

Civil bodies gather for Sharmila



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Syed Miraz Ahmed 11 August 2016 9478 views

A solidarity action expressing deep respect for Irom Sharmila and supporting the ongoing struggle for justice by civil society in [Manipur](#), was organized Tuesday at Jantar Mantar in [New Delhi](#). The solidarity event saw a large turn-out of [over](#) a hundred people, despite a rainy day.

Participants included women's movement activists Shanti, Runu Chakraborty and Nandini Rao; [author](#) of Irom Sharmila's biography "Burning Bright" Deepti Priya Mehrotra; human [rights](#) activists Devika Mittal, Ravi Nitesh, Shruti Achesh and Rita Manchanda; historian Uma Chakravarty; Monisha Behl of North-East Network; senior [journalists](#) Pamela Philipose and Sujata Madhok ([President](#), Delhi Union of Working [Journalists](#)); Servants of the People Society Trustee, octogenarian Satya [Paul](#); Activist Dipak Dholakia, NAPM ([National](#) Alliance of People's Movements) activists Shabnam and Vimal bhai; theatre activists Nisha and Afaqullah (he came from Faizabad, U.P, and joined in singing IPTA songs); R.Geetha of Penuramma Iyakkam, Chennai; Sagari Ramdas and Madhoo who work with tribal groups in Andhra Pradesh; labor activist Rakhi Sehgal; academicians [Mary](#) John, Felix Padel and Anuradha Marwah [Roy](#); NGOs Sama and Saheli; students from JNU, Delhi University, South Asia University and several others. The solidarity action was organised by two autonomous groups, Sampurna Trust and Save Sharmila Solidarity Campaign.

The people gathered sang movement songs -- songs of struggle, such [as](#) 'Tu zinda hai to zindagi ki jeet mein yakeen kar' and 'Khamoshi todo vaqt aa gaya'. Several persons have been inspired by Sharmila [over](#) the years, and this was evident in the energy of the gathering. Some read out poems they have written about Sharmila, including Sagari Chhabra: "You resist violence by denying yourself taste/ Make haste, oh world, listen to this voice...."

The gathering noted that on August 9, 1942, the British government arrested Mahatma [Gandhi](#) and other [leaders](#), and on August 15, 1942, it promulgated the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance, to quell the Quit [India](#) movement. In 1958, the Indian government promulgated the Armed Forces Special Powers [Act](#) ([AFSPA](#)), and subsequently imposed it in several parts of the country. People in [Manipur](#), including human [rights](#) and women activists, are struggling for [AFSPA](#) to be repealed. The [Act](#) perpetuates violation of fundamental democratic [rights](#) by granting excessive powers, and impunity, to armed forces. Recently, the Supreme Court of [India](#) ruled that [over](#) 1,500 cases of alleged 'fake encounters' in [Manipur](#) are to be thoroughly investigated; the first six cases investigated have all been proved to be fake encounters: killing of innocent individuals, by armed forces or police commandos.

The convention agreed that “humane, democratic solutions are needed to solve real problems faced by people; dialogue rather than repression.” Each person lit a candle or a diya, [as](#) a mark of the continuing struggle for justice, peace and democracy in [Manipur](#) and the rest of the country. It is not necessary for one person to take the struggle onto her shoulders: the burden is shared by others in civil society. The [group](#) noted, “We care for democracy, peace, good governance and justice, and feel that we are all responsible for helping to bring this about. We need to listen, learn, and together search for ways to move ahead, to actually resolve many very difficult situations.”

Syed Miraz Ahmed

Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

BY SYED MIRAZ AHMED

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