12 AUGUST 2020

FOR URGENT RELEASE

THE CARAVAN'S JOURNALISTS SEXUALLY HARASSED AND ASSAULTED WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT IN DELHI'S NORTH GHONDA

On the afternoon of 11 August, three journalists with *The Caravan*—Shahid Tantray, Prabhjit Singh and a woman journalist—faced a brutal attack while reporting in the nation's capital. A mob assaulted the three journalists in Subhash Mohalla, in northeast Delhi's North Ghonda neighbourhood. The journalists were reporting on a story concerning an individual who filed complaints regarding the targeted anti-Muslim violence in northeast Delhi this February. The journalists were under attack for roughly an hour and a half. They were subjected to communal slurs, threatened with murder and sexually harassed.

The incident began while the journalists were taking photographs of saffron flags that had been put up in the area. (Saffron flags are popular symbols of Hindutva, the ideology of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Hindutva groups are widely reported to have attacked Muslims during the February violence in Delhi.) Some men approached them and told them to stop. One of the men, who was wearing a saffron kurta and had a bandage on his arm, identified himself as a "BJP general secretary." He asked Tantray for his identity card. The mob launched their attack upon realising that Tantray was Muslim. During her attempt to get away from the attack, the woman journalist faced sexual harassment from a middle-aged man who exposed his genitals to her. Later, the mob attacked her as well. To ensure the safety of the journalist, *The Caravan* is concealing her identity.

The Caravan has published over thirty stories on the anti-Muslim attacks in February. These include critical investigations into allegations that leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party orchestrated and participated in the violence, and eye-witness accounts of police complicity in the attacks. The stories have also looked in depth at the police's harassment and intimidation of Muslim residents in the aftermath of the violence, and especially of witnesses who have come forward to register official complaints. Over twenty journalists—including reporters, video reporters, photojournalists and editors—have put their efforts into producing our coverage of the violence and its aftermath, even amid the COVD-19 lockdown.

The assault on *The Caravan*'s journalists is a grave attack on press freedom and the freedom of speech enshrined in the Constitution, and a sign of the rising dangers of reporting on Hindutva and majoritarian violence under the current government.

"Tuesday's attack on three Caravan journalists who reported doggedly on the violence in northeast Delhi is an attack on journalism and free and fair reporting," Vinod Jose, the executive editor of *The Caravan*, said. "We expect the police and the judiciary to act fearlessly in punishing the mob that assaulted and sexually harassed journalists, and deleted valuable interviews and images from the journalists' camera. The violence and sexual

harassment faced by our woman colleague is among the most shocking and offensive attacks on a woman journalist in India in a long time."

"This is unprecedented, in 25 years of journalism I have not encountered this level of public depravity," Hartosh Singh Bal, the polictal editor of The Caravan, said. "If mobs can decide on who will report on them and how, if identity becomes the marker of journalistic credibility, if violence is the response to reporting and institutions fail to act by the law, then it is not just the media which becomes unviable, so does constitutional democracy."

The attack began at around 2 pm, when a mob of locals—men and women—surrounded the journalists in a lane and learnt of Tantray's Muslim identity. During the assault, the woman journalist managed to extricate herself through a gate. The mob locked the gate behind her, trapping the other two journalists inside. When the woman journalist pleaded with the attackers to let her colleagues go, a man with a crew-cut hairstyle and rakhis tied around his wrist pulled at her clothing to try and drag her inside.

The woman journalist ran to a neighbouring lane. As she sat on a slab to compose herself, she was surrounded by a group of young men who looked to be in their early twenties. The men began taking photos and videos of her. As she recorded in a police complaint filed immediately after the incident, they were "making cheap and lewd comments and started saying '*Dikhao, dikhao*'"—Show, show. As she walked away, "a middle-aged man in a dhoti and a white T-shirt, with a bald head and a slim pony-tail stood in front of me. He then opened his dhoti and exposed his genitals while looking at me. He proceeded to shake his penis with his hand and started making objectionable and lewd expressions, while laughing at me."

The woman journalist fled for her safety. She then received a call from Tantray, who asked her to come to the Bhajanpura police station. As she was asking for directions to the police station, the mob that first attacked the journalists caught hold of her. The mob began shoving and beating her. "All of them started hitting me on my head, arms, chest, hips," she recorded in her complaint. She was finally able to escape with the help of a police official, who took her to Bhajanpura police station.

