

A draft policy on protecting human rights defenders readied

TIRUCHI, OCTOBER 24, 2021 20:11 IST

A draft policy on protection of human rights defenders will be