

Interview 12: INDIA: Raj Kumari Sanajaobi

Mrs. Raj Kumari Sanajaobi is a homemaker and represents the ordinary women in Manipur state, India. She lives in Singjamei Chingamakha Yanglem Leikai, Manipur.

What do you think of the policing system of your country?

The police administration may be beautiful on paper and in the law; I don't know much about that. But what I know is that in the early days, the police protected the people, and they were trusted by the general public. But now they are not trustworthy. Nowadays, the police are a great threat to the general public because of their criminal attitude. After the implementation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in 1958, the number of security forces in the state have increased. These state forces act in the same manner as army personnel after the AFSPA is implemented. They even kill people for money. A huge amount of bribe money has to be paid in order to get a job in the police department. I believe this is the root cause of corruption. The people are also afraid of the police because of this immoral behavior.

What do you think of the police's use of torture?

It is not appropriate to torture any person who is in custody. If a person is arrested, they must be informed why they have been arrested; they should not be tortured. Torture cannot help in anything other than distancing ordinary people like me from the police.

What is your idea of good relationship between the police and the citizens of Nepal?

At present the relationship between the police and the Nepali citizens is not good at all. There is no trust between us and them. The police should protect the people, not torture or kill them. Only then can citizens begin to trust the police, and then a good relationship can begin.

If you have a problem, would you feel safe to go to police and complain?

No, I would never complain to the police because I am afraid of them. Instead, I would consult other people. If I went to the police, they would ask for money. If I fail to pay, they would file false cases against me. They can rape me or even kill me. This has happened countless times in Manipur. No one was punished so far. So you tell me now, knowing this, would you go to a police station?

Is there a law against domestic violence in your country? If yes, is it well implemented? If not, what are the problems?

We do have a law against domestic violence in our country. In my opinion, in Manipur, there aren't many cases of domestic violence filed with the police. When there are issues of domestic violence, the culprits are punished by the community itself.

If a woman finds unsafe to go to a police station for a serious crime like the murder of her son because of her fear for the police, how can you expect her to approach the police with her domestic complaints? So why should she risk being raped by a few police officers just to lodge a complaint against her husband's beatings? No law in this country will work if our police continue like this. If this country is going to change, the police must change first.

Do you have anything else to say regarding the issues women face as regards to law enforcement in the state in which you live?

The people implementing the laws are not aware of the people's feelings. Cases of rape and molestation by police officers are often witnessed by the general public; mother's see their sons killed; and their daughters being raped by police officers and officials from other state agencies. No one can bear this. So the women of Manipur have come out to protest against this, and in particular against the crimes committed by the police. Law enforcers have no mercy and regard for human rights. This situation must end.