

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5681>



India

Radical Socialist condemns attacks on human rights activists and arrests

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV523 - August 2018 -

Publication date: Friday 31 August 2018

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Radical Socialist condemns the targeted attacks on human rights activists and their arrests in a simultaneous operation across the country by the Maharashtra police. In one of the grossest violation of human rights, the Pune police conducted raids on the houses of activists across the country and arrested them, confiscating their mobile phones, computer and other electronic devices, books, periodicals. The police claim that these raids and arrests are in connection to the Bhima Koregaon incident.

Over four years of the BJP in power at the Centre; well over three decades of aggressive struggle by the fascists to force the pace and promote their agenda, India today has moved so far to the right, that gross violations of civil liberties can be wiped out of consciousness when the targets are secular and rationalist activists, or civil rights/democratic rights activists, or Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, people whose existence is seen as socially less valuable by the Brahman-bania elite at the core of the Sangh's elite politics, and at the same time people on whose oppression their conception of Hindutva is based.

The attacks on Human /rights activists on 28 August 2018 must be denounced without hesitation, and the release of all who were arrested demanded. Radical Socialist joins all democratic forces in making these as the primary demands today. We do not need to go into raptures over the Supreme Court's interim order, for us to realise that even less aggressive fascistic components of the state find the assault irrational and totally violating democratic rights.

The growing openness of the far right violence needs to be understood with clarity. The attacks on secular and rationalist activists, leading to the murders of Kalburgi, Pansare, Dabholkar, Lankesh; the attempt a few days ago on Umar Khalid; the mass lynchings in the name of cow protection in large parts of north India; the attacks on Dalits and Adivasis including driving Rohith Vemula to suicide, the violence in Una, and the violence in early 2018 in connection with the annual celebration by Dalits of the Bhima Koregaon battle; the violence unleashed by state as well as far right forces on Adivasis, are all tied together.

On 28th of August 2018, the police forces raided offices and residences of nine activists. The raids and arrests were by the Pune police, in connection with the Bhima Koregaon violence in January, in which Dalit activists had clashed with upper-caste Marathas. Those arrested include noted radical poet and cultural activist Varavara Rao, lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj, and activists Arun Ferreira, Gautam Navlakha and Vernon Gonsalves. The raids were carried out in Delhi, Faridabad, Goa, Mumbai, Ranchi and Hyderabad.

Rao was arrested on the alleged involvement of his in a plot to kill Narendra Modi. Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves were arrested from Thane and Mumbai. Human rights lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj was picked up from her home in Faridabad. Gautam Navlakha's transit remand to Pune is also on hold, the Delhi High Court said. He will stay at home under police guard and can meet only his lawyers.

Earlier, in June, others had been arrested – Sudhir Dhawale, Surendra Gadling, Mahesh Raut, Rona Wilson and Shoma Sen. They had allegedly made “provocative speeches”. In a country where a right wing MLA can even speak about the need to kill intellectuals, this charge is laughable, or would have been, had it not been backed up by court cases and arrests.

A new term has been created, in conjunction with ultra-right television channels whose task is to prepare the ground for the state and right wing. This is the term Urban Naxal. In reality it means nothing, since Naxalite is a term used

Radical Socialist condemns attacks on human rights activists and arrests

about a range of left wing parties and groups that owe some allegiance to the Naxalbari uprising of 1967, the Andhra struggles of Srikakulam etc., as well as to Mao Tse Tung and the Cultural Revolution in China. Beyond these few points to day these groups have diverse politics. Many are involved in trade union work, some in elections, while for some rural work continues to be primary. Any radical left activist who supports any of these organisations and lives in cities, is formally speaking an urban Naxalite.

But the term has been coined for a very different aim. It is to suggest that the original Naxalites were rural guerrillas, and urban Naxalites are all, to use some of the favourite terms of the government and its pet media, “terrorists”, “anti-nationals”, etc. By putting these claims, an attempt is made to deprive citizens, accused of being urban Naxalites, of the democratic rights that everyone is supposed to have.

Apparently the Delhi Police, after having arrested Sudha Bharadwaj, waited for Republic TV to arrive so that her arrest could be used on television in a sensational manner, to demonise activists, human rights defenders and intellectuals. And of course this is further evidence of how Republic TV and its ilk need to be seen, not even as run of the mill bourgeois right wing media, but as part of the fascist-Hindutva brigade.

It is also a matter of significance that the Bhima Koregaon issue has been made a focal point. If Dalits and Muslims and Adivasis join hands, that would mean a major blow to the ideological project of the Hindutva forces. We do not take the position that these attacks are in any sense attempts to remove attention from some supposed “real” issues, reducing the class struggle to only bread and butter issues. But we do underscore the need to take a class approach to these struggles.

For each ascent of the Hindutva Right, when the left has failed to put up principled struggles, has resulted in a popular front which has only used people’s anger to form alternative, non-BJP bourgeois coalitions rather than forge mass struggles. Yet each time, the Sangh has managed to raise the bar higher.

Fighting for real issues that affect dalits, adivasis, Muslims, working class and peasant women, men and persons of other gender identities, have to be brought together. We join all democratic forces in condemning the attacks and arrests, we demand the release of all those arrested, and the withdrawal of cases. At the same time, we warn that this will be a tough battle, and only if we are not prepared to succumb to the charm of merely electing a non BJP government as the solution to all evil can we resist the constant shift to the right that is happening.