

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Faculty of Law, Jamia Millia Islamia proposes to organize a One Day National Seminar in collaboration with National Commission for Women on *Socio-Legal Aspects of Combating Acid Attack in India* likely in the month of January-February, 2018 for which papers are invited from interested stakeholders.**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

Acid attack is a vicious form of aggression against human beings. Sulphuric and nitric acid, thrown on a human body, causes skin tissue to melt, often exposing bones below the flesh, sometimes even dissolving the bones. This is gender based violence as committed primarily against the women by men, to destroy their physical appearance which causes extreme lifelong mental suffering. It took a while for the Indian law makers to acknowledge this brutal form of violence as a separate crime, as prior to 2013 there was no specific provision in law punishing acid attacks as an offence per se. The perpetrators were tried under section 326 of the Indian Penal Code which penalizes voluntarily causing grievous hurt. It was only on 3 February, 2013 that the Criminal Law (Amendment) 2013 promulgated by the President of India inserted Sections 326(A) and 326(B) in the Indian Penal Code, 1860 to deal with acid attacks. Unfortunately, the numbers of acid attack cases are still on rise indicating that merely criminalizing acid attack on paper is not enough, instead a deeper deliberation is needed on core issues surrounding the crime of acid attack such as the acid sales restrictions, prosecution and rehabilitation realities post 2013. Further to uproot this crime from its base there is a need to understand acid attack in the social context by examining the underlying causes, its consequences and further to overcome the multiple barriers to justice for its victims.

The laws however, for sure too late might also be too little in their current state. Activists say that the new law has only increased the punishment for perpetrators but does not have rehabilitation provisions for the victims who have to live with not just the physical disfigurement but also psychological scars and social exclusion. Securing government compensation as provisioned by Supreme Court guidelines remain painstakingly slow process. It is distressing to note that even after Supreme Court directing the Union of India and States to implement compensation payable to acid attack victims by creation of a separate fund, only 17 States have been notified of the Victim Compensation Schemes (VSC). Out of which 7 states and 4 Union territories have not initiated the VSC. Even in those States where

the Scheme has been implemented a meagre compensation ranging between Rs.25, 000/- to Rs. 2 lakhs is provided for medical care. And many States have not provided any compensation for rehabilitation at all. Such state of affairs forces one to question the spirit with which the State is observing its responsibility towards the acid attack victims.

From the social perspective acid attacks like other forms of violence against women, are not random or natural phenomena. Rather they are social phenomenon deeply embedded in a gender order that has historically privileged patriarchal control over women and justified the use of violence to “keep women in their places”. Acid violence reflects gender inequality and discrimination in society. Often acid attacks are perpetrated against women because they transgress gender norms that relegate women to subordinate positions. Indeed, a significant portion of attacks in India when a woman exercises decision-making power by rejecting a suitor’s marriage or love proposal. Acid attackers aim for a woman’s face in an attempt to destroy what many members of society consider to be one of her most important assets—her beauty. There is an urgent need to challenge such stereotypes to put an end to such a crime.

The lack of medical care, poor implementation of compensation scheme, the absence of alternative institutions for victims rejected by their families, the failure of the government to enforce laws against the attackers, have facilitated the need to effectively publicize and sensationalize acid victimization. This Seminar is intended to provide platform for lawyers, researchers and activists from across India to share their learning and perspectives on issues concerning socio-legal aspects of combating acid attack in India. The intention is to not only explore the process of accessing justice through litigations and procedural justice practices but also explore matters concerning how the societal constructions indirectly and often directly impacts the lives of acid victims. The outcomes of the Seminar shall be published in order to strengthen the existing knowledge framework on socio-legal aspects of combating acid attack in India. This seminar will be first one of its kind in the Faculty of Law Jamia Millia Islamia. We expect it to have wider implications upon law related research in India.

### **OBJECTS AND JUSTIFICATION**

Against this background, the proposed National Seminar on Combating Acid Attack has been conceptualized with the basic objective of taking stock of the progress made by India in the sphere of law, and creates a space for discussion on all matters pertaining to acid attacks. Hence, this seminar is basically intended to open discussion in the following relevant areas--

1. Social Exclusion of acid victims
2. Laws dealing with acid attack
3. Deterrence as a means of combating acid attack
4. Rehabilitation of Acid attack victims like access to employment.
5. Efficacy of Victim Compensation Schemes

#### **SUB-THEMES**

1. Causes of acid attack
2. Restrictions on acid sale
3. Sensitization of public
4. Comparative approach: Bangladesh Model
5. Efficacy of Punishment

**Interested Participants may email a line of interest of the theme on which they intend to present a paper by January 10, 2018. Abstracts can be sent by January 21, 2018. Full papers should be sent a day before the seminar to [nationalseminar.fo@jmi.ac.in](mailto:nationalseminar.fo@jmi.ac.in). Reviewed Full Papers would be published after the seminar.**

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