

8th October, 2026Press Statement**PUCL Condemns Sexual Assault of Women Journalists and Attacks on All Journalists;
Demands Immediate Action Against Police Officers**

PUCL is shocked at reports of sexual assault of women journalists and of physical assault and harassment of journalists covering the ongoing protests against the Chief Election Commissioner in Delhi. PUCL condemns the attacks and deplores the FIRs lodged against journalists who protested the assault.

According to the testimony of independent journalist Rosy, a police officer identified as ACP Vivek Bhagat grabbed her breast and then ran away when she protested.

The brave journalist tried to lodge an FIR at Parliament Street police station and spent over five hours until late at night, but faced further harassment as police stalled her efforts to book the officer. To date, no action has been taken on her complaint.

There are reports of the sexual assault of two other women journalists covering the protest. Shockingly, journalists who gathered to demand immediate action against the police officers were detained and had FIRs lodged against them!

It is sickening and totally reprehensible that police openly and deliberately use sexual assault against women journalists and protestors as an additional weapon in their already lethal arsenal of shock batons, air guns, etc.

In the last CJP protest, there were videos of Delhi Police Station House Officer (SHO) Naveen Rathi shoving a baton into the private parts of a woman protester. Another report said women journalists were deliberately surveilled and beaten. To date, despite the Delhi High Court's cognisance of these incidents, no action has been taken.

In the middle of these protests the ACP was promoted and made an [Addl SP](#). When there was an outcry about his promotion, in what is clearly a whitewashing exercise, Delhi police resorted to a social media campaign by issuing statements about Bhagat's "voluntary" request not to avail his duty charge as Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, pending a full enquiry and posted "guidelines" for women journalists covering protests.

When the journalists and other activists refused to leave the parliament police station, they were thrashed and arrested, with the police demanding 15 days of remand when produced in front of the magistrate who granted them bail. Barring two complainants who raised the issue of sexual violence by the police, all were arrested.

Worldwide, restrictions govern direct physical contact between male police officers and women. To violate this so blatantly is condemnable and totally unacceptable.

In addition, male journalists were kicked and pushed around. One of them was slapped by a police officer when he was forcibly pushed inside a police van with protesters, though he repeatedly told the police that he was from the press.

The brutal way police dealt with the media made it clear their orders came from above. The Delhi police report directly to the Union Home Ministry. They have been given a mandate to crush the

protest in the most repressive manner by detaining protestors, assaulting them, bundling them in buses and taking them to unknown locations.

The media bear witness to all these thoroughly illegal acts, and the Delhi police is deliberately targeting independent journalists to intimidate them and curb their work.

PUCL demands immediate stringent punishment of the officers responsible for the sexual assault of women journalists. They need to be suspended immediately, pending enquiry. Every day they continue on duty jeopardises the safety and security of all journalists and women protestors.

PUCL demands the suspension of police personnel responsible for the beating up of journalists and their detention.

PUCL demands that FIRs lodged against the assaulted journalists be withdrawn immediately.

The media have a right to report freely and fairly, without fear or intimidation. PUCL India demands that the Union government and the Union Home Ministry uphold the rule of law and direct its officers to fulfil their constitutional obligations to the fullest extent.

Kavita Srivastava
President

Dr. V. Suresh
General Secretary

People's Union for Civil Liberties