Before the mob found the woman journalist, it had continued its attack on the other two journalists. Tantray was abused with communal slurs such as "mullah" and "kattua," threatened with murder, and repeatedly slapped and kicked. When Singh tried to intervene, the mob kicked him as well. The mob threatened to break the camera the journalists were using, at which point Tantray offered to delete all the pictures he had taken. He then did so in front of his attackers. When the mob persisted with its threats to break the camera, Tantray was forced to give up its memory card. Singh recalled that the man who claimed to be affiliated to the BJP told the journalists that "they would not be able to do anything to him."

Two police officials who were present at the scene were unable to prevent the mob from attacking the journalists. Ultimately, more police officials arrived at the scene and they were able to take the two journalists to the Bhajanpura police station. It was at that point that Tantray called his woman colleague.

Singh and the woman journalist filed police complaints about the attack. The police have not registered FIRs in connection to these complaints. The police have stated that the locals who attacked the journalists also filed a complaint, and that they need to examine both sides' complaints before filing an FIR.

The journalists were in the area for follow-up reporting in connection to an earlier story by Singh and Tantray on local women's allegations of assault and sexual harassment at the hands of the Delhi Police. Two women and a teenage girl alleged that the police sexually harassed them on 8 August, after they arrived at the Bhajanpura station to try and register an FIR regarding the chanting of communal slogans in the area following the foundation-laying ceremony for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. One of the women was among the complainants in a case related to the Delhi violence.

The Caravan has consistently reported on the targeted attacks against Muslims during the Delhi violence. The journalists attacked on 11 August have done ground-breaking work to the violence and the government's response to it. In a series of investigative stories, Singh reported on multiple complaints filed by Muslim residents that tied BJP leaders and senior police officials to the violence, and described how the police had failed to act on these complaints. Tantray, in a video story, recorded the testimony of a Hindu rioter who justified the violence, and spoke openly of setting Muslim-owned shops on fire and watching three people being burnt alive. In another story, Tantray reported on the case of a Muslim man who lost an eye to a bullet injury, and on failures by the Delhi Police in their investigation of the case.

The attack on our journalists is a grave assault on media freedom, and on the journalists' democratic rights as reporters and citizens. *The Caravan* is determined to continue its reporting on the violence in northeast Delhi.

Please call our Editorial Manager Haripriya KM on +91 85270 37049 for any details.

The full report of the attack is here:

caravanmagazine.in/crime/the-caravan-journalists-assaulted-sexually-harassed-in-northeast-delhi

The Caravan's coverage of the Delhi Violence is here:

caravanmagazine.in/tag/delhi-violence

Singh and Tantray's latest report, on the women and teenager who alleged that the Delhi Police officials at the Bhajanpura police station sexually assaulted them, here:

caravanmagazine.in/crime/delhi-police-beat-sexually-assaulted-us-bhajanpura-station-riots-complainant-daughter

Copies of the complaints, with the identity of the woman journalist withheld, are attached.

Photo Credit:
LEFT: COURTESY PRABHJIT SINGH/RIGHT: BILAL KUCHAY

Thanks,

The Caravan Editors

The SHO
Police Station,
Brajanpura

DD No. 105 Adt (1)/8/20

POLICE STATION BRAJANPURA

Sub Criminal complaint against unknown unknown accused persons under sections 323, 354, 342, 3-2, ~~345~~, 384, ~~3~~ 153-A, & 383 ~~A IPC~~ 506 (Part II) ~~3~~ 392 (Part I) of IPC.

Sir, I am Prabhjit Singh S/o Mohinder Singh, currently working with The Caravan as a journalist. The present criminal complaint is in relation to the offences of voluntarily causing hurt, wrongful confinement, posing grave provocation, extortion, robbery, communal comments, hurling abuses and criminal intimidation inflicted upon me and my two colleagues - Shahid Faraz and [redacted] by unknown persons while we were reporting. The brief fact for this criminal complaint are provided here below, the entire episode occurring at around 2 pm continuing till 3.30 pm. We can identify the accused persons.

(P.T.O.)

(2)

1. On 11.05.2020 morning, I visited Subhash Mohallah North Gonda along with my two colleagues Shahid Tantray and [redacted] to report on a story.

2. After interviewing some people, we ~~started to~~ on street no. 1, we went to street no. 202, where I talked to a woman, at ~~her~~ the doorstep of her corner house. We ~~go~~ were proceeding further, then 3-4 men whom we could identify, started shouting at us, objecting & stopping us ~~from~~ clicking photographs that were necessary for our story.

3. More people ~~to~~ came out of their houses and took the shape of a violent group. They forced us to delete the shots that Shahid [redacted] had taken for the story.

