

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Honorable M. Karunanidhi  
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

I would like to express my deep concern on an incident in Tamil Nadu that unlawful acts committed to a Dalit woman suspected of theft and that the local police are not responding to this case sincerely.

Lakshmi, a 45 year-old Dalit woman from Koormavilasapuram village, is a member of a Self Help Group (SHG). On 19 September 2007, when she returned to her village in order to attend the SHG meeting, the leader of the SHG blamed Lakshmi for stealing a calf from the village. Although Lakshmi denied any involvement, she was suspected of having taking the calf and the leader took Lakshmi away to a higher caste village where an unofficial village meeting was held - "Katta Panchayat" (KP).

KP, which is prohibited under Tamil Nadu state law, compelled her to confess the crime. Continuous humiliation and the associated bad language drove Lakshmi to try to commit suicide. Even after that, a KP incarcerated her with her husband and her sister in the SHG building. It also demanded her to pay compensation and Lakshmi was threatened that her land would be taken away if she did not pay the money. She was also warned that she would not be allowed to live in the village, as there would be a social boycott.

Lakshmi complained about her case to the police with the support of Human Rights Organization in Tamil Nadu but the local police avoid any action being taken in the case.

I am deeply concerned on the above situation and I ask you for;

1. serious and proper consideration of Lakshmi's case by ensuring that authorities - particularly the justice agencies - take appropriate measures to file a case to punish those who have committed unlawful acts. Moreover, in light of General Recommendation 31 of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, there shall not be any discriminatory practice in the procedures to file the cases, such as ignoring cases filed by Dalit women.
2. assurance that the local acts to protect human rights - such as the laws to prohibit KPs - will be implemented appropriately with appropriate countermeasures.

Respectfully yours,

Signature \_\_\_\_\_