

LETTER

BEHIND BARS

The state of Kerala which is increasingly becoming another laboratory of the so-called war against terror has now targeted a people's lawyer and human rights activist Shahnawas as a desperate attempt to silence all voices who expose the real state terror on the people. Shahnawas is also one of the Executive members of the Central Chapter of the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners.

People's lawyer Shahnawas was instrumental in bringing out the extra-constitutional act of the Hi-tech cell of the home department of the Kerala government when they resorted to hacking the mails of more than 250 odd people in Kerala of which the majority were from the Muslim community. To hack on the e-mail of citizens without prior permission duly acknowledged by an authority is an infringement on the right to privacy of the individual. This is a violation of the constitutional right. Once this criminal act of the Kerala government was brought before the people, the desperate powers that be didn't have any answer to offer to the people. On the contrary they have resorted to violently attack on the very person who has brought this through the reputed Malayalam daily *Madhyamam*. The very desperate act of the state in the arrest of people's lawyer Shahnawas is an outright admission that the state has resorted to the criminal act of hacking mails of citizens so as to use them as pawns in their America inspired ideology of the so-called war against terror.

Besides it was people's lawyer Shahnawas who had tirelessly and without fear worked for the acquittal of many of the Muslim youth who had been targeted with several cases under UAPA as alleged SIMI activists involved in 'major conspiracies' against the state. Significantly, it was Shahnawas who was leading the defence of all those accused in the notorious Wagamon case in Kerala (to take one example) where several Muslim youth were entrapped in UAPA through a case of conspiracy of 'waging war against the state'. It goes without saying that even before the trial started in the court of law, the intelligence agencies inspired sensation driven media had already conducted a trial on the youth by castigating them under several baseless stories thus criminally violating the right of the accused to be presumed innocent till proven guilty through a court of law. Shahnawas as the office bearer of the Minority Rights Watch had exposed this violent and criminal face of the state through several public meetings, demonstrations and publications while at the same time fighting cases before the court of law.

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Amit Bhattacharyya, Secretary General,

Rona Wilson, Secretary, Public Relations.