

Irom Sharmila: Lone Crusader



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Rituparna Goswami Pande 19 September 2007 16141 views

Manipur's human rights activist Irom Sharmila who has been on a fast-unto-death since November, 2000 seeking the repressive Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act repealed. She opposes the Act that gives draconian powers to the security forces and has repeatedly been used with brazen brutality in the Northeast. For five years, she has been imprisoned and force-fed by the State for her 'crime'. Irom Sharmila's lone battle against the government is a proof of the grit and determination of a woman scorned.

Popularly known as the iron lady of Manipur Irom Sharmila has approached UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi for help by handing over a letter addressed to Sonia Gandhi to Sandeep Pandey, Magsaysay award winning activist recently when he was on a visit to Imphal's Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, where Sharmila is on her hunger-strike. She presumes that the congress chief's intervention would have a positive outcome and ensure the fulfillment of her demands.

A five-day solidarity fast that concluded recently which was in support of the people's movement against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 and Irom Sharmila's lone crusade. Human rights activists from all over the country as well as the state's student and civil society participated in the fast organized jointly by Delhi based National Alliance of People's movement, Asha Parivar and Manipur Forward Youth Front(MFYF).

Pandey a member of the visiting team and MFYF members decided to convene a "national convention" in November over the imposition of the army act in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir.

Sharmila's lone crusade started a day after troopers of Assam Rifles gunned down ten civilians at Malom in greater Imphal on November 2, 2000. Sharmila was honoured with the prestigious Gwangju Prize for

Human Rights in recognition of her fight against injustice.

But now it remains to be seen when her real wish i.e. the repeal of the Armed Forces Act is going to be honoured if at all and when will her crusade meet a fitting finale.

Photo: Sandip Panday and his party met Irom Chanu Sharmila on 16-09-07 on the 4th day of 5 days long solidarity fasting agitation in support of peoples movement against Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA), 1958 and for saving the life of Sharmila. Pix by UB Photos.

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BY RITUPARNA GOSWAMI PANDE

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