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Press Statement

People's Watch urges recall of MKU VC's Committee Against Prof. Nirmala Devi.

People's Watch denounces the speed and urgency of the actions initiated by the Vice Chancellor of the Madurai Kamaraj University, Mr. P.P. Chelladurai, against Prof. Nirmala Devi. People's Watch further condemns Mr. P.P. Chelladurai's announcement that a 'committee', led by a Senate member of the University, will conduct an enquiry into the allegations made against Prof. Nirmala Devi.

Prof. Nirmala Devi's 20 minute long phone to lure four final year girl students is an extremely shocking incident to anyone with a conscience and interest in upholding the Right to Education. Higher education has to be carried out in an environment free from discrimination, harassment, retaliation and or sexual assault / favours at all levels within the larger jurisdiction of the university and confines of the college. Any such allegations bordering on sexual favours falls within the ambit of Sec.354A IPC and 'sexual harassment of women at work place Act 2013 under section 2(n) defines sexual harassment to include any one or more than following unwelcome acts or behavior, namely,

1. Physical contact and advances; or
2. a demand or request for sexual favours; or
3. making sexually coloured remarks; or
4. showing pornography; or
5. any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature

In the case at hand, the sexual harassment complaint as revealed in the Whatsapp video in the 20 minute conversation that went viral has clear references to several higher officials of the M.K.University. The said higher officials of any University include its Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Controller of Examination, the HODs as well as its Senate and Syndicate members. The act of the speedy response therefore of the Vice Chancellor and the Chancellor is peculiar and raises suspicion.

After the sexual harassment at work place Act has come into effect all such complaints should be investigated by the 'Internal Complaint Committee' of Devanga Arts College Aruppukottai in Virudhunagar district and if the same has not been constituted by the 'Local Complaint Committee' of Virudhunagar district as per Section 6 of the Act to receive complaints of sexual harassment from establishments where the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) has not been constituted.

The second option for the university should be for the MHU's ICC to enquire the matter and not any other committee appointed by the Vice Chancellor or Chancellor

Both these Committee have to immediately stop their inquest into the matter as they are not within the process of enquiry envisaged under the sexual harassment of work place Act. Such an enquiry alone without the arrest of Prof. Nirmla Devi would reveal the truth about the higher officials in the university who were referred to in the 20 minutes conversation.

People's Watch urges the District Collectors of Madurai and Virudhunagar to get the matter enquired at the earliest by the local complaint committee of each districts.

Sd/-

(Henri Tiphagne)

Executive Director, People's Watch

For more info contact : 9994368524, 9717571075