

# Letter of condolence from European Coordinators for Sharmistha Choudhury

European Coordinators

World Women's Conference of grassroots women

Suse Bader, Halinka Augustin

**Condolences for our comrade and friend Sharmistha Choudhury, General Secretary of the All India Revolutionary Women's Organisation (AIRWO) and leading comrade of the CPI (ML) Red Star**

Sharmistha died on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 in a hospital in Kolkata (Calcutta) as a result of corona disease. She was only 45 years old.

**Dear friends of AIRWO, comrades of the CPI (ML) Red Star,**

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of comrade Sharmistha.

On behalf of the militant world women's movement, we extend our deepest condolences to her partner, her mother and to you all! Sharmistha's death leaves a large gap in the revolutionary and international militant women's movement.

We commemorate Sharmistha and her life's work which has now ended so abruptly and far too soon.

Sharmistha was co-founder and leader of the All India Revolutionary Women's Organisation (AIRWO), a mass movement with organisations in all states of India.

The liberation of women from exploitation and all forms of oppression was an important concern for her. As a revolutionary, she campaigned for liberation in a socialist

society. Sharmistha also worked theoretically in this regard. The CPI (ML) Red Star writes in their obituary:

*“On the question of women’s liberation, Sharmistha has written many important essays which have exposed the theoretical weakness of the communist movement from the beginning in developing a consistent political line and practice against Brahminical, Hindutua ideology and patriarchy ... and from ... all reactionary forces perpetuating the slavery of women and other genders. She has campaigned for the revolutionary emancipation of women....”.*

Sharmistha was an internationalist. In this capacity, she actively contributed to the organisations and development of the World Women’s Conference of grassroots women. At the 1st and 2nd World Women’s Conferences in Caracas/Venezuela and Kathmandu/Nepal, she made valuable contributions with theoretical contributions, translation, mobilisation and organisation work. She was a safe pair of hands for the international militant women’s movement.

In December 2018, together with AIRWO and the coordinators of the World Women’s Conference, she organised the first strategy seminar of the world women’s movement in Bangalore/India. The women from Banghar (West Bengal) gave moving accounts of their 22-month struggle against energy giants and the Modi government’s privatisation plans.

Sharmistha, together with her partner Alik Chakraborty and other comrades, built the “Committee for the Defence of Land, Livelihood, Ecology and Environment”. The villagers blockaded the area and defended it against hooligans, government troops, police and representatives of the power giants. Over 20,000 people became active in these struggles and women played a prominent role.

Sharmistha trained and educated the women, who were often illiterate, on the tasks in the struggle. These women reported

on this confidently, in colourful saris.

We heard: "I felt what freedom is for the first time." and "Now we were sitting next to the men, we were no longer relegated to the house. When the men were arrested, we women stepped into their place in the struggle."

On several occasions, the World Women's Movement organised protest and solidarity actions for our comrade Sharmistha. Neither prison nor kidnapping stopped Sharmistha and her comrades from continuing the struggle.

Sharmistha was proposed to strengthen the Asian coordination of the World Conference on Women. Now this is no longer possible. The Indian authorities refused to allow her to leave the country in October 2019 and she was unable to attend the conference.

We bid you farewell Sharmistha, and we pledge to continue building our international militant women's movement! At the 3rd World Women's Conference in Tunisia in 2022, you will be there too!