

OPEN LETTER TO THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER

15 July 2018

To,
Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister,
South Block, Raisina Hill, New Delhi 110011

STOP DEATHS ON OUR ROADS – STRENGTHEN THE LAW – IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY

Respected Sir,

We, the undersigned, would like to draw your attention to the terrible state of road safety in our country. **Annually over 1.5 lakh people lose their lives and another 5 lakhs are seriously injured in road crashes.** Road crashes account for more than 44% of all un-natural accidental deaths in India and 51% of all those killed between the ages of 18 and 30. In addition to the loss of priceless human life and the emotional trauma suffered by those left behind, the economic hardship borne by the families who often lose the sole bread winner is severe. Those that are injured either suffer lifelong pain or permanent disability. The cost of recovery from an injury - emotional, physical and financial - is very high and takes a toll on the victims, their families and the community. The economic loss from road crashes is estimated at 3% of the GDP or Rs 4 lakh crores annually.

After the death of Shri Gopinath Munde in a road crash, the issue of road safety came under the spotlight and Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport and Highways made a personal commitment to improve road safety. MoRTH is the nodal Ministry for road safety in the country and responsible for creating the statutory framework to ensure proper laws and standards – for enforcement, vehicles, road infrastructure and institutional mechanisms. The Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, the encompassing enactment for road safety and transport, is woefully outdated and has failed to stem the carnage on the roads. **The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill 2017** proposes sweeping reforms to the Act aimed at strengthening statutes related to road safety – such as increase in penalties for breaking traffic rules, more severe punishment for serious traffic crimes such as drink and drive, speeding and driving of vehicles by juveniles. The Bill also tightens regulations for wearing of helmets (more than 52,000 or 35% of those killed in road crashes are two-wheeler users) and seat-belts both of which are effective ways of significantly reducing the risk of death and injury. **All amendments proposed to improve road safety have been unequivocally endorsed by all political parties across the country.**

Despite this, the Bill continues to languish in the Parliament since 2016. **Every day** that passes without the Act being amended leads to the death of 400 Indians and injuries to another 1300, many of whom will be disabled for life.

International experience shows that death and injury from road crashes can be prevented with the right laws and their proper enforcement. India is signatory to the **Brasilia Declaration**, thus making a commitment that it shall reduce death and injury from road crashes by half by 2020. This is also one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3.1). Unless urgent steps are taken we shall fail to meet this target.

*We appeal to you to **make road safety a national priority and ensure that the law is amended** so that we may have safer roads and save lakhs of lives.*

Submitted by the Road Safety Network on behalf of the undersigned.

Reply to:
Road Safety Network
c/o Consumer VOICE
<address>
roadsafetynetwork@gmail.com

