

May 13, 2008

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MEDIA ADVISORY

“FREE BINAYAK SEN!”
INTERNATIONAL COALITION DEMANDS IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF
JAILED HUMAN RIGHTS CRUSADER IN INDIA
22 Nobel Laureates Write to Indian Authorities Asking For Release of Dr. Sen
Solidarity Actions Planned in 9 North American and 3 European Cities

WHEN: Tuesday, May 13th/ Wednesday, May 14th

WHERE: In cities across the US, Canada and Europe

WHAT: A broad coalition of 40 organizations from US, UK and Canada have come together to demand immediate release of the jailed human rights activist, Dr. Binayak Sen, who was recently awarded the prestigious Jonathan Mann Award by the Global Health Council, Washington DC. The coalition consists of human rights groups such as Amnesty USA (which has declared Dr. Sen a Prisoner of Conscience), health rights groups such as the People’s Health Movement, antiwar groups such as the ANSWER Coalition and the Boston Mobilization, student groups from Harvard and Berkeley, local peace and justice groups from a number of cities, as well as a large number of diasporic groups based in US, UK and Canada. (A complete listing of groups is available below).

In an unprecedented move twenty-two Nobel Prize winning scientists and economists have also appealed to the Indian government to release Dr Binayak Sen enabling him to go and receive the 2008 Jonathan Mann Award for Health and Human Rights in Washington later this month. (A full listing of Nobel Laureate signatories is below).

May 13/14th, 2008, which mark one year of Dr. Sen’s undemocratic imprisonment, are being observed as Global Days of Action to highlight his situation. Coordinated actions are planned in 12 cities outside India. These include Washington DC, New York City, San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Boston in the US; Vancouver in Canada; and London, Paris and Stockholm in Europe. More details about local actions are given below.

Dr Binayak Sen is a renowned pediatrician, public health specialist and the national Vice-President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL). Dr. Sen is an activist with a lifelong commitment to the issues of community health and human rights, who was arrested on false charges of sedition last year, joining dozens of other human rights activists in Indian jails, charged under repressive "Black Laws." Dr. Sen earned the ire of the government for opposing *Salwa Judum*, a private militia movement armed by the Government to combat 'Maoist insurgency'. *Salwa Judum* has led to a spiraling increase in violence, which has displaced over 100,000 indigenous people over the last 3 years.

The challenges faced by human rights activists working in Chhattisgarh were thrown into prominence again last week, with the arrest of another activist with PUCL, Chhattisgarh, Ajay TG, under the same draconian law that was used to detain Dr. Sen and which grants unlimited power to the government to apprehend people on the merest suspicion of guilt. In addition to the release of Dr. Sen, the coalition is also asking for the repealing of these repressive laws, as well as the disbanding of *Salwa Judum*.

Over 4000 signatures from individuals around the world have also been collected on petitions asking for the release of Dr. Sen. Internationally acclaimed intellectuals, including Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, George Galloway, Mahashweta Devi have all joined in urging the Indian government to free Binayak Sen and stop the harassment of human rights activists.

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For more information, visit www.aidboston.org/FreeBinayakSen

Endorsing Organizations:

International Organizations:

- Alliance for a Secular and Democratic South Asia, MIT (www.alliancesouthasia.org)
- Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, San Francisco (www.asata.org)
- **Amnesty International, USA** (www.amnestyusa.org)
- A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism - San Francisco (www.answersf.org)
- Association for India's Development (www.aidindia.org)
- Association of South Asian Political Activists (ASAPA), Berkeley (<http://asapa.berkeley.edu>)
- Asian Law Alliance (www.asianlawalliance.org)
- Boston Coalition for Justice in Bhopal (www.boston4bhopal.org)
- Boston Mobilization (www.bostonmobilization.org)
- Birmingham Anti-SEZ Campaign, UK
- Campaign against Forced Displacement, UK (http://www.ilps-web.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=79)
- Campaign to Stop Funding Hate: CSFH (www.stopfundinghate.org)
- CMC Vellore Alumni Association - UK Branch
- DEEP - Defenders of the Environment and Ecology of Panjab, UK
- Dharma Megha, East Lansing, Michigan
- Friends of South Asia: FOSA (www.friendsofsouthasia.org)
- Gadar Heritage Foundation, Fremont (<http://gadar.homestead.com>)
- Hillingdon Asian Women's Communication Service, UK (www.hillingdonwomenscentre.org.uk)
- India Foundation, East Lansing, Michigan
- Indian Muslim Council, USA (www.imc-usa.org)
- Indian Workers Association (GB)
- India Relief and Education Fund, Fremont (<http://iref.homestead.com>)
- International Accountability Project (<http://www.accountabilityproject.org>)
- International League of People's Struggles, UK (www.ilps-web.com)
- International Service Society, Okemos, Michigan
- International South Asia Forum: INSAF, NYC (www.insaf.net)
- Massachusetts Global Action (www.MassGlobalAction.org)
- Matahari: Eye of the Day (www.eyeoftheday.org)
- Our Developing World (<http://www.magiclink.net/~odw>)
- Peace and Human Rights Trust: UK
- Peninsula Peace & Justice Center (www.peaceandjustice.org)
- Peoples Health Movement, USA (www.phmovement.org/cms)
- Sanhati (www.sanhati.com)
- San Jose Peace & Justice Center (www.sanjosepeace.org)
- SANSAD (South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy), Vancouver, Canada (<http://sansad.org/Sansad>)
- Seva International, Okemos, Michigan
- Sikh American Heritage Organization
- South Asian Alliance, UK: (www.southasianalliance.org)
- South Asians Stepping in Solidarity, Harvard: SASS
- South Asia Solidarity Group, UK: (www.southasiasolidarity.org)
- Students for Bhopal (www.studentsforbhopal.org)
- The 1857 Committee (<http://1857.org.uk>)
- Vaishnava Center for Enlightenment, Okemos, Michigan
- Vedanta Society of East Lansing, Michigan
- Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF) (www.wslfweb.org)
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - San Jose (http://www.wilpf.org/US_WILPF)

