

Press Release

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
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Sub: Public Hearing on Corporal Punishment, all forms of Torture, Sexual Abuse and Neglect of Children in Schools and Hostels by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights on 23rd January 2008 at Chennai.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPR) has been working on addressing issue of corporal punishment in schools, hostels, homes and streets. A National Working Group has been constituted to examine the issue of violence against children in schools and hostels and the member of the NCPCR Ms. Deepa Dixit heads this. There is an outpour of complaints of abuse in schools of children by children themselves and also by the parents. The Commission is shocked to notice that the schools have become sites of terror and violence against children. When parents contest, they contest it not from child rights perspective, but from an adult perspective, the response of the teacher or school is also likewise. The fight turns into clash of egos and not one of dialogue and leading to redress. The child gets caught in this. A detailed guideline on prevention of corporal punishment in schools has been issued to the States to implement in the schools.

Recently the NCPCR responded to an appeal from a coalition of 20 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in TamilNadu to conduct a Public Hearing on Corporal Punishment, all forms of Torture, Sexual Abuse and Neglect of Children in Schools and Hostels. The public hearing will be held on the 23rd January 2008 at the World University Centre, Egmore, Chennai. The Coalition has submitted more than 50 cases of abuse to be led before the jury.

The Chairperson of the NCPCR will head the Jury Panel. Other members of the Jury Panel are: Ms. Dipa Dixit, Member NCPCR, Honorable Justice H. Suresh, Former Judge, Mumbai High court, Mr. Ashutosh Dharmadhikari, Advocate, Nagpur Bench of Mumbai High Court, Dr. Vasanthi Devi, Former Chairperson, State Commission for Women and Dr. S.S. Rajagopalan, Educationist. The NCPCR will hold the public hearing and will issue interim verdict.

The types of cases that have been submitted for process in the public hearing are in the nature of violence and discrimination in schools and hostels and specifically:

- ⇒ Torture (physical and mental)
- ⇒ Molestation and Sexual Abuse
- ⇒ Other forms of cruel and degrading treatment

- ⇒ Discriminatory practices including verbal abuse
- ⇒ Harassment and abuse caused by fees collection, donation, compulsory tuition, etc.
- ⇒ Punishment at tuitions or for obtaining low marks in exams, etc.
- ⇒ Suicide / Murder / mental imbalance
- ⇒ Discrimination and violence on dalit students in Schools and Hostels
- ⇒ Injuries and death caused to students by negligence of school authorities

The media has a greater role to play in introducing child rights discourse in school. The NCPCR appeals to all media groups to take the issue of corporal punishment up in their agenda towards social responsibility concerning children.