

CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS, INDIA

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PRESS STATEMENT

CATHOLIC NUNS AND FATHERS AND BROTHERS EXPRESS SOLIDARITY WITH AGITATING WOMEN WRESTLERS, CALL FOR JUSTICE PROCESS TO START

BENGALURU, JUNE 5 2023

The Conference of Religious in India [CRI] has extended solidarity and support to the agitating women wrestlers whose protest against sexual crimes by high political persons, was ruthlessly terminated by the Delhi police.

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. CRI is politically non-aligned but stand for human rights and the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized.

CRI President and educationist Sr Nirmalini Nazareth wrote a letter to the women wrestlers who have many Olympics and World champions amongst them, saluting the young athletes "Who have dared to challenge patriarchy and asserted your agency and human dignity..."

"You stand as an example to women who feel 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."

The CRI said 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 them and their fellow men wrestlers.

Sr Nirmalini said CRI condemned the brutal and totally uncivilized manner in which the police behaved with them and forcibly terminated their rightful agitation at Jantar Mantar.

The CRI called 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. 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.

The letter said the CRI noted that the Prime Minister was aware of the serious 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," The letter said.

"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," Sr Nirmalini's letter noted.

Acknowledging that the wrestlers had been supported by some of the greats of the Indian sports galaxy, the CRI thanked Mr. Kapil Dev and the first Indian team to win the Cricket World Cup, and Olympic Champions such as Mr. Abhinav Bindra and Mr. Neeraj Chopra.

M. Nirmalini Nazareth

Sr. Nirmalini Nazareth A.C.

President

Conference of Religious in India (on behalf of the Executive Committee)