

## Press Release

The Human Rights Forum (HRF) demands that all police personnel who participated in the killing of four accused in the rape and murder case of a veterinarian be immediately arrested and prosecuted for the crime of homicide. The investigation into this case must be handed over to the CBI since the Telangana police cannot be trusted to be fair in the matter. The judiciary must also take cognizance of these killings and respond appropriately.

The gruesome rape and murder of Priyanka on November 27 has given rise to strong passions in society with several people even clamouring for the accused to be handed over for a public lynching. The police have taken advantage of this sentiment to commit a deliberate and cold-blooded murder of the four men in their custody. As usual, they have trotted out the ludicrous version of self-defence.

This is the third such incident of deliberate custodial killing of alleged perpetrators of crimes. We recall the December 2008 murdering of three accused in an acid attack in Warangal. On October 20, 2007 two men who were accused in the brutal murder of a Bank of Indore branch manager were murdered by the Visakhapatnam police near Yendada on the city outskirts. In both these cases, the police put out the farcical self-defence plea. All these deaths are methodical slayings by the police of accused men in their physical custody.

It would be a fallacy to even imagine that some kind of justice has been served by abandoning all due process and committing such killings. Is it permissible for police personnel to play judge, jury, executioner and mete out fatal justice in this manner? Is the 'satisfying of the collective conscience' in such a brazenly unlawful and murderous way healthy for a democracy? Does the killing of rape and murder accused act as any kind of deterrent against heinous crimes? Are such killings going to make women safer? We think not. Preventing crimes against women involves a long, sustained and complex battle that has to be fought in, among other arenas, society, our homes, educational and work places. Endowing police with the sanction to commit murders of accused is no answer; they only distract and shield the State from accountability. And celebrating such killings amounts to inhumanity. Such acts are uncivilized, brutal and those police-men responsible for today's crime must be brought to book.

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**6-12-2019, Hyderabad**

