

NOBEL WINNERS' APPEAL

An Unjust Conviction

[Following is a slightly shortened version of an appeal issued by 40 Nobel Laureates in February, 2011 for Dr Binayak Sen's Release]

We note that, when Dr Sen was on trial in 2008 and many of us appealed for his release on bail, a year later the Supreme Court of India concurred with our opinion and ordered his immediate release. Several months after voicing our concern about Dr Sen's detention, one of us traveled to Chhattisgarh; met government officials; consulted Dr Sen's family, lawyers, and colleagues; visited his remote clinic to learn more about his selfless work with the Adivasis; and, after a few days and many hours spent waiting in the Raipur prison yard, finally met with Dr Sen himself in the presence of the prison warden.

We have seen that Dr Sen is an exceptional, courageous, and selfless colleague, dedicated to helping those in India who are least able to help themselves. Yet his recompense has been two years in prison under difficult conditions, a blatantly unfair trial lasting two years in the so-called "Fast Track" Sessions Court, an unjust conviction of sedition and conspiracy, and condemnation to life imprisonment.

We earnestly hope that our renewed appeal is heard. We know that there are leaders in India who have the power, humanity, patriotism, and decency to speak out against this injustice. We entreat those leaders to act now, to urge Dr Sen's immediate release on bail, and insist that this time his appeal is heard without delay under the highest standards of Indian law.

Surely, those who would see the largest democracy in the world survive and thrive can do no less at this crucial time for both Dr Sen and for the future of justice in India.

S G Vombatkere from Vijaynagar adds:

It is astonishing that of all the Nobel Laureates who made an appeal for Binayak Sen's release there is not one who is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize! What could be the reason for that glaring absence?

US President Barack Obama accepted the Nobel Peace Prize even before he made any moves towards world peace (he was not even the US President then) and he could have scored a point by appreciating Dr Binayak Sen's work and demanding justice as the Nobel Laureate that he is. Maybe his political compulsions at home (Guantanamo prison still exists and Bradley Manning is still in solitary confinement and the bombing of Afghanistan continues and ...) prevent him from praising another deserving Nobel Peace Prize awardee like Dr Binayak Sen. But with Nobel Peace Laureates like Dr Henry Kissinger, maybe Dr Binayak Sen is better off without a Nobel Peace Prize. □□□