

Sex Work is Dignified Work



Press Release

30-10-2024

National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW-India)

We, the members of the National Network of Sex Workers in Maharashtra, hereby appeal to the candidates contesting elections in Maharashtra to meet female, male and transgender sex workers in your constituencies to discuss violations faced by us and to include our concerns in your electoral manifestos and campaigns.

The legal ambiguity and arbitrary implementation of laws leads consenting adult sex workers to suffer while carrying out their work. After a long struggle by sex worker rights groups, on 19 May 2022 the Supreme Court of India issued an interim order on the rights of sex workers as an important milestone in the Budhadev Karmakar vs State of West Bengal, 2007 case. The order contains guidelines to protect rights of sex workers.

1. Release consenting adult sex workers from protective homes:

State Governments are directed to do a survey of all facilities for survivors picked up under The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) and placed in protective homes, so that adult women who are detained against their will can be reviewed and processed for release in a time-bound manner. The guidelines also stipulate strict directions to police to treat all sex workers with dignity.

2. Protect privacy and identities of people in sex work:

The Press Council of India should be urged to issue appropriate guidelines for the media to take utmost care not to reveal the identities of sex workers, during arrest, raid and rescue operations, whether as victims or accused and not to publish or telecast any photos that would result in disclosure of such identities.

3. Condoms cannot be used as evidence of sex work:

Measures that sex workers use for their health and safety (e.g., condoms,) must neither be construed as offences nor seen as evidence of commission of an offence.

4. Educate sex workers about their rights:

The Central Government and the State Governments, through the National Legal Services Authority, State Legal Services Authority and District Legal Services Authority, should carry out workshops for educating the sex workers about their rights vis-a-vis the legality of sex work, rights and obligations of the police and what is permitted/prohibited under the law.

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NNSW comprises of 84 organisations across ten states with over 1.5 lakh sex workers members.

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5. Assist sex workers to access the justice system:

Inform sex workers as to how they can get access to the judicial system to enforce their rights and prevent unnecessary harassment at the hands of traffickers or police.

Female, male and transgender members of National Network of Sex Workers in Maharashtra who are voting members in Maharashtra urge candidates to insist on effective implementation of the Supreme Court guidelines that are vital to provide safe working space and justice to sex workers. It is our appeal to all the electoral candidates in Maharashtra to include these guidelines in their election manifestos and campaigns.

Sincerely

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