4. One of those men started abusing Shahid, threatening him, ~~[illegible]~~ for his I-card

~~5~~ ~~c.s.~~ claiming that ~~he~~ ~~two~~
he was "BJP general secretary".
He was wearing ~~saffron~~ saffron
colour kurta and had a
bandaged fractured arm.

5. They all asked for our I-cards
When Shahid showed his
I-card, the mob became
more violent and the
~~men~~ men, including the
aforesaid person in saffron
kurta started hitting Shahid
on his forehead, back &
kicking on his legs. I also
got a kick on my leg.
"आरे ये तो Muslim" यही
the man with saffron kurta.
Two more men arrived, both
wearing white shirts, intimidated
Shahid and tried to hold
him when I came inbetween
for his rescue.

6. Two policemen arrived on the
scene - ASI Zamir Khan and
HC Arvind Kumar. They tried
to intervene and pacify the
violent/abusive mob. ~~But~~ But

the man in saffron kurta started provoking the women against us. Two women began snatching Shahid's camera. The mob was uncontrolable despite the presence of the policemen. Had it not been there, the mob led by that saffron kurta clad man would have lynched Shahid for his muslim identity. The men were all communally abusive, telling Shahid - "मारो साले को मार दो". I could hear the voices around "पकड़ो इसको!" "तुम्हारी वजह से हमारा नुकसान हुआ है" "तुम्हारी वजह से मरना पड़ेगा" reported Shahid.

7. After Shahid deleted the photos from his camera - they again threatened him for the 'memory card'. In all, the persons, including two women, hit him again and again and forced him to take out the memory card. They snatched the memory card from Shahid. The card contained our hard earned material content ~~which~~ that we had gathered since morning.

8. While the cops were ~~rescu~~ rescuing us to a waiting police vehicle, a man in white shirt came from ~~behind~~ behind and again threatened Shahid. The man said - "तुम को मार दूंगा!"

9. The accused persons repeatedly hit us causing bodily pain and thereby voluntarily caused hurt. They are thereby liable for voluntarily causing hurt to me under section 323 IPC.

10. The accused persons have forcibly restrained me within an area as they surrounded us, while continuously assaulting us and threatening us, and prevented us ~~from~~ from leaving the area. Thereby the accused persons are liable for wrongful confinement under section 342 IPC. They locked the street gate.

11. The accused persons intentionally used force against us, without our ~~con~~ ~~not~~ consent and without any provocation, and through their actions caused injury and fear to us and the mental agony.

12. The accused persons dishonestly removed our mobile phone from our possession of [redacted] and kept it in their possession and deleted the content in the phone. Therefore, the accused persons are liable for robbery under section 392 (Part) of IPC.

13. The accused persons threatened us with injury to our persons and to our reputation by threatening us and, thereby, caused harm to us by a result of their actions. Therefore, the actions of the accused persons amount to criminal intimidation and the accused persons are thereby liable under section 506 (Part II) of IPC.

(P.T.O.)

The accused persons threatened to kill Shahid while they were beating him. Therefore the actions of the accused persons amount to criminal intimidation and the accused persons are thereby liable under section 506 (Part II).

15. The accused persons shouted communal slogans at Shahid because of his Muslim identity, promoting hatred, enmity and ill-will among the mob towards Shahid because he was a Muslim. Thereby, the accused persons are liable under section 153-A IPC.

16. The accused persons threatened us and continually assaulted us while they demanded Shahid's memory card. Thereby, the accused persons are liable for extortion under section 383 IPC and robbery under section 392 IPC.

17. My colleague [redacted] was able to take some photos of the mob as they assaulted Shahid, and we will provide these photos along with a section 65B certificate. Several of the offences disclosed in this complaint constitute a cognizable offence, and accordingly it is requested that an FIR be registered on the basis of the present criminal complaint and the matter be thoroughly investigated. The guilty parties need to be brought to book. I shall furnish all such relevant information/evidence that may be ~~brought to book~~ required for purposes of investigation. The actions of the accused have affected my mental and emotional well-being as well as my bodily integrity.

Yours Sincerely

SHAHID TANTRAY
11/8/2020

Tejpreet Singh
11/8/20
(PARAMJOT SINGH) (P

Prabhjit Singh

[redacted]

Shahid Tantray

[redacted]

To Respected SHO, Bhagirathpura Police Station

(1)

DD No. 104A dt 11/8/20

[redacted]

On 11 August 2020, I was out on a project for The Caravan magazine at Subhash Mohalla, North East Delhi to record the testimonies of riot victims.

I reached the area at around 12 pm. I recorded the statement for one and a half hour. Then I left the homes of the victims to record stills visuals for video reels.

