

Dated: 07/08/2018

To,

The Chief Minister,

Government of Jharkhand

via, Resident Commissioner

Jharkhand Bhawan, New Delhi.

Memorandum to the Chief Minister, Government of Jharkhand

Jharkhand and Jharkhandis are known for their bravery and long battle that they fought against the British, and they continue to fight for their rights, privileges and survival till now. Today, we would like to draw your attention to the case of sedition charges against 20 people of Jharkhand mainly related to the facebook posts, which has nothing to do with creating disharmony among the people or inciting violence. These activists have raised their voices of decent in social media for the basic rights of the people particularly, related to 'pathalgadi', anti-people land acquisition bill of the Jharkhand, and an attempt to dilute the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT)/Santal Pargana Tenancy SPT Act. This is a clear case of suppression of dissenting voices from the most marginalized people. As you would be aware, the Adivasi community of India has been practicing their old tradition of 'pathalgadi' in different parts of the country as a form of agitation to claim their rights of Jal Jangal Jameen which have been denied since independence. In this regard there are voices of dissent in support of 'pathalgadi' in different ways. It is important to note that 'pathalgadi' is not unconstitutional and without clarifying anything on 'pathalgadi' the government is making false charges of sedition. In this regard, home ministry has also directed the head of the state to talk to the people in discontent, but the state government adopted the colonial route of suppression of the voices of the people by 'Lathi and Bullet' and lodging false cases of sedition; same as British did in colonial India. People against whom the sedition charges lodged under IPC-121, 121A and 124A are – Walter Kandulna, Vinod Kumar, Ajay Kandulna, Aloka Kujur, Ghanshyam Biruli, Dharkishore Kullu, Stan Swami, Belosa Babita Kachchap,

Biras Nag, Sukumar Soren, Thomas Runda, Samu Tudu, Mukti Tirkey, Rakesh Roshan Kiro, Anumat Sumit Kerketta, J. Vikas Kora, Vinod Kerketta, Thoedore Kiro, Ajugya Birua. As the cases labeled against them, these social media posts did not cause any disharmony and violence among the community or against anyone or against the country. In fact, Supreme Court has already scrapped the section 66A and 66F of the Information Technology Act and accordingly these cases do not have any merit in itself.

There are false charges against some more tribal leaders who are working for the rights of the adivasis are – Vijay Kujur, Krishna Hansda, Birsa Pahan, Babita Kachhap etc. They have been charged in different false cases and some of them are already in police custody. More often than not, in the modern colonial set up tribes are labeled as Maoist (who does not believe in constitution), but activists and leaders related to ‘pathalgadi’ are reading the constitution of India and trying to understand its true meaning and value by writing in the carved stones (megaliths). If the government is unhappy about the people’s move of this kind, government should step forward and help ‘adivasis’ to understand its true meaning rather using the police force unnecessarily.

With reference to the above issues we demand following-

1. Unconditional withdrawal of the sedition charges against those 20 people.
2. Unconditional release of the activists related to ‘pathalgadi’.
3. Step forward to discuss and debate the ‘pathalgadi’ issue in Vidhan Sabha and let the people know what is right and what is wrong with this ‘pathalgadi’.
4. Include social impact assessment and environmental assessment in the land acquisition bill.

Copy to,

1. Prime Minister of India (2) President of India (3) Home Ministry (4) Ministry of Tribal Affairs (5) National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (6) Governor of Jharkhand

Sincerely,

Name

Signature