

Growing demand to release Binayak Sen, repeal draconian Law

Across the country, citizens have taken to the streets on 14 May 2009 demanding the release of 'Jonathan Mann Awardee for Global Health and Human Rights' (2008) Dr Binayak Sen, who is a well-known paediatrician and human rights defender in Chhattisgarh, and has completed two years of imprisonment on 14 May 2009 in a Raipur prison on false charges of abetting Maoist activity in Chhattisgarh, sedition, and waging war against the State.

In Lucknow, India, a candle light vigil is being held in the nerve centre Hazratganj to further up the pressure in favour of Dr Binayak Sen. Many civil society organizations including Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Health Association (UPVHA), Vatsalya, Sahayog, Health-Watch, Samadhan, Asha Parivar, National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), Lok Rajniti Manch (People's Politics Front - PPF) have jointly called for the release of Dr Sen.

This committed advocate of civil liberties has spent over three decades in the service of some of the poorest and most underserved communities and raised his voice relentlessly against atrocities in the State of Chhattisgarh. The imprisonment of Dr Binayak Sen is symbolic of gross injustice and violation of democratic values by the State and the suppression of the voices of human rights defenders.

Last year, twenty-two Nobel laureates from around the world had appealed to the Indian government to allow Dr Binayak Sen to receive the 2008 Jonathan Mann Award for Global Health and Human Rights in person at the end of May 2008. But Indian government denied the permission and Dr Sen's wife had received the coveted global health award on his behalf.

Dr Binayak Sen of Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India, who has helped establish a hospital serving poor mine workers in the region, founded a health and human rights organization that supports community health workers in 20 villages, and is the general secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), has been imprisoned in Raipur for two years now without trial as a result of unproven allegations that he was a naxal courier. Not only Dr Sen denies committing any crime, but his lifetime contribution to strengthen democracy and fight for the most underserved communities defies such accusations.

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.

The activists demand:

- immediate grant of bail to Dr Binayak Sen because there is no concrete evidence which state has been able to produce against him in past two years. No witness has testified against him or incriminated him in the alleged charges.

- that the draconian Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act should be repealed in the undercover of which grotesque human rights violations take place in the state.
- the winding up of Salwa Judum

Hope the citizen's voice reaches their own representatives in the power corridors.

Source: DailySouthAsian <indopakpeacemarch@yahoo.co.uk>
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