**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Voices against 377 files Review Petition in Supreme Court**

Voices against 377, a broad and diverse coalition of organisations working across human rights, women’s rights, child rights, as well as gender and sexuality rights, has been working – in member’s individual capacities as well as collectively – on issues of gender and sexual rights since 2005. The coalition and its members have organised campaigns, advocacy and public events, workshops, deepened public dialogue on gender and sexuality, build connections with social movements as well as pursued legal interventions.

*Voices* intervened in the *Naz Foundation vs Union of India* case in 2006. Through its intervention, it marked that support for LGBT rights and the movement against Sec 377 was not limited to people with a particular sexual or gender identity, but was widespread among all those who believe in fundamental rights. Its arguments were fundamentally centered on the belief that Sec 377 violated fundamental rights against Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21: equality, dignity, freedom of expression and privacy.

Today, Voices against 377 has filed a review petition against the Supreme Court judgment on 11.12.2013 that overturned the historic Delhi High Court order that stated that LGBT citizens have Section 377 violated fundamental rights to equality, dignity, non-discrimination and privacy.

The review petition highlights most importantly that the Hon’ble Supreme Court has erred in not considering substantial evidence provided by Voices against Sec 377 as well as other petitioners that highlight the active use of Sec 377 in torture, harassment, discrimination and prejudice against LGBT citizens. Such evidence is crucial in appreciating the life of this section and the important part it has played in creating an environment of discrimination against the LGBT community. Further, as a coalition concerned with the democratic rights of all citizens, we are particularly concerned by the Hon’ble Court’s characterization that the rights of a supposed “minuscule fraction” of the population are not worth protecting. We would like to remind the Hon’ble Court that this judgment impacts the rights of all Indian citizens for if some of us are unequal, then all of us are unequal.

Voices against 377 has also appealed for a stay of the Supreme Court judgment, giving evidence of a number of incidents even in the short time since its passage that show that it the judgment creates an environment that legitimizes and sanctions discrimination and prejudice against LGBT citizens. We have filed multiple affidavits in the Court showing that even in the short time since the judgment, harassment, prejudice and discrimination have occurred directly related to the decision.

These affidavits include a range of testimonies. In one, a mental health practitioner argues that, “*The effect of the judgment is the return of a feeling of oppressive and continuous persecution for my LGBT clients.”* Another recounts a case of police harassment: “*I urged the police to stop beating [my friends] and asked them why they were doing so. The officers mockingly said that I should be knowing the reason … they said they are aware of the judgment.”* Health professionals have testified that “*LGBT individuals are opting out of health services for fear that they may be identified.”* A mother said that she *“is more fearful than ever before that the law could be used to unfairly target”* her child. Another recounted that the judgment has made his father once again pressure and threaten him to “*undergo conversion or reparative therapies.”*

We remain committed to democratic processes of challenging this unjust law, and hope that this review petition will be the first step in bringing justice and restoring our faith in the values of our Constitution.

*Voices against Sec 377 members include Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues (TARSHI), Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), Jagori, Nirantar, Haq: Centre for Child Rights, Nigah, Anjuman, Breakthrough, Saheli, PRISM, Sama, and Partners for Law in Development (PLD).*

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