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## Over 31,000 Women and Girls Reported Missing in Madhya Pradesh in Three Years, Says Government Data

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More than 31,000 women and girls have gone missing in Madhya Pradesh over the past three years, according to data presented by the state government during the ongoing legislative session. The figures have sparked widespread concern over the safety of women and the efficiency of law enforcement in the state.

Responding to a question from former home minister Bala Bachchan, the state government reported that between mid-2021 and mid-2024, a total of 28,857 women and 2,944 girls were reported missing. This translates to an average of nearly 31 disappearances per day.

Despite the alarming numbers, only 724 missing persons cases were formally registered during the same period. The low rate of First Information Reports (FIRs) has raised questions about the seriousness with which authorities are treating these incidents.

In several districts, the data presents a grim picture. Ujjain reported 676 missing women, yet no FIRs were registered. Indore, one of the state's largest cities, saw 2,384 women go missing, but only 15 cases were officially recorded.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognizance of media reports regarding the issue and has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Madhya Pradesh. The NHRC has asked for a detailed report within two weeks, including the status of missing persons, the number of recovered individuals, and steps taken by the police and district administrations.

The commission also highlighted the failure of initiatives like Operation Muskan, a nationwide campaign aimed at tracing and rehabilitating missing children. Despite multiple phases of the operation being carried out in the state, results have been negligible.

Human rights advocates and social workers have expressed alarm at the apparent indifference of authorities. Many fear that some of the missing women and girls may have fallen victim to human trafficking, forced labor, or other forms of exploitation.