**Subject:** Urgent Advocacy for Deafblind Rights and Respectful Treatment

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to bring to your attention a distressing incident that occurred during my recent journey from Kudachi’ district in Karntaka to Pune. My colleague, Mr. Sadik Pathan, and I had attended a family event in Miraj and took the opportunity to visit the Junnediya Education English Medium School for Girls in Kudachi. Mr. Iqbal Sattar, the executive director, graciously welcomed us, allowing me to share my experiences as a deafblind individual advocating for the deafblind community in India.

Our return journey, however, took an unfortunate turn. On the morning of December 27, 2023, at 3 am, we reached Pune by train and decided to take a state bus. Our plan was for me to disembark at Bopodi, near my parents' place, while Mr. Sadik continued to Nashik on the same bus. Unfortunately, the conductor refused to let me get off at Bopodi, citing government rules. Despite Mr. Sadik's pleas, the conductor's response was both disrespectful and uncooperative.

In the face of this situation, I decided to take matters into my own hands. I disembarked from the bus, finding myself alone on the road, unable to see or hear my surroundings. The lack of assistance and communication compounded the difficulties I faced. I attempted to seek help, waiting on the roadside for someone to assist me. After an hour, I managed to find a bus stop where two individuals initially tried to help but eventually left me alone.

The challenges persisted until I encountered an understanding elderly man who, along with a young boy, assisted me in using a phone to navigate and find the right bus to Bopodi. Despite reaching my destination safely, crossing the railway posed additional challenges, highlighting the vulnerability of deafblind individuals in unforeseen circumstances.

What is particularly troubling is the threat issued by the conductor to forcibly eject me from the bus. This act is reminiscent of the unjust treatment faced by Mahatma Gandhi in Africa, and it serves as a stark reminder that individuals with disabilities continue to face discrimination.

I urge you to consider this incident as a call to action. It is imperative that we advocate for the rights of deafblind individuals and demand respect from all quarters, including public transportation services. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for awareness and education on how to assist and communicate with individuals who have sensory impairments.

I kindly request your support in bringing this matter to the attention of relevant authorities and advocating for a more inclusive and understanding society. Together, we can work towards a future where every individual, regardless of their abilities, is treated with dignity and respect.

Yours sincerely,

Founder Director and Consultant

Society for the empowerment of the Deaf-Blind(SEDB)

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