



Banglar

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PRESS RELEASE

Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) is primarily working on and addressing the issue of torture and human rights violations in West Bengal since 1997. In recent times, under the central and the different state governments, the right to freedom of expression is being enormously hampered, mass media is being subjected to restraint and anyone criticizing the governments is being accused and put behind the bars. The human rights movement throughout the country is facing severe attack in the current socio-political scenario of India. Human Rights Defenders all across the country are being charged with false cases and are being arrested, put on house arrest and even abducted by the state agencies in order to suppress the human rights movement all over the country. The situation of West Bengal is not different as we recently witnessed that social activists, not guilty of any crime are being put inside jail for as long as 10 years and then released by the Calcutta High Court. MASUM has also suffered a lot from the state machinery, which obstinately refuses to be open towards criticism but over the years has desperately sought to resist the same.

MASUM organised People's Tribunal on Torture (PTT) at Moulali, Kolkata on June 9-10, 2008, where 82 victims of torture by police and BSF narrated their ordeal before the panel members that consisted of distinguished personalities of national repute. Mr. Kirity Roy, Secretary of Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) and many other renowned social activists were accused in fabricated charges for holding the tribunal by Taltola police station under Kolkata Police, Case No. 134 dated June 9, 2008, under sections 170 (Personating a public officer)/179 (refusing to answer public servant authorised to question) / 229 (Personation of a juror or assessor) /120B (Criminal Conspiracy) of Indian Penal code. The tribunal was deemed to be "unauthorised" by the Police. MASUM's appeal to quash the false charges against Mr. Kirity Roy and others in the High Court on 10.09.2008 was rejected on 26.08.2009. After that on 09.04.2010, the anti-terrorist cell of Kolkata police suddenly arrested Mr. Kirity Roy from his home, while Taltola police station on the same day produced him in Bankshal Court and submitted charge sheet stating him and other activists as accused. MASUM also appealed to the double bench of Calcutta High Court against the previous order but that too was rejected by the division bench and Chief Justice on 10.03.2014. Finally MASUM approached the Supreme Court against the Calcutta High Court's order on 01.08.2014 and on 16.08.2019 after a prolonged legal battle, police was directed by orders of Supreme Court to withdraw the fabricated case from Bankshal Court. This happens to be a success for not only MASUM but the human rights movement of the country as a whole.

Today, in a discussion session on the systematic attack on human rights activists at Kolkata Press Club, Mr. Naba Dutta, a social activist who was a co-accused in the case, remarked that the attack on human rights defenders has remained consistent in West Bengal even under the rule of different political parties. Human Rights Activist Ms. Bolan Gangopadhyay, reiterated the need to have special directives for the protection of human rights defenders and provisions to help them fight against fabricated charges. Social Activist Ms. Miratun Nahar called for strict legislation against prosecutions of human rights defenders on fabricated charges and the need for international pressure on the government to uphold the principles of various human rights treaties that India is signatory to. Mr. Amlan Bhattacharya, member of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, stated that democracy functions at the convenience of the State authorities wherein human rights violations committed by

the State and repeatedly overlooked. Finally, Activist Mr. Piyush Chakraborty, called out to the human rights defenders to be more alert and fight against the atrocities of the State.

The objectives of the discussion were introduced by Mr. Kirity Roy, Secretary of MASUM. He also delivered the concluding speech stating that the human rights defenders have taken a resolve to fight a legal battle with the State by challenging the fabricated charges against them and prosecuting the State for undue harassment.



(Kirity Roy)

Secretary

MASUM

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