

May 30th – To Hassan, We March in Protest

In order to strongly condemn the heinous sexual scandal carried out by Prajwal Revanna, the Member of Parliament from Hassan, a huge demonstration and outdoor gathering called “Hassanadedege Namma Nadige (To Hassan, We March in Protest)” has been organised by **Federation of Karnataka State People’s Movements-** including Feminist, Dalit, Workers’, Farmers’, backwards castes and minorities, sexual and gender minorities, Adivasis, peoples science movements, retired government officials/employees organisations, students and youth organisations, like-minded individuals, intellectuals, litterateurs, artists and concerned citizens from all corners of Karnataka- on Thursday, 30th May 2024 in Hassan Town. And we urge the leaders and members of pro-people movements and women’s organizations, philosophers, litterateurs, artists and socially aware citizens from all across Karnataka state and Hassan district to participate in this protest in huge numbers.

In this regard, give below are the decisions made and demands by all the organisations pertaining to women, Dalits, farmers, minorities, backward communities, sexual minorities, scientific movements, student and youth movements from Hassan and Karnataka at a meeting held in Hassan on Saturday, 18th of May 2024:

Background of the Scandal and Minutes of Meeting:

The JDS MP from Hassan Mr.Prajwal Revanna, with the backing of his political power, feudal family background and upper-class arrogance, influenced and forced hundreds of women and used them to satiate his heinous sexual desires. Not just that- he has also non-consensually recorded, photographed and taken screen shorts of these sexual acts along with nude videos of the women on his phone and has stored the same. This is the most condemnable and heinous scandal, something never seen or heard before.

Prajwal Revanna, who is a people’s representative, took advantage of women from different backgrounds who approached him for help, along with women who worked as house helps for his family, women leaders and party activists working for the organisation of electoral victory for his own party for his perverse desires; he even misused the guest houses allotted by the government to the Former Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for these acts and all of this makes it a very serious case. Although the BJP and JDS parties were well aware of Prajwal Revanna’s involvement in such horrible acts, they chose to let him contest as the Hassan MP candidate in the 18th Lok Sabha election held in April 2024 and this decision of the national and state leaders of both the parties is condemnable.

Further, with a malintent of influencing the voters, Prajwal Revanna’s videos were circulated among the public through pen drives and social-media by some wicked people, who have also publicly violated the privacy and dignity of the abused women, which needs to be condemned severely. Further, Mr.G.Devrajgowda, a BJP leader from Hassan had repeated claimed through the media that he is in possession of thousands of videos and photographs of the sexual assaults several months ago; however the election commission and the police failed to act in advance and did not arrest Prajwal Revanna and his former car driver Karthik, which became one of the factors leading to this social debacle.

It is unforgivable that Prajwal Revanna, who has carried out this perverted sexual crime was not put on surveillance, was not detained and was even allowed to escape from the country. Although later the government set up the Special Investigation Team (SIT), even to this day a red-corner notice has not been issued for Prajwal Revanna's arrest. The central government has not cancelled the 'Diplomatic Passport' issued to Prajwal Revanna, nor has it responded to a letter written by state government seeking help with his arrest. No necessary diplomatic actions have been initiated. Why? Who are they trying to protect? – These are the hard-hitting questions that we need to raise.

Owing to the unusual and perverted nature of the sexual abuse, the affected women are hesitating to appear before the SIT. Therefore, it is the SIT's duty to contact the directly and reassure them, provide appropriate protection to the victims and the government should guarantee that their privacy will be safeguarded, and necessary help will be provided.

Since the scandal came to light, the JDS party has only suspended Prajwal Revanna's membership; however, the party has not publicly condemned the act, neither has it made an effort to console the women abused by their own MP nor has it reached out to its own women leaders and party workers who have been victims of the abuse with a promise to help them get justice. The national, state and district presidents of JDS party or any party leaders for that matter, have not spoken in support of the victims. Instead, they have been making insulting claims against the affected women, have alleged that "the victims have been paid by our opponents for their statements to the SIT". By doing so, they have further degraded the resolve of the affected women. It is condemnable that the JDS leaders are also indirectly trying to prevent the victims from appearing before the SIT.

The actions of BJP in relation to Prajwal Revanna's heinous sexual scandal makes way for several suspicions. BJP, which already had information about the incident, chose to keep quite about it, thereby proving that political mileage they could gain out of their coalition with JDS outweighed the crimes carried out against women. On one hand, the central government has failed to take appropriate steps to arrest Prajwal Revanna, while on the other hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, along with other JDS and BJP leaders have been pressurising to handover the case CBI, in a clear attempt to derail the investigation. The Congress party's involvement in the mudslinging has also hampered the seriousness of the scandal. As a result of all these developments, the pains endured by the women sexually abused in the scandal are being sidelined, which holds a mirror to the sick and distorted mindset of our society.

The videos and images pertaining to this scandal have already been widely circulated through the internet. Attempts are being made to show these content to the children, families, relatives and acquaintances of the victims and such attempts could continue in the future as well. This could also lead to threats and blackmailing. As a result, the husbands and children of these women will need to face severe social, mental and familial embarrassment and this will have serious repercussions. The civilized society needs to think about steps to be taken to mitigate the severity of this situation.

Further, this scandal has resulted in several unimaginable ill-effects in the society and several families. The news pertaining to this scandal has negatively impacted children and

youth too. Considering these issues, there is a need to work extensively on finding ways to build a healthy society.

There is a possibility that these videos and images have percolated the pornography websites as well. Therefore, it is important to pressurise the government to take measures to find all the videos and photographs related to the Hassan scandal anywhere on the internet and to destroy all the sources of the same.

Among the affected women, there are some party leaders, workers, women officers, employees and househelps. Therefore, if the main perpetrator of the crime Prajwal Revanna and other accused are not punished at the earliest, women might hesitate to play an active role in the society and politics and might refrain from participating in social movements, which needs to be given a serious thought.

The women who became victims of such a complex, perverted sexual abuse deserved widespread social sympathy and concern and the abusers deserved to face people's anger. Instead, as a result of the political, familial, economic and caste supremacy of the accused, the women who were subjected to sexual abuse are being looked at with disgust and disrespect. The discrimination deeply prevalent in our patriarchal society has come to the forefront. Despite the angst against Prajwal Revanna, the taunts, sarcasm and disgust being expressed regarding the affected women is condemnable. Therefore, the society needs to start working to change this mindset and form a sympathetic view in the social and public platforms regarding the women who were forced to endure the sexual misdeeds due to a variety of factors.

Organisers of the programme:

Federation of Hasana district people's Movements.

[The federation includes movements of Women, Dalits, Workers, Farmers, backward castes and minorities, sexual and gender minorities, Adivasis, Science movements, Retired government officials/employees organisations, students and youth organisations as well as like minded individuals.]