

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE LAWYERS!

Dear friends,

24th January each year is commemorated by the lawyer community internationally as day of the Endangered Lawyer. This was initiated in 2009 and in recent years numerous International lawyer and bar organizations have supported this call. (More details are available at <http://dayoftheendangeredlawyer.eu/>) This year, the seventh year of the Day of the Endangered Lawyer- the focus will be on China.

During the past year, in India, we have observed repeated harassment, persecution and even incarceration of Human Rights lawyers including those lawyers defending political prisoners. Below are a few of prominent examples:

- **Indira Jaising**, a Human Rights Lawyer, former Additional Solicitor General and vociferous critic of the current administration had been targeted by the cancellation of the FCRA license of her organization Lawyers Collective (LC).
- On, 27 August, 2016, the J&K Government arrested prominent peoples' lawyer, social activist and human rights defender, **Babar-ul-Islam Nehru** from Saah Mohallah of Doda district in Chenab valley and booked him under the draconian PSA for alleged 'anti-India activities'. Another prominent Human Rights activist of Kashmir- **Parvez Khurram** was also booked under PSA to prevent him from travelling abroad to address a convention on human rights violations in Kashmir.
- On 14 April, 2016 the Chhattisgarh government dismissed Sukma's Chief Judicial Magistrate **Prabhakar Gwal**. Gwal, who belongs to the Dalit community, had questioned the manner in which the police have been indiscriminately arresting tribals in the conflict zones of Chhattisgarh. The Sukma SP had complained to the District Judiciary against Gwal stating that among other things that the judge had been granting bail to naxal accused and that such decisions have "adversely affected the morale of the security forces" and "weakens the judicial process". It is based on complaints by the Sukma SP that that the Magistrate had been granting bail to naxal accused and hence "adversely affected the morale of the security forces" that Chhattisgarh government dismissed Gwal.
- On December 25, 2016 a fact finding team comprising of lawyers, activists and academicians was on their way from Telangana to Chhattisgarh to look into the matters of encounter killings in the Bastar region. The members of the fact finding team, included Advocates **Chikkudu Prabhakar** and **Balla Ravindranath** and other leading democratic rights activists of Telangana. All the seven members of the fact finding team were illegally arrested by Telangana Police and were later handed over to their Chhattisgarh counterparts. They have been charged under the oppressive and draconian Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005 and denied bail.
- **The Jagdalpur Legal Aid Group (JagLAG)** working in Chhattisgarh has been a repeated target for the Chhattisgarh Police administration. In February 2016, the police had pressurized the landlord of the JagLAG office to evict the lawyers from Jagdalpur. In a recent incident, the day after the arrest of the Telangana activists, **Advocate Shalini Gera, Advocate Priyanka Shukla, Advocate Nikita Aggrawal** and others from JagLAG team, were confronted and threatened by a police team while they were implementing an order passed by the High Court in connection with a case of false encounter of a young Adivasi boy.
- On 8th January 2017, **Advocate Murugan**, Secretary of Centre for Protection of Civil Liberties (CPCL), was arrested by the Tamilnadu Q branch police. Advocate Murugan was arrested for allegedly "instigating" two women Maoist accused who are his clients. The police arrested him under sections of the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and seized all documents of his cases i.e. files, preparations for final arguments, some books and medicines.

The **Indian Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)** condemns these continuous attacks on members of the legal community. Abovementioned are only a few instances of the harassment, threats and arrests that many Human Rights lawyers face. These instances are not only an assault on an advocate's right to fearlessly practice their profession but also a violation of the fundamental right of all arrestees to get legal representation and their right to fair trial which is meaningless without getting a robust defense. We call upon the Indian government to:

1. Immediately desist from branding, threatening, harassing and arresting any Advocates defending their clients, particularly political prisoners.
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Advocates Chikkudu Prabhakar and Balla Ravindranath and other leading democratic rights activists of Telangana and Advocate Murugan of Tamil Nadu.
3. End the continuous harassment of JagLAG lawyers and provide complete protection for such advocates from police pressure, threats and harassment.
4. Demand from the Chinese government the immediate release of the six rights lawyers namely Li Heping, Wang Quanzhang, Xie Yang, Xie Yangyi, Li Chunfu and Liu Sixin, who continue to remain in detention pending for trial

PROTEST DEMONSTRATION:

Venue:
Azad maidan, Opposite CST,
Mumbai

24TH January 2016

Time: 5pm

HALL MEETING:

Venue:
Mumbai Marathi Patrakar Sangh Hall,
Azad Maidan, Opposite CST, Mumbai

Time: 5.30pm to 7.30pm

"Lawyers Endangered by the State of Chhattisgarh
-Adv Shalini Gera (JagLAG)

"On the Arrest of the Telangana Democratic Rights activist team"
-Adv. Raghunath (CLC, Telangana)

(A fact finding report by IAPL on the persecution and harassment on Lawyers in Chhattisgarh will also be released)



Indian Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL), Mumbai

c/o Suresh Rajeshwar Adv., 401, Podar Chambers, S. A. Brelvi Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400 001
Maharukh Adenwalla Adv.: 9820141989, Arun Ferreira Adv.: 9769287956