

India: Drop Sedition Charges against Amnesty International India

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 19 August 2016) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and its members are deeply anguished and concerned over the filing of a case against Amnesty International India on sedition charges. This is another attempt in narrowing the space for civil society and criminalising human rights activities in the country.

The charges filed against Amnesty International India relate to a seminar held in Bangalore on 13 August 2016 to discuss the human rights and justice situation in Kashmir. Two days later, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student body affiliated to the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party of India, registered a case against Amnesty International India at a police station in Bangalore, claiming that anti-Indian sentiments were promoted through slogans of 'azadi' (freedom) in the event.

FORUM-ASIA and its members note that Amnesty International India has clarified that none of its staff were involved in the chanting of any anti-India slogans, and that it does not take any side on the question of self-determination, which the alleged slogan of 'azadi' might refer to.

Amnesty International India has rightly said that 'the right to freedom of expression under international human rights law protects the right to peacefully advocate political solutions that do not involve incitement to discrimination or violence.'¹

FORUM-ASIA, its members and associates in India² unequivocally support the stance of Amnesty International India, and express strong solidarity with the organisation and the rest of the human rights movement in India.

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org.in/show/news/statement-on-sedition-charges-filed-against-amnesty-international-india>

² People's Watch, Human Rights Defenders' Alert- India [HRDA], All India Network of Individuals and NGOs working with National / State Human Rights Institutions [AiNNI], Institute of Human Rights Education [IHRE], Sudhanthra [A rehabilitation centre for victims of torture and domestic violence], South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring, Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), Programme Against Custodial Torture & Impunity (PACTI), People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), Human Rights Alert.

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 democratisation.

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