

INDIA: Report on human rights defenders and Erstwhile Enclave Dwellers Released in Kolkata by FORUM-ASIA and MASUM

(Bangkok/Kathmandu/Kolkata, 11 December 2019) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and its member, Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) are pleased to announce the launch of two publications in commemoration of International Human Rights Day— ‘Report on the Ongoing Harassment and Threats to MASUM’ and ‘Erstwhile Enclaves in India: A Post-LBA Analysis’. The reports have been launched at an event held in Kolkata, India to commemorate International Human Rights Day.

‘Report on the Ongoing Harassment and Threats to MASUM’ is a joint effort by FORUM-ASIA and MASUM to highlight the systemic attacks on the human rights defenders of MASUM, their strenuous struggle for justice and security, and the time consuming legal battles that they are undertaking. The report was released by renowned human rights activist, Binayak Sen.

In spite of the report’s focus on individual human rights defenders, it aims to address the larger issue of the crackdown on dissent by the forces of the State. By documenting and narrating the details of their cases, the report seeks to expose the brazen violation of human rights, gender discrimination and the abuse of legal mechanisms by state authorities to silence grassroots human rights defenders. The time has come to reflect on these cases, and initiate a collaborative effort to protect the right to speak truth to power.

‘Erstwhile Enclaves in India: A Post-LBA Analysis’ is a report detailing the lives and struggles of people living in erstwhile enclaves, who are denied the full enjoyment of their citizenship rights. Even as the border disputes between India and Bangladesh have received substantial international attention, the lives of over 100,000 inhabitants of the erstwhile enclaves have been largely neglected for decades. After the implementation of the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) in 2015, several enclaves were incorporated into Indian territory. Prolonged denial of basic human rights faced by the enclave dwellers have become amplified because of state inaction and ignorance.

This report is an attempt to give a voice to the erstwhile enclave residents and their on ground realities. Based on field research and testimonies from the ground, the report seeks to analyse their challenges related to citizenship, land rights, health and sanitation, education and other social entitlements that the people are continuously denied.

FORUM-ASIA and MASUM stand for the rights of erstwhile enclave residents, and invite the human rights community, especially human rights defenders from South Asia, to join them in their quest for justice and equality. Both the reports were released by Justice Ashok Ganguly, former judge of the Supreme Court of India.

These reports have been released on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2019. This day is significant to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) from

1948. FORUM-ASIA and MASUM celebrated this day to remind people of the ideals enshrined in the UDHR. In these times, with the increasing attacks on minorities, the suppression of dissent and the systemic crackdown on human rights defenders, it is imperative to look back upon the goals with which the human rights community had started its journey. We hope that through this celebration, our brethren from the human rights fraternity were reminded of the monumental task ahead of us to ensure peace, equality and justice.

The launch event was held at the Academy of Fine Arts, 'Mukta Mancha' in Kolkata. Eminent human rights defenders, activists, legal luminaries and academicians graced the occasion. Various civil society organisations and forums displayed their work and publications, followed by cultural performances by artists from all over the State of West Bengal, India.

Reports can be downloaded here:

[Report: Erstwhile Enclaves in India: A Post-LBA Analysis](#)

[Report on the Ongoing Harassment and Threats to Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha \(MASUM\)](#)

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 81 member organisations in 21 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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