

## India: Restore the licence of Sabrang Trust, and Repeal FCRA

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 12 July 2016) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the cancellation of the license of [Sabrang Trust](#) under the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act (FCRA) of 2010 and urges the Ministry of Home Affairs of India to withdraw the cancellation order immediately.

On 6 June 2016, the Ministry of Home Affairs cancelled the FCRA license of Sabrang Trust, preventing it from receiving future foreign funds for its human rights work. Sabrang Trust is actively involved in seeking justice for the victims of communal violence in India, particularly for the victims of the 2002 Gujarat riots. Sabrang Trust's FCRA licence was suspended for a period of 180 days starting from 9 September 2015.

The Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act was enacted in 1976. Several amendments have been made since, creating barriers for civil society organisations to access foreign funding for human rights activities. [The present version of the Act](#) was amended in 2010 and entered into force in May 2011. The Act grants wide discretionary powers to state authorities, enabling them to allow, refuse or cancel a permit to receive foreign funds. In effect, these powers are used to silence civil society organisations who are critical of government policies on human rights. Sabrang Trust has been the latest victim to this political witch-hunt. In the last six years, over [14,000 civil society organisations](#) working on a wide range of human rights issues have reportedly lost their licences.

*“The FCRA is not compatible with international human rights standards,”* says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. *“At the very least, it violates the right to freedom of association guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a State Party.”*

On 16 June 2016, three United Nations Special Rapporteurs – Mr Michel Forst (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders), Mr David Kaye (Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression), and Mr Maina Kiai (Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association) – asked the [Government of India to repeal the FCRA noting](#) that it “fails to comply with international human rights norms and standards” and is used “to silence organisations involved in advocating civil, political, economic, social, environmental or cultural priorities, which may differ from those backed by the Government.”

FORUM-ASIA joins the Special Rapporteurs in calling for the Government of India to immediately repeal the FCRA, stop the political crackdown on civil society organisations, and ensure an enabling environment where civil society organisations can freely promote and protect human rights and democratic values.

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**About FORUM-ASIA:**

*FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.*

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