

INTELLECTUALS' STATEMENT

Release Dr Binayak Sen, Repeal Chattisgarh Act

Monday 18 June 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 16 June 2007).

Presentation of the statement by the PUDR — People's Union for Democratic Rights:

The widespread campaign to release Dr Binayak Sen and repeal the Chattisgarh Special Public Security Act received a fillip today with one of the world's foremost public intellectuals, Professor Noam Chomsky, demanding that he be released.

Noam Chomsky, Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, Arundhati Roy, Prabhat Patnaik, Ashok Mitra, Habib Tanvir, and Rajendra Yadav and many other intellectuals, writers, and poets, issued a statement today, in which they said they were "dismayed at the continued detention in custody of Dr Binayak Sen, General Secretary of the PUCL, since 14 May". His arrest, their statement said, "is clearly an attempt to intimidate PUCL and other democratic voices that have been speaking out against human rights violations in [Chattisgarh]". They have demanded that that Dr Binayak Sen be released immediately; that harassment of other activists be stopped; that the Salwa Judum be disbanded; and that the Chattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2006 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 2004 be repealed. See the statement below.

NAGRAJ ADVE, SHASHI SAXENA
Secretaries PUDR

The statement

RELEASE DR BINAYAK SEN, REPEAL CHATTISGARH ACT

We, the undersigned, are dismayed at the continued detention of Dr Binayak Sen, General Secretary of the Chhattisgarh People's Union for

Civil Liberties (PUCL), since 14 May. Dr Binayak Sen is also National Vice-President of PUCL, one of the oldest civil liberties organizations in India.

Dr Sen epitomises a dwindling tradition in India of public health professionals taking health care to the poorest sections and most underdeveloped regions of this country. For the past 30 years, he has been promoting community rural health care centres. He was a member of the state advisory committee that piloted a community-based health worker programme in Chhattisgarh. He also helped establish the Shaheed Hospital in Dalli Rajhara, set up and operated by workers for over 25 years.

We believe that the arrest of Dr Binayak Sen is a grave assault on the democratic rights movement in India. PUCL Chhattisgarh has been one of the foremost independent organizations to draw attention to the excesses committed by the Chhattisgarh government under its Salwa Judum campaign. The fake encounters, rapes, burning of villages and displacement of adivasis in tens of thousands and consequent loss of livelihoods have been extensively chronicled by several independent investigations. Dr Sen's arrest is clearly an attempt to intimidate PUCL and other democratic voices that have been speaking out against human rights violations in the state. In recent days, the targets of state harassment have widened to include Dr Ilina Sen, who for years has been active in the women's movement, Gautam Bandopadhyaya of Nadi Ghati Morcha, PUCL's Rashmi Dwivedi, and other activists of PUCL.

Dr Sen has been detained under the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2006 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 on charges that are completely baseless. Both these extraordinary laws have been criticized by numerous civil rights groups for being extremely vague and subjective in what is deemed unlawful, and for giving arbitrary powers to the State to silence all manner of dissent. As was feared, these undemocratic laws have been used to target Dr Sen and PUCL Chhattisgarh.

We demand:

1. That all charges against Dr Sen be dropped and that he should be released

immediately;

2. That the threats to and harassment of other activists be stopped immediately;

3. The immediate disbanding of the Salwa Judum; and

4. That the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2006 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 be repealed.

SIGNATORIES

1. Professor Noam Chomsky
 2. Professor Romila Thapar
 3. Professor Irfan Habib
 4. Dr Ashok Mitra
 5. Habib Tanvir
 6. Arundhati Roy
 7. Professor Amiya Bagchi
 8. Professor Prabhat Patnaik
 9. Rajendra Yadav
 10. Professor Sumit Sarkar
 11. Dilip Chitre
 12. Professor Jean Dreze
 13. Professor Utsa Patnaik
 14. Professor Namwar Singh
 15. Shyam Benegal
 16. Professor Jayati Ghosh
 17. Anand Patwardhan
 18. Professor Utsa Patnaik
 19. Professor Imrana Qadeer
 20. Dr Rama Baru
 21. Dr Ritu Priya
 22. Professor Tanika Sarkar
 23. Anand Swaroop Verma
 24. Sayera Habib
 25. Professor Abhijit Sen
 26. Geetha Hariharan
 27. Professor Jasodhara Bagchi
 28. Dr Uma Chakravarti
 29. Professor Anand Chakravarti
 30. Gopa Sen
 31. Krishna Suman
 32. Dunu Roy
 33. Dr K. J. Mukherjee
 34. Amar Kanwar
 35. Vrinda Grover
 36. Dr Mohan Rao
 37. Professor K.R. Nayar
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P.S.

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