At a point, while collecting these visual shots, I ended up in front of a street that had a saffron gate and saffron flag

Shahid

Suddenly a man came out of saffron gate and asked us to stop shooting.

We informed him that we are from the press and were just taking shots of the locality. We assured him that we were just reporting as members of the press. Then this man got very agitated and started shouting. We tried pacifying him but he kept demanding that we show him the recording and subsequently delete them.

Soon, a crowd came near us. Everyone started shouting "Hatt Hatt" [go away] at Shahid, Prabhjit and me. In fear, I took the camera from Shahid's hand and tried to distance myself from the situation. I successfully was able to leave

... 10 ... [illegible]

I was leaving, I heard a man scream, 'Isko Pakdo.' [catch her], as I was exiting the saffron-gated-gully.

A little ahead from the saffron-gated-gully I saw a bunch of women standing, so I went and joined myself with them. I was waiting for my colleagues to leave the saffron-gated-gully, when I saw the crowd close and lock the saffron gate, while my colleagues were still inside. I went back towards the worried saffron gate and pleaded that my colleagues be let out. The women I was standing with, followed me as I went towards the saffron gate. As I was pleading, [people inside the saffron gate] let my colleagues out safely, a boy opened the gate and tried to drag me inside. The boy was wearing a bright-coloured-shirt about 5"10, fair

He was wearing rakhis. He looked like he was in his early twenties. He looked young.

This boy pulled my kurta from the front and tried to drag me inside and take the camera hanging around my neck. Thankfully, the women who were standing with me helped me get out of this boy's grip. I ran away from the saffron-dated-gully and entered the neighbouring gully. Then, I sat on a slab and tried to recollect my strength when 3-4 boys suddenly came and encircled me. They started taking my pictures and videos, and their phone-cameras started flashing in my face. They were all young, 20-25 years-old. None of them had beards, they were all fair, about 5"3 / 5"4 in height.

They were all giggling and making cheap and lewd comments and started saying "दुरवाशा", [shown] to me.
दिखाशा

I stood up and started walking away from the spot where the boys were eve-teasing me.

A little ahead, a middle-aged man in a dhoti and a white t-shirt, with a bald head and slim pony-tail stood in front of me. He then opened his dhoti and exposed his genitals while looking at me. He proceeded to shake his penis with his hand and started making objectionable and lewd expressions, while laughing at me.

This middle-aged man had a wrinkled face, was tall and had a light brown complexion. Disturbed by this sight, I ran away. Soon after, I got a call from my colleague Shahid, asking me to come to Bhojanpura police station.

I started asking for directions, and one old man offered to help me. He said his son would drop me to the station. Suddenly, a woman rushed towards me and asked me when I turned behind, 3 women

me are charging in my direction.
In fear I started running away.
As I was running I fell, and the
mob caught on to me. The mob
encircled me and started pushing
me back and forth, and asked me to
come back with them to the
saffron-gated-gully. All of them started
hitting me on my head, arms,
chest, hips. One of these men had a
bandage, which was white in colour, on
one of his arms. It looked like a
surgical bandage. This man was also
present earlier, when I was trapped in
the saffron-gated gully with my
colleagues. I recognised him from there
as well.
One woman, in a pink shirt, attacked
me. She was also present when I was
trapped in the saffron-gated-gully.
A lady in an orange-brown sari, also
present at the saffron-gated-gully, was
also a part of this mob. A man in a
white vest with white hair, a tiny
ponytail, was also in this mob. He was
also previously present in the saffron-gate
gully. One of the men in the mob,
I have and made me
...running at

The mob was asking me to come back to the saffron-gated-guilty. They were yelling at me, asking why I was in their guilty and taking videos of the guilty and their flags. I can identify members of these mob if needed.

With God's grace I saw a policeman approach. I ran towards him and begged him to save me. The mob still aggressive, grabbed my 200cc bike in front of the policeman. This policeman tried to trivialise the situation and told us to resolve the dispute verbally, among ourselves. I pleaded that the policeman be with us. Luckily, another policeman came to the spot. He assured me that I will be safe and said, "Let's go to the police station." The second policeman was 5'11" or 6 feet, slightly chubby had a paunch, had a wheatish complexion. He was wearing a mask. The first policeman, who was not very helpful, was clean-shaven not wearing a mask, medium built, and had a wheatish complexion. After this, we went to the police station. The second policeman, who was helpful, got me on his bike.

The first policeman remained on the spot.

I captured a video clip and image of some members of the mob from earlier in the day, when we were all trapped, in [illegible] where they were [illegible]

I can identify most of the people from mob and the policemen that I later met on 11 August 2020.

[redacted]