

PRESS RELEASE

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Amnesty International Human Rights Award 2016 goes to Henri Tiphagne from India

**Award ceremony to be held on April 25 at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin,
Germany**

BERLIN, 25 JANUARY 2016 – Indian lawyer and human rights defender Henri Tiphagne will be awarded the 8th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany. The award, which will be presented at an official ceremony on April 25 at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, is a recognition of Henri Tiphagne’s exceptional commitment to human rights. “For many decades now, Henri Tiphagne has been tirelessly and bravely standing up for human rights. His organisation’s invaluable work includes campaigning against discrimination and the use of torture in India,” Amnesty International said in a statement.

“Henri Tiphagne and his organisation *People’s Watch*, while fighting to ensure the rights of others, are themselves being harassed and hampered in their work by the authorities. And there are other civil society organisations in India that are in a similar position. The award is therefore meant to send a strong signal of support to the whole of the Indian human rights movement,” adds Selmin Çalıřkan, Director of Amnesty International Germany.

Henri Tiphagne is the founder of the organisation *People’s Watch*, one of the most notable human rights organisations in India. *People’s Watch* has been researching and documenting human rights violations, as well as providing legal representation to those affected, for over 20 years. The organisation also actively supports human rights education: In 1997, Henri Tiphagne founded an institute offering training for teachers as well as mentoring around school human rights education programmes. So far, they have managed to reach out to around 500,000 children in 18 Indian states.

In recent years, many organisations have come under intense pressure by the Indian government, and *People's Watch* is no exception. The organisation's bank accounts have been frozen repeatedly since 2012. This meant that some employees had to be dismissed and many programmes needed to be abandoned. The Delhi government in power at the time used the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act to justify this kind of harassment. A complaint filed by *People's Watch* against these government actions is still pending. The same legal framework is being instrumentalised for political ends by the current government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Those targeted by the authorities include non-governmental organisations as well as activists and local protest groups campaigning, for example, against forced evictions to make way for new coal mining projects.

Whenever activists and organisations are forced to limit the scope of their work due to this kind of harassment, human rights such as the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association are under threat.

The Human Rights Award is presented by Amnesty Germany every two years in recognition of individuals or organisations campaigning for human rights under very difficult conditions. With the award, Amnesty International aims to honour and support the awardees' exceptional human rights commitment and raise awareness of their work amongst the German public. The award is endowed with 10,000 Euros, provided by Amnesty Germany's foundation *Stiftung Menschenrechte, Förderstiftung Amnesty*. The Human Rights Award will be presented for the eighth time in 2016. Former award recipients include: Monira Rahman from Bangladesh (2006), Women of Zimbabwe Arise from Zimbabwe (2008), Abel Barrera from Mexico (2011) and Alice Nkom from Cameroon (2014).

Henri Tiphagne will be coming to Germany several days ahead of the award ceremony in April and will be available for interviews. For more information about Henri Tiphagne's personal background and the situation in India please contact the [Press Office of Amnesty Germany](#).