Nobel Laureates Who Have Asked for Dr. Sen's Release

For full text of the letter, see:

http://www.aidboston.org/FreeBinayakSen/docs/media/Binayak_NobelLaureateLetter.pdf

John Polanyi (Chemistry 1986), Francois Jacob (Medicine 1965), Roger Guillemin (Medicine 1977), Charles Townes (Physics 1964), John Polanyi (Chemistry 1986) Peter Agre (Chemistry 2003,) Claude Cohen-Tannoudji (Physics 1997), Robert Curl (Chemistry 1996), Johann Diesenhofer (Chemistry 1988), Paul Greengard (Physiology or Medicine 2000), Eric Kandel (Physiology or Medicine 2000), Sir Harald Kroto (Chemistry 1996), Yuan T. Lee (Chemistry 1986), Craig C. Mello (Physiology or Medicine 2006), F. Sherwood Rowland (Chemistry 1995), Jens C. Skou (Chemistry 1997), Phillip A. Sharp (Physiology or Medicine 1993), Harold Varmus (Physiology or Medicine 1989), Sir John E. Walker (Chemistry 1997), Torsten Wiesel (Physiology or Medicine 1981) and the world-renowned economists Kenneth J. Arrow (Economics 1972) Finn Kydland (Economics 2004).

Details for Actions:

Baltimore/JHU: Talk on Dr. Binayak Sen followed by signature campaign. May 13th, 2008 (1:30 to 2:30 pm) School of Public Health [Contact Email : Manjunath - mshankar at jhsph.edu or 952-201-8679]

Boston: Vigil @ Harvard Square on May 13, 2008 (7pm) [Contact Email: freebsen at gmail.com]

Dallas: Sat, May 17 at 11 am. Talk/discussion/film clips on Binayak Sen's work followed by signing of petition. UT Dallas Student Union. contact Nitin Paradkar at nitinparadkar@gmail.com

Houston: Sat, May 31, Time TBD: Documentary on Dr. Sen's work followed by signing of petition. Venue: TBD. Contact Ashish Waghray at ashish_waghray@yahoo.com

London: Vigil in front of Indian High Commission on May 13, 2008 from 1-3pm. [Contact Email: sasg at southasiasolidarity.org]

New York: Protest in front of Indian Consulate on May 13, 2008 (12:30pm). [Contact Emails: Ashwini: akr7 at columbia.edu or Murlu: mnatrajan at yahoo.com]

Paris: Meet with the Indian Consulate staff to voice concerns and deliver petitions on May 13, 2008. [Contact Email: Sapna - sapnamg at gmail.com]

Philadelphia: Candle light vigil @ 40th and Locust street field on May 13, 2008 (7:30). [Contact Email: AID.Philadelphia at gmail.com]

Pittsburgh: Candlelight Vigil @ Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Avenue on May 13, 2008 (7:30pm) [Contact Email: maryganguli at yahoo.com or sparun at gmail.com]

San Francisco: Protest in front of the Consulate General of India, 540, Arguello Blvd. San Francisco, CA 94118 at 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 13th, 2008. [Contact Email: mail at friendsofsouthasia.org]

Stockholm: Meet with the Indian Consulate staff to voice concerns and deliver petitions on May 13, 2008. [Contact Email: Pradyumna - pradyumna.singh at gmail.com]

Vancouver: Protest action at the Indian Consulate on May 14th, 2008. [Contact Email: Hari Sharma of SANSAD - sansad at sansad.org]

Washington DC: Protest in front of Indian Embassy, 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 on May 13, 2008 (4pm). [Contact: Somu @ 703-728-8987 or Somu at aidindia.org]

Related News Stories:

- Nobel appeal for rights activist, BBC, 12 May 12, 2008 : http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7395540.stm
- Jailed Indian Doctor Wins 2008 Jonathan Mann Award, Global Health Council, Washington DC, April 21, 2008, <http://www.globalhealth.org/news/article/9833>
- Indian Unrest Ensnarers a Doctor: 'Rights Activists' Such as Dr. Sen Caught in Middle, Wall Street Journal, November 12, 2007, http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB119483106350089620-1MyQjAxMDE3OTE0MzgxMzZxWj.html
- India: Chattisgarh government detains human rights defender, refuses to arrest police officials suspected of involvement in unlawful killings of adivasis, Amnesty International, May 2007, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGASA200132007>