



Sexualised Attacks on the Prime Minister Constitutes Political Violence

For as long as she has held public office, Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya has been subject to misogynistic attacks and vitriol. The latest of these have been in response to the misprinting, in a Grade 6 English language module, the name of a website considered age inappropriate. This has escalated the issue from being about children's wellbeing and gaps in due diligence in printing of educational materials to one of undue homophobic hysteria to justify vicious, sexualised attacks against the Prime Minister. As the Minister of Education and the most prominent proponent of education reforms, Prime Minister Amarasuriya has received much of the blame for this error. The absence of effective safeguards has allowed this culture of hate speech and misogyny, perpetrated by some political actors, and misogynistic citizens alike, and amplified by certain media houses to persist unchecked.

We, the undersigned 188 individuals and 27 organizations, affirm the importance of transparency, internal investigation, and accountability in relation to educational materials. Children's wellbeing and the integrity of public education are paramount. A politically engaged and informed public is essential to democracy. However, accountability cannot be weaponised to legitimise misogynistic abuse. Sexualised harassment is not political critique. Character assassination is not democratic engagement. We reject the double standards imposed on women politicians and condemn the opportunistic participation of public figures and private individuals in this smear campaign.

We unequivocally condemn the vicious, sexualised, and misogynistic attacks directed at Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya on social media and beyond, including hate speech and harassment by citizens who mobilise misogyny to police women's presence in public life. These acts constitute gender-based political violence and represent a direct assault on democratic participation, equality, and the rule of law. They are not isolated incidents or mere "online abuse," but deliberate political acts intended to intimidate women, delegitimise their leadership, and force them out of public life. Such violence targets not only individual women, but the very principle of equal and inclusive representation.

We stand in full solidarity with the Prime Minister and with all women political representatives who have been subjected to similar attacks. They hold public office by democratic mandate and exercise their leadership with legitimacy, competence, and courage. They are not alone, and they will not be silenced. These attacks violate Sri Lanka's binding obligations under CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the ICCPR, the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, which require the State to eliminate discrimination and violence against women in political and public life and to guarantee participation in public affairs free from intimidation or coercion. They also contravene UN standards recognising violence against women in politics as a serious threat to democracy.

We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to prevent, investigate, and prosecute all acts of gender-based political violence, whether online or offline. All political parties, not only those in government, must publicly defend women



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Women and Media Collective

representatives and ensure their safety and equal participation. Digital platforms must act swiftly to remove harmful content and prevent the spread of misogynistic abuse. Democracy cannot be defended while women are punished for leading. Protecting women's political participation is not optional, it is a democratic imperative. We will continue to speak out, organise collectively, and demand accountability until women can exercise political power free from violence and fear.

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2. Aaniver Products Pvt. Ltd
3. Community Development Services (CDS)
4. Dabindu Collective
5. Delete Nothing
6. Eastern Social Development Foundation
7. EQUAL GROUND
8. Equite Sri Lanka
9. Human Development Organization
10. Human Elevation Organization (HEO)
11. Law and Society Trust
12. Mannar Women Development Federation
13. Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights
14. Muslim Women's Development Trust

15. Samathai Feminists Collective, Batticaloa
16. Savisthri National Women's Movement
17. Sisterhood Initiative
18. South Asian Women in Media (SAWM), Sri Lanka
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20. Uva Wellassa Women Organization
21. Vallamai Movement for Social Change
22. Women's Action Network
23. Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC)
24. Women's Resource Center
25. Women's Centre Sri Lanka
26. Women's Solidarity Front
27. Women's Solidarity Network (WSN)