



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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Public Statement

Immediately Withdraw Criminal Proceedings Against All Protesting Farmers

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Madurai: Human Right Defenders Alert - India (HRDA) welcomes Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi's announcement about the decision to repeal the three farm laws in the upcoming winter session of the Parliament. Farmers across the country have been peacefully protesting the three farm laws – passed in a manner in the Parliament raising several questions on the conduct of the government – severely threatening agrarian economy and lives of millions of farmers.

HRDA believes that the yearlong nationwide peaceful farmer's protest is a unique contemporary example of free and peaceful assembly globally, reaffirming the significance of people's collective right to opinion, dissent, expression, association, and assembly in a democracy. HRDA salutes the protesting farmers for defying extreme challenges posed by the governments, sectarian forces including the pro-government media and harsh weather conditions.

We are anguished that prime minister's announcement failed to acknowledge the loss of lives – close to 700 farmers died directly related to the protests – including the recent murders of farmers at Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh. The brutal force unleashed against the protesting farmers when they started marching to Delhi last year and as recent as in Karnal in August 2021, and several similar instances where the state apparatus abused powers to subjugate protestors is highly condemnable.

We express concern on numerous cases registered against the protesting farmers across the country, including children being mentioned in some of these FIRs. On several incidents, they were detained, arrested and tortured in custody.

Some protestors are charged under harsh penal code provisions and draconian laws and many of them have also been extorted from their districts. On several instances, members of trade unions, activists, journalists were subjected to false criminal proceedings and in some cases brutal custodial torture.

We urge the Government of India to:

- Repeal the three farm laws through proper procedures in the winter session of the Indian Parliament.
- Take actions to withdraw all criminal cases and proceedings initiated against the farmer protestors and those expressing solidarity with them.
- Compensation of Rs. 25 Lakhs to the family of each of the deceased protestor.
- Ensure that the farmers are not forced to end protests until they decide.

We urge the National Human Rights Commission to:

- Undertake an independent, transparent and impartial investigation into all incidents of use of excessive force by the security forces, acts of harassments deployed by state police and administration such as fabricated FIRs, arbitrary detentions, illegal arrests, custodial torture and extortment proceedings against protestors.

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