August 21, 2012

Dear Dr. Walia,

**Subject: Exploitation of children by begging mafia**

I am writing to you on behalf of COMMON CAUSE, a civil society organization dedicated to articulating the common problems of the people and securing redress for them. In its espousal of public causes over three decades, Common Cause has used the instruments of policy advocacy and public interest litigation to good effect. Through this letter, I wish to draw your attention to the rampant exploitation of infants by professional beggars and begging mafia in the national capital territory of Delhi.

In the recent past, The Bangalore Mirror and DNA Mumbai have brought out investigative reports on trafficking in children by begging mafia. These reports have also highlighted the practice of hiring and doping of infants with a view to attracting larger alms.

We were shocked to find that scenes reminiscent of the appalling situation depicted in these reports from Bangalore and Mumbai are being witnessed at almost every important traffic signal in the National Capital. Most of us have become inured to the sight of young girls, with an outstretched palm and a limp, naked infant on the hip at all times of the year, weaving their way through rows of cars at the red lights.

In order to draw your attention to the plight of such vulnerable children, we have gathered photographic evidence from a couple of road intersections in New Delhi of apparently sedated children being used for beggary. Given the magnitude of the problem and our resource constraints, we have not been able to collect evidence from across the state. However, the enclosed photographs should suffice to spur your ministry into action.

We would urge you to undertake a comprehensive inquiry into the ecosystem which enables the begging mafia to operate in the National Capital and engage in trafficking in small children and infants without let or hindrance. The findings of the investigation should help in devising appropriate remedial and punitive measures to wipe out this shameful blot on our collective conscience.

As the exploitation of children by begging mafia has an interstate dimension, we have also written to the Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Chairperson, Central Social Welfare Board, and Minister of State (IC) for Women and Child Development, Government of India. Copies of these letters are enclosed for your reference.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Kamal Kant Jaswal

Director

Dr. (Smt.) Kiran Walia,

Minister for Social Welfare, Women & Child Development,

Department of Social Welfare,

Govt. of NCT of Delhi

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