

GROUP FAST BEGINS

At Raipur on 16th June 2008

AGAINST THE BLACK LAWS & FOR RELEASE OF

Dr. BINAYAK SEN, AJAY TG & Ors.

17th June, 2008: Raipur (Chhattisgarh)



The 10-day Group Fast began on 16th June, 2008 at Raipur around 2 pm to express solidarity with Dr. Binayak Sen (Medical Doctor), Ajay T G (Film Maker), both members of the PUCL, and many others detained under the draconian Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005, and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967) amended in 2004.

While Dr. Sandeep Pandey (Magsaysay Award Winner & Social Worker), Com. Prem Narain Verma (Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha), Prem Prakash & Faisal Khan (both from Asha Pariwar), began their 10-day fast to ensure that human rights of marginalized people are not trampled upon and human rights defenders continue to work fearlessly, seven social & cultural activists from Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Pithora region of Raipur district joined in solidarity in a relay-hunger strike for 24-hours. They include Naveen Kumar, Leeladhar, Janki, Jugmati, Sandhya, Hemant Giri and Budhyarin.

Today, at the completion of 24 hours of the Fast, 11 social activists and members of the Chhattisgarh Mahila Jagriti Sangathan (CMJS) replaced them for another day of 24-hour relay hunger-strike at 2 pm at the Dharna Sthal at Burha Talab in the capital city of Raipur. These are: Veena Thakur, Lokeshwari Thakur, Beena Vishwas, Durga Dhruv, Saguna Sarthi, Humeshwari Sahu, Emin Kahsyap, Indrani Kahsyap, Kansani Pandey, Ranjana Belekar.





About 75 citizens, activists and intellectuals were present at the inauguration of the Group Fast on 16th June to end arbitrary abuse of state power and protect democratic rights of ordinary citizens. These represented various people's and human rights organisations led by Com. Janak Lal Thakur (President, Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha & Former MLA) & Com Sheikh Ansar (Vice-President, CMM), Adv. Gautam Bandopadhyaya (Nadi Ghati Morcha), Ratneshwar Nath (Ekta Parishad, Kanker), Shashi Sail (Chhattisgarh Mahila Jagriti

Sangathan), Adv Sudha Bhardwaj (Pragateesheel Cement Shramik Sangh, Jamul), Com Hemant Tandon (Communist Party of India-ML), Kumud Nandgave (Chhattisgarh Bal Shramik Sangathan), Jacob N (Richariya Campaign), Com. Bishe Lal Nishad (Pragateesheel Engineering Shramik Sangh & CMM), Nazma (Roopantar), Shiv Kumar Patel (Mukti-Niketan, Pithora), Vijendra (National Centre for Advocacy Study), Com Bishram KK & Pawan Devangan (Rajnandgaon Kapda Milla Mazdoor Sangh), Com Rajim Tandi (Dalit-Adivasi Sangh), Babita Dutta (Shaheed Ansuiya Natya Kala Manch), M K Masih & Surendra Tandi (MLU-RCDR).

During the occasion, Adv Rajendra K Sail, President (Chhattisgarh PUCL) underlined that these draconian laws sanction the violation of due process by the state, and thus contravene internationally accepted norms of jurisprudence as well as democratic governance. Quoting the Senior Advocate K G Kannabiran, National President of PUCL, India, Sail said that in his letter to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Kannabirarn argues that the CSPA and UAPA operated by criminalizing the very performance of civil liberties activities, and culpability was decided upon not by direct proof, but through guilt by association.

Sail also pointed out that the PUCL-Chhattisgarh Unit, with Dr. Binayak Sen's active leadership as its General Secretary, had exposed the government sponsored so-called campaign Salwa-Judum in Chhattisgarh which legitimizes extra-constitutional violence and pits adivasis against adivasis. And, this was the major reason that the State machinery of Chhattisgarh had come out heavily against the human rights defenders.

Addressing the gathering at the inauguration of the Group Fast, Dr. Sandeep Pandey, Magsaysay Award Winner said that if the state did not respond to peaceful and democratic means of protest, it was but natural that the people victimized by various development processes being implemented by the Governments at the behest of big business and industrial giants would have no option but to resort to extra-constitutional means. Giving example of Irom Sharmila, a human rights activist from Manipur on Fast-unto- Death for the past 7 years against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Sandeep Pandey said that it was such a shame that the democratically elected governments were going back on their own promises to restore democracy and ensure human rights in the North-East India region, which has been witnessing worst violations of human rights by the hands of the Army.

Others who spoke at the occasion were Com Janak Lal Thakur (CMM), Bharat Bhooshan Pandey (CPI-ML), Ram Prakash (Asha Pariwar), Sudha Bhardwaj (PUCL-CG), Shiv Kumar Patel (Mukti-Niketan). Cultural Activists from Shaheed Ansuiya Natya Kala sang mukti songs, and raised slogans.

At the end, Rajendra Sail announced that the Group Fast would end on 25th June, the day Emergency Rule in India was declared in 1975, followed by a National Convention on Repressive Laws & Human Rights on 25th & 26th June 2008 at Raipur.



Sail also informed that almost that more than 70 organizations from more than 25 states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, UK, USA, and other nations had endorsed the campaign, and that a signature campaign has been initiated to mobilize support from the Members of Parliament in India. He said that 12 MPs, who were related to medical profession, had already signed the petition for the release of Dr. Binayak Sen.

Rajendra K Sail

President

Mobile: 094242-01288

Dharna Sthal: +91-9752526299