

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Immediately Stop The Witch-Hunt Of Academics And Activists In The Bhima Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad Case

'Berlin for India' strongly condemns the ongoing witch-hunt against academics and activists in the Bhima Koregaon case. In particular, we condemn the latest round of intimidation and arrests. On 14 August, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) summoned Dr. PK Vijayan and Rakesh Ranjan, faculty at Delhi University (DU), for questioning in relation to the case. Earlier this month, another DU Professor, Hany Babu was arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Babu is the 12th person to be arrested in relation to this case.

Under the pretext of an investigation, this harassment of academics is a clear attempt to throttle freedom of expression. This has had a chilling effect on academics and activists. The increased criminalisation of dissent has created a climate of fear. The latest round of intimidation is aimed at silencing voices of dissent and quashing movements.

Dr. PK Vijayan, a teacher of English at Hindu College, and Rakesh Ranjan, a teacher of Economics at Shri Ram College of Commerce have both spoken up against inequality, discrimination, and for freedom of expression. They have been critics of the government and have been active in highlighting the plight of political prisoners in India, especially the case of Prof. GN Saibaba's inhumane incarceration. Prof. Hany Babu, a teacher of English at DU, is a tireless anti-case activist and intellectual.

The Bhima Koregaon- Elgaar Parishad case has been instrumentalised by authorities in India to round up, drown out, and silence any critical voice. The security and law enforcement apparatus of the state has been weaponised to upend the lives of activists and academics. 12 activists- Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Surendra Gadling, Sudha Bhardwaj, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves, Varavara Rao, Gautam Navlakha, Anand Teltumbde, Hany Babu- continue to remain incarcerated in relation to the case under over-broad and draconian security laws. Even in the midst of the pandemic and reports of declining health, their bail applications have been systematically rejected. A similar pattern of repression can be seen in the arrests and intimidation meted out to the Anti-CAA-NRC protestors by the Delhi Police.

Berlin for India has previously condemned¹ the arrest and intimidation of all activists. All of them are prisoners of conscience and each of these arrests ignore the freedom of speech and expression, the liberty of thought and belief, and the dignity of the individual that are guaranteed in the Indian constitution. With these actions, the BJP-led Government has demonstrated that it will not tolerate any opposition to its ambition to build a Hindu nation where religious identity forms the basis for citizenship.

We demand that Indian Authorities:

1. Immediately release of all activists and intellectuals charged in the fabricated Bhima Koregaon case.
2. Immediately end the harassment of academics and activists in relation to the case.

¹ See: <https://berlinforindia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/07/StatementJuly15v4.pdf> and <https://berlinforindia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/05/StatementMay24v2.pdf>

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3. Ensure access to adequate healthcare to political prisoners in India
4. Immediately release of all anti-CAA, NRC and NPR activists.
5. Repeal the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and other over-broad and draconian laws.