

Outrage after videos of college girls being gang-raped are posted online by blackmailers

The videos were part of a larger scheme by a group of men who befriended female students on social and recorded their sexual assaults

By Varsha Vasudevan

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Students took to the streets in the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India after several videos that showed sexual assaults on college girls were posted online.

A throng of women's rights campaigners demanded the authorities on March 14 to quickly investigate the assaults and also provide protection to the victims. Many of the victims in the videos have since been identified based on the footage.

The outraged campaigners increased their protest after the authorities said that the footage was a part of a larger scheme by a group of men who became friends with female college students on social media, met them in person, committed sexual assaults, and then finally used the footage to blackmail the victims, reported the [Daily Mail](#).



Students demonstrate the government's reaction to recent rape incidents in the country (Source: Daniel Berehulak/Getty Images)

Twenty one-year-old graduate student Captain Prabhakar, who joined the protests in the city of Coimbatore, said: "Watching the video of a girl begging her assailants to let her go was chilling. In many of these areas, girls stepping out of their homes to attend college is a big deal. We fear that cases like this will result in restrictions being imposed again on girls."

According to data from the Indian government, the number of crimes against women that were reported in the country rose by 83 per cent from 2007 to 2016. There were four rape complaints reported to the authorities every hour in 2016, as per the data.

The Tamil Nadu police wrote in a report to the government on March 13 that four men in the city of Pollachi were arrested after a 19-year-old student lodged a complaint against them in the case. They were identified as Sabarirajan, Thirunavukkarasu, Sathish and Vasanthkumar. Later police added the name of a fifth person, identified as 'Bar' Nagaraj, in the FIR. All five men are out on bail.

The investigators are now trying to identify the other victims based on more video footage that were recovered from the cell phones of the accused men. So far, at least five sexual assault videos have reportedly been posted on social media, and according to The News Minute, at least six women are there in the videos that have leaked now.



Students across the state took to walking out of classrooms as a sign of protest (Source: Chelsea Guglielmino/Getty Images)

Local newspaper The Hindu reported that in the teen's police complaint, the student said that she had been sexually assaulted by a group of men — two of whom she knew — inside a car, and that her horrifying ordeal was recorded.

The number of cases in the police register, however, has been steadily on the rise after national outrage at the fatal gang-rape of a student aboard a bus in the capital city of New Delhi in 2012.

Henri Tiphagne, the director of human rights' charity People's Watch who is based in Madurai, said: "The need of the hour is to help other victims break their silence and come forward with their complaints. We need to create a safe atmosphere for the other victims."

The National Commission for Women, which is a statutory body that advises the Indian government on women-related issues, sent a letter to the authorities stating that they were "seriously concerned about the safety and security of women in Tamil Nadu."

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