

Hubballi Murder:

The Neha Hiremath Case and its Aftermath

Introduction

The brutal murder of Neha Hiremath, a 23-year-old student from Hubballi, Karnataka, has sent shockwaves across the state and sparked a heated debate over the alleged 'love jihad' angle. The incident, which occurred on April 20th, 2024, has not only left a grieving family seeking justice but has also ignited a political firestorm, with accusations and counter-accusations flying between the ruling [Congress](#) and the opposition [BJP](#).

The Tragic Incident

On a fateful Thursday afternoon, CCTV footage captured the harrowing moments when Fayaz Khondunaik, a former student at KLE Technological University, approached Neha and repeatedly stabbed her on the college campus. Neha, a first-year Master of Computer Applications (MCA) student, was rushed to the hospital but succumbed to her injuries, leaving her family and the entire community in shock and grief.

The Alleged Motive

While the accused, Fayaz, claimed that the murder was a result of a failed romantic relationship, Neha's father, Niranjan Hiremath, a [Congress](#) corporator, vehemently denied any such relationship and asserted that his daughter was killed for rejecting Fayaz's marriage proposal. He further alleged that there were unidentified perpetrators involved and urged the police to investigate the 'love jihad' angle, accusing Fayaz of being influenced by others.

The Political Storm

The tragedy quickly escalated into a political showdown, with the [BJP](#) accusing the Congress government of shielding the perpetrator and downplaying the 'love jihad' angle for vote bank politics. Union Minister

Pralhad Joshi and Karnataka BJP president BY Vijayendra echoed similar sentiments, claiming that the state government was reluctant to investigate the 'love jihad' aspect.

However, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah refuted these allegations, stating that the murder was not a case of 'love jihad' and condemning the BJP for using the tragedy for political gain. He assured that the culprit would be punished and that the investigation was being conducted seriously.

The Demand for Justice

Neha's father, Niranjan Hiremath, expressed frustration over the slow pace of the investigation and the lack of arrests of the eight individuals he had named. The father of the victim expressed his frustration to ANI, stating that despite openly naming eight individuals, none have been apprehended.

He stated, "I am losing faith now. They are trying to divert my case. Give it to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) if you cannot do it... The commissioner in this case is a lady, even then she is not taking a girl's murder seriously... She is working under some pressure... I demand the commissioner should be transferred for negligence in the case... I demand that the case be given to the [CBI](#)." During his visit to the victim's home on Sunday, BJP's national president, JP Nadda, reiterated the call for a [CBI](#) investigation, while offering condolences. He accused the state government of attempting to influence the investigation to weaken the case.

Nadda said, "If the state government wants, they can refer the case to CBI and [BJP](#) will cooperate so that this innocent girl gets justice, humanity gets justice and such incidents do not recur in the future... Even her father has demanded for a CBI probe because he doesn't have faith in the state police and wants the investigation into the murder of his daughter to be transferred to the CBI." Nagalakshmi Choudhary, chairperson of the Karnataka women's commission, visited Neha's residence, promising justice for her family. Choudhary stated that evidence has been gathered, and assured that justice would swiftly follow once DNA investigation reports are released. Choudhary told PTI, "I made them be strong and also

told them not to allow anyone to use this incident for their selfish input or politicizing it, because then it will be like insulting Neha. If we are really worried about her, we all have to strongly support and allow the police to do a free investigation and as early as possible, we have to get justice for Neha.”

The Accused's Family's Reaction

In a surprising turn of events, the accused's family expressed remorse and apologized to Neha's family. Fayaz's father, Baba Saheb Subani, a school teacher, stated that his son should face severe consequences for his actions and acknowledged the gravity of the crime. However, the accused's mother claimed that Neha had initiated the relationship, contradicting the victim's family's assertions. “He (Fayaz) should be punished in a way that no one dares to do such a thing in future. With folded hands, I apologize to Neha’s family members. She was like my daughter,” father said, adding that Neha’s family had called him to inform that Fayaz had been troubling.

“Fayaz told me he wanted to marry her but I refused it with folded hands,” he added. “Neha was a good girl,” mother said and acknowledged the severity of her son’s crime, saying, “He should be punished severely.”

The Call for Bandh

The ABVP and BJP units in Karnataka organized significant protests in Hubballi and Bengaluru on Friday to denounce the murder. As the state gears up for the [Lok Sabha Elections 2024](#), BY Vijayendra called on BJP workers to set aside election work and take to the streets on Monday to demand justice for Neha.

Interestingly, Muslim organizations, including the Anjuman-e-Islam led by President Esmail Tamatgar based in Dharwad, also planned a protest and a 'bandh' on Monday to express their condolences and show solidarity with the victim's family.

Conclusion

The Hubballi murder case has exposed deep fault lines within the socio-political fabric of Karnataka. While the family of the victim seeks justice and closure, the incident has been politicized by various stakeholders, each with their own agenda. As the investigation unfolds, it remains to be seen whether the truth will prevail and justice will be served, or if the tragedy will be further exploited for political gains. The need for a fair and impartial investigation, free from external influences, is paramount to ensure that the memory of Neha Hiremath is honored and that such heinous acts are prevented from occurring in the future.