

## **Statement from Coordination of Democratic Rights Organisation (CDRO)**

CDRO strongly condemns the arrest by Maharashtra police in the early morning of June 6, 2018 of Adv. Surendra Gadling, senior advocate from Nagpur and General Secretary of India Association of Peoples' Lawyers (IAPL), Prof. Shoma Sen, Head of Department of English, Nagpur University, Sudhir Dhawale, poet and Editor of Vidrohi from Mumbai, Rona Wilson, public relations secretary of Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) from Delhi and Mahesh Raut, activist from Bharat Jan Andolan and former Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow for Gadchiroli District.

These arrests and raids have been made based on the FIR registered on 8th January 2018 in Pune following the large scale protests held against the attacks on the Bhima-Koregaon commemorative function on 1st January 2018. These attacks were instigated by leaders of RSS-linked organizations, Sambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote. The government of Maharashtra, instead of punishing the actual perpetrators and instigators of the Bhima-Koregaon violence has been trying to pin the blame on organizers of the commemorative function. The FIR, which was originally lodged u/s 153(A), 505(1b), 117 and 34 of the IPC later had sections of the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) added to it. It is utterly condemnable that the Maharashtra government has charged activists and lawyers with UAPA under these trumped up charges while the actual perpetrators of the violence are roaming around freely.

It is also to be noted that a fact-finding organized by CDRO which recently visited Gadchiroli following the so-called encounter by the Maharashtra police C-60 special forces there that had resulted in the death of 40 people including Maoist combatants and adivasis found clear evidence of a fake encounter and cold blooded murder of the victims. Adv. Surendra Gadling, Prof. Shoma Sen and Mahesh Raut played important roles in facilitating this fact-finding. Therefore it appears that the Maharashtra government has decided to arrest them, together with the other activists and lawyer, to exact vengeance for their role in exposing this mass murder by the Maharashtra police.

The Maharashtra government routinely uses the draconian UAPA to persecute dissenters and any persons who oppose the policies of the state. Currently Prof. Saibaba and five coaccused people are imprisoned in Maharashtra after being convicted in a sham trial under various sections of the UAPA. Now, Adv. Surendra Gadling who was their defence lawyer in that trial has been himself charged under UAPA. These actions clearly show the anti-democratic functioning of the Maharashtra government which has made the arresting of activists and human rights defenders and charging them under UAPA a routine affair.

CDRO strongly condemns this highly anti-democratic and repressive action of the Maharashtra government and the complete violation of all constitutional norms by the State and the Central governments and demands the immediate release of Advocate Surendra Gadling, Prof Shoma Sen, Sudhir Dhawle, Rona Wilson and Mahesh Raut.

On behalf of CDRO,  
Asish Gupta, Coordinator.

*Constituent Organisations: Association for Democratic Rights (AFDR, Punjab), Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR, West Bengal); Asansol Civil Rights Association, West*

*Bengal; Bandi Mukti Committee (West Bengal); Civil Liberties Committee (CLC, Andhra Pradesh); Civil Liberties Committee (CLC, Telangana); Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR, Maharashtra); Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR, Tamil Nadu); Coordination for Human Rights (COHR, Manipur); Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS, Assam); Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR); Peoples' Committee for Human Rights (PCHR, Jammu and Kashmir); Peoples Democratic Forum (PDF, Karnataka); Jharkhand Council for Democratic Rights (JCDR, Jharkhand); Peoples Union For Democratic Rights (PUDR, Delhi); Peoples Union for Civil Rights (PUCR, Haryana), Campaign for Peace & Democracy in Manipur (CPDM), Delhi; Janhastakshep(Delhi).*