

# **CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS, INDIA**

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Dear young women,

We the women and men of the Conference of Religious in India [CRI] salute you for having dared to challenge patriarchy and asserted your rights as women and of human dignity.

The CRI is a forum of more than 1.25 lakh Catholic Nuns, Brothers and Fathers, working all over the country in educational institutions, medical centers, and social welfare groups in rural and urban areas. We are politically non-aligned, but stand for human rights and development, and the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized.

Women wrestlers of India set high standards and show a mirror to those who do not have the courage to stand on principles, or even to stand in solidarity with brave women such as you and your fellow men wrestlers.

You stand as an example to women who are helpless in the face of recurring sexual harassment at the workplace or in the neighborhood and public spaces, because they are alone, or weak, poor or trapped in poisonous relationships.

We condemn the brutal and totally uncivilized manner in which the police behaved with you and forcibly terminated your rightful agitation at Jantar Mantar.

You broke many a ceiling when you took to wrestling and brought honors to the country in arenas far more prestigious than the commercial grounds of big-money sports. We therefore thank Mr. Kapil Dev and the first Indian team to win the Cricket World Cup that they have extended support to your just cause, as have Olympic Champions such as Mr. Abhinav Bindra and Mr. Neeraj Chopra.

We also call upon the Union Government to take the steps that are necessary to see that justice takes its course in your complaints of sexual molestation and harassment. That one of the victims is a minor adds further urgency to this matter. That is a case where not only the police but also the National Commission for Protection of Children must act, invoke the powerful Law of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences, and move the Supreme court as powerful political forces are protecting the accused.

We note that the Prime Minister is aware of your charges. He has often spoken of his support to the cause of the women in India and has implemented several projects for their uplift. We hope he will do what is necessary to start investigations into the charges of molestation and other sexual offences. This will help ensure that such crimes are not committed in future, specially by men in high office.

Yours in solidarity,

  
Sr. Nirmalini Nazareth A.C.

President

Conference of Religious in India

(On behalf of the CRI Executive Committee)