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CPM targeted women in Nandigram: Amnesty

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WOMEN LEADING the agitation against land acquisition in Nandigram were singled out and targeted by CPM supporters, a report by the India chapter of the Amnesty International said on Tuesday.

Several women left behind after the men fled were raped, assaulted, threatened and harassed. Many were forced to attend CPM meetings, the report said. While cases of sexual violence against women were registered — in some the victims also named the perpetrators — the suspects are yet to be arrested.

The report also alleged that the violence in November took place against the backdrop of the Bengal government's inaction along with tacit acceptance of the tactics adopted by CPM cadres.

The report titled 'Urgent Need to Address Large Scale Human Rights Abuse During Nandigram "Recapture"' was released on Tuesday. It has been compiled by a four-member Amnesty delegation, which, led by Justice (retired) S.N. Bhargava, visited the villages in Nandigram in the last week of November.

"The women were targeted because they were active in the agitation. All the women who we interviewed categorically told us that they were targeted. In fact, they are still being threatened with violence in the future if they reveal what happened," delegation member, advocate Vrinda Grover said.



A file picture of Nandigram violence-hit victims being treated at a hospital.

The report said: "Also, the delegation was informed by local residents that many women had refused to file police reports as they were still afraid of the consequences and were also unwilling to risk social censure associated with rape."

Grover said an independent judicial enquiry was urgently needed to look into the cases of human rights abuse. "The Central Bureau of Investigation is looking into the violence of March while the state Criminal Investigative Department is looking into the incidents of November. Local residents were decidedly less enthusiastic about the CID probe."

Grover said the judicial enquiry should look into the role of different officials, including senior police officers, in the violence. "They need to come under the scanner. There should be a broad accountability and the findings of the time-bound enquiry should be made public."

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