



ASSOCIATION OF THE VICTIMS OF UPHAAR TRAGEDY (REGD)

“Let’s work together for a SAFE India”

PRESS RELEASE

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June 13, 2023 marks the twenty-sixth anniversary of the man-made fire at Uphaar cinema in New Delhi, which took the lives of 59 innocent people. These precious lives were lost due to the wilful and criminal lack of adherence to fire safety rules, and due to a distressing disregard for safety in public spaces. AVUT (Association for Victims of Uphaar Tragedy) deeply mourns the loss of these 59 innocent lives and expresses deep concern and distress over the failure of the Government and relevant authorities in ensuring that safety measures are in place in public spaces.

In the twenty-six years, ie a quarter of a century, since the Uphaar fire tragedy, AVUT has worked tirelessly to seek justice for the killing of the 59 victims, and to hold those responsible for this mass murder accountable. In its battle to seek justice and punishment for those responsible for the murder of 59 innocent lives, AVUT approached the courts and through several prolonged legal battles that dragged on for decades, was able to secure the conviction of the accused. Gopal and Sushil Ansal were convicted and held responsible for heinous crimes including the mass murder of 59 innocent people, as well as tampering with evidence.

And yet, the convicts were able to manipulate the legal system to walk out of jail by securing a reduced sentence or by paying money to secure their freedom from jail. AVUT has been grievously betrayed time and again by the judicial system, which convicted the Ansal brothers but allowed them to walk free either on grounds of old age, or by paying a sum of 30 crore INR each towards the building of a trauma center in NCR, and more recently citing ‘double jeopardy’ in the Tampering of Evidence matter

<https://rememberuphaar.com/archives/1715> The message conveyed by the judicial system is loud and clear, namely, you can kill as many people as you like, and walk free even if and when convicted if you have enough money to manipulate the system. This betrayal affects not only AVUT members but also society at large, as it sets a dangerous and lethal precedent for the future. The Uphaar case which should and could have served as a powerful reminder to those in charge of public spaces, that they will be held accountable and responsible for any lapses on their part, and that no one will be spared for causing harm to the public. Instead, the message conveyed is quite the opposite. The whole purpose of sentencing is to act as a deterrent. The orders passed in the Uphaar related cases will only embolden the rich and powerful accused to tamper with court records, be in cahoots with authorities and law officers and get acquittal. To read details of the cases fought by AVUT, please follow the following links: www.rememberuphaar.com

For many years, the public at large remained unaware of the plight of the 59 victims and their families. The recent web series Trial by Fire based on the book with the same title by Neelam and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy, has laid bare the horror of the incident and the sheer callousness of the convicts and their accomplices. But what remains to be shared with the public is the incomprehensible insensitivity and callousness from a man given the honour of being a Judge. He upheld the conviction of the men who killed 59 people and also tampered with evidence, but his sympathy for them is unimaginable and intolerable for us. Further, his equating our suffering with what he calls the suffering of the Ansals is an insult we can neither forget nor forgive.

NEELAM KRISHNAMOORTHY

President