

LETTERS

CARICATURE OF JUSTICE

People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi (PUDR) strongly protests against the conviction order of the Sessions Court at Raipur sentencing Dr Binayak Sen, Piyush Guha and Narayan Sanyal to life imprisonment.

The reason for the institution of this case by the Chhattisgarh police was to prevent the growing opposition to the government policy of creating and arming of the Salwa Judum, an opposition that the PUCL, Chhattisgarh was leading. The PUCL and its General Secretary, Dr Binayak Sen organised fact-finding missions and brought to light the untold misery being caused to the tribal people by the Salwa Judum mobs through hitherto unrecorded murders, rapes, arson and looting that led to the total evacuation of around 700 villages. Such efforts were not to be taken kindly by the police and civil administration and Dr Sen had been threatened that he would be booked. Being the conscientious civil liberties activist, Dr Sen continued in his work unmindful of the threats. That such were the designs of the Chhattisgarh government is made amply clear through the demolition of the Vanvasi Chetna Ashram and hounding of the noted Gandhian, Himanshu Kumar, till he was forced to flee.

The charge made out by the prosecution against Dr Binayak Sen was that he was responsible for passing letters from Narayan Sanyal lodged in jail to Piyush Guha. During the trial, not a single witness testified to this. The charge was wholly demolished. Hence a number of additional flimsy charges were made against Dr Sen. These include receiving a letter from Narayan Sanyal duly stamped by jail authorities, visiting Narayan Sanyal in jail to assist in his medical treatment, receiving a letter from another jail inmate regarding appalling conditions of jail inmates, helping to organise a fact-finding in Nagpur into the attacks on dalits at Khairlanji, among others. While each of these is a legitimate activity taken up by every civil rights organisation in the country, a sinister colour was sought to be given to it by the prosecution. All of these charges were found utterly baseless during the course of the trial.

Lies were resorted to at various levels. First of these concerns the arrest. Piyush Guha's arrest was shown many days after he had been arrested. His return ticket to Kolkata and the reservation chart with the Indian Railways shows this amply. Thus he was already in police custody and had been tortured for many days before he was shown to have been arrested with the letters ostensibly given to him by Dr Sen. Lies were submitted on record by the prosecution to the highest courts in the case of Dr Sen's arrest. Dr Sen was in Kolkata when the Chhattisgarh police started making insinuating statements against him. Dr Sen publicly criticized these statements and proceeded to Bilaspur and went straight to the police to confront them. He was told that he was under arrest at the police station. Police has however stated that Dr Sen was nabbed by the police, implying that he was evading arrest. The courts consistently failed to see through this web of lies and Dr Sen was denied bail for two whole years. Most recently, during the final stages of the trial, a letter was brought before the court and was attributed to having been seized from Dr Sen's house. All articles seized from his house were signed by him at the time of the seizure. This one did not bear his signature, but the judge allowed it to be taken on record. During the final arguments, he was sought to be linked through e-mails to the Pakistan ISI by the prosecution, a charge that turned out to be comic since the ISI turned out to be the Indian Social Institute at Delhi. The judge did not deem it fit to even chastise such glaring mal-prosecution.

Harish Dhawan & Paramjeet Singh,
Secretaries, PUDR

CONFERENCE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Very recently SREI Foundation organised a conference on "World Confluence of Humanity, Power & Spirituality" for 3 days at Town Hall premises, at the behest of Sri H P Kanoria, Chairman of SREI Foundation and a staunch believer in all scriptures of all religions.

The assemblage comprised religious leaders, scholars, consulars, students and several delegates across the communities and religions.

Distinguished speakers like Jagadguru Shankaracharya, Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati, Swami Agnivesh, Swami Survabhutanandaji, Tsering Wangda, Dr P S Pasricha, R P Jain, Dr K P Misra, spoke on "Human Rights, and Social-Eco Justice", "Freedom of Expression", "Right to Information Act", "Inclusive Growth", etc.

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