

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken
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ATTACKS ON GREENPEACE INDIA

Amsterdam, May 5 2015

I am writing to ask for your support for civil society organisations in India, and in particular, Greenpeace India who are experiencing escalating attacks from India's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

These attacks by the MHA against Greenpeace India are wide-ranging, have been occurring since June 2014 and are a worrying threat to democratic rights of free speech and public participation in India.

They are also damaging to India's international credibility. As Amnesty International stated last month, "These extreme measures taken by the government to disable an organisation for promoting the voices of some of the country's most powerless people will damage and shame India."

The incidents began in June 2014 when a report by the Ministry of Home Affairs, claimed that Greenpeace India had a negative impact on India's GDP growth amounting to '2-3 per cent per annum'. Greenpeace India has no interest in undermining India's GDP growth.

Since January 2015, the MHA has:

- Acted in defiance of the High Court and **blocked all foreign funding** to Greenpeace India. A response by Greenpeace India to all the allegations can be found here: http://www.greenpeace.org/india/en/news/greenpeace_india_speaks/
- Acted in defiance of the High Court and **frozen Greenpeace India's bank accounts including domestic accounts effectively shutting us down if this decision is not rescinded**. For the record, 70 per cent of Greenpeace India's funds for FY 2014-15 came from Indian donors, not overseas donations.
- **Prevented Greenpeace India campaigner Priya Pillai from boarding a plane to London** from New Delhi airport despite having the necessary visa and documentation.

Ms Pillai had been due to brief British Members of Parliament on the impacts of a proposed coal mine on the forests and people in the Mahan coal block. Ms Pillai was barred from travelling, and her passport was stamped with the word 'Offload'. In March, the Delhi High Court declared that the MHA's action was undemocratic. As Delhi High Court's Justice Rajiv Shakder told the MHA, "You cannot muzzle dissent in a democracy". He ordered that the offload stamp be expunged from her record and that she be removed from any Intelligence Bureau database.

Greenpeace India campaigns for forest conservation, clean air and sustainable energy, to deal with problems such as biodiversity loss, climate change and air pollution.

This is a wholly legitimate activity for any environmental organization, whether in India or in any other part of the world. As a gauge of the value of such work, a World Bank report has said that environmental degradation costs India 5.7 per cent of GDP.¹

These attacks on Greenpeace India and other organisations by the MHA are a violation of the rights to freedom of expression and association guaranteed by India's Constitution and by international human rights law.

I would be most grateful if you could urgently raise this issue with your counterpart in India, the Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj and help initiate a dialogue between the NGO sector and the Indian government that will address our concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can meet to discuss these issues at your earliest convenience.

With kind regards,

Sylvia Borren,
Executive Director Greenpeace Netherlands

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/07/17/india-green-growth-necessary-and-affordable-for-india-says-new-world-bank-report>, Report available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/06/18009327/india-diagnostic-assessment-select-environmental-challenges-vol-1-3-analysis-physical-monetary-losses-environmental-health-natural-resources>