



VIGIL FOR THE RELEASE OF DR BINAYAK SEN

1.00pm -3.00pm, Tuesday 13 May 2008
Indian High Commission, The Aldwych, London WC1
(nearest tube: Holborn)

Dr Binayak Sen is a renowned paediatrician and human rights activist who has been working with the poorest people in Chhattisgarh state in central India for the last 25 years. On 14 May 2007, Dr Sen was arrested on trumped-up charges and has been imprisoned without trial ever since.

As a doctor, Binayak Sen is widely respected for his unshakeable commitment to providing health care to poor adivasi or 'tribal' communities. He was instrumental in setting up the cooperative Shaheed hospital for mine workers in Dalli Rajhara, and has campaigned tirelessly against violations of the human rights of the poor. On 21 April this year, he was awarded the prestigious Jonathan Mann Award for Global Health and Human Rights in recognition of his work as a public health activist and defender of human rights.

The BJP government of Chhattisgarh claims that Binayak Sen has aided banned Maoist groups who are active in the region. The 'evidence' they present for this is that he had met a senior Maoist leader many times in the preceding year. But all these meetings in fact took place when Binayak Sen, as the Vice-President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, visited the 70 year old leader in Raipur Central Jail to provide medical and legal assistance, with the permission of the jail authorities and under their close supervision!

Binayak Sen's real 'crime' is to stand by the poor and dispossessed and to speak out about the violence they are facing in Chhattisgarh.

He was arrested after helping to expose involvement by the police in the unlawful killing of 12 adivasi people. He had been a vocal opponent of the Salwa Judum, a state-sponsored militia which has massacred local people and forced thousands to flee from their homes. Behind the violence and repression is the government's aim of displacing the poor from their land in order to hand over huge tracts of mineral-rich Chhattisgarh to transnational steel, aluminium and

mining companies. Over 30 'Memoranda of Understanding' (MOUs) had already been signed with these companies.

May 14 will mark one year since Dr Binayak Sen's arrest. The Acts under which he was arrested make it possible for the government to keep him in prison for an unspecified period, without any evidence. On December 10 – Human Rights Day – Binayak Sen's application for bail was rejected by the Supreme Court. The Indian government and the Chhattisgarh state government are determined to silence Dr Sen. We must not allow them to succeed.

Supported by:

South Asia Solidarity Group,

CMC Vellore Alumni Association – UK Branch

Dr Wendy Savage MBBCh FRCOG MSc (Public Health) Hon DSc, Campaigner on Public Health

South Asian Alliance

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FREE DR BINAYAK SEN!

For more information contact sasg@southasiasolidarity.org, 07875973116