

## **National Day of Action against India's Immoral Trafficking Prevention Amendment**

Bangalore

July 1, 2008

The Karnataka State Coalition Against ITPA (Constituent Organizations: Aneka, Ashodaya Samithi, Jyothi Mahila Sangha, Karnataka Sexual Minorities Forum, Karnataka Sexworkers Union, LesBiT, Samara, Sangama, Sangram, Suraksha, Swathi Mahila Sangha, Veshya Anyay Mukthi Parishad, Vijaya Mahila Sangha) urges the government of India to:

- recognize sexwork as legitimate work
- recognize that criminalizing sexworkers or clients is counter productive: don't destroy the livelihood of sexworkers by criminalizing their clients
- drop the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act amendment process immediately

and invites you to a public rally and meeting:

**3 PM PUBLIC RALLY** from Chikka Lalbagh (Majestic) to Mysore Bank Circle

**5 PM PUBLIC MEETING** at Mysore Bank Circle

Recent cases of violence against sex workers include:

Sitamarhi, Bihar

Mob attacks sexworkers and burns down 250 houses in front of police.

Calicut, Kerala

Sexworkers evicted from their homes and their houses burnt by the cadres of the ruling party.

Channapattana, Karnataka

Goondas (supported by police) brutally attack sexworkers who had gathered to peacefully demonstrate for rights.

Delhi

Police forcibly pick up 70 adult sexworkers in Delhi, in gross violation of their basic rights and detain them in jails and protective homes of Andhra Pradesh, under the guise of rescuing/ helping/reforming sexworkers.

These are not isolated incidents but witness to the growing intolerance and prejudice against sexworkers. Sexworkers face constant police violence, goonda violence and extreme social rejection. Hounded by the goondas and constantly harassed by the police, sexworkers are in danger of not only getting marginalized but also becoming far more vulnerable to HIV-AIDS. As sexworkers are forced to run from street to street, adopting safer sex practices, accessing health care services or even using condoms becomes almost impossible in spite of their best efforts to save their lives. As a large part of their earnings go to police, goondas and the Government (as court fines), they are forced to work long hours, serve more clients and often put themselves at risk. Constantly they are coerced to compromise with everyone because of the fear of false

cases being foisted on them, as well as being insulted and humiliated in public and denied even basic dignity and respect.

The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) criminalizes most aspects of sexwork by equating 'voluntary adult sexwork' with trafficking. Trafficking - the business of forcing children and adults against their will into various forms of work including sexwork, is totally unacceptable to us. Sexworkers have been struggling against the unfairness in ITPA. Police make use of ITPA to harass, abuse and extort money from sexworkers most of who are disadvantaged in many ways.

To make matters worse the Central Government has proposed to amend the ITPA to punish the clients of sexworkers. The logic behind the move is supposedly to prevent trafficking of people into sexwork by reducing demand for sexwork. There is enough evidence from numerous countries that criminalizing clients of sexworkers doesn't help in combating trafficking but only pushes sexwork underground making sexworkers more vulnerable to violence and HIV infection. The Central Government is planning to go ahead with this in spite of protests from sexworkers and human rights activists for the last few years. This process will deny sexworkers basic right for survival and livelihood. In a democracy, the government must duly consult all concerned and affected people before amending any law. But the Union government has been ignoring the voices of the sexworkers in the ITPA amendment process. The role of the government should be to enable sex workers to access their social entitlements and rights.

Sexworkers have broken their long silence. They have been forming their own organizations, strengthening their communities, engaging with the society at large and supporting Governmental efforts in combating HIV-AIDS. They have been extending solidarity and support to the struggles of various marginalized people including women, dalits, adivasis, minorities, the poor, workers and others.

We request all citizens to join hands with us to demand that the government drop the ITPA amendment process immediately.

[Immoral Trafficking Prevention Amendment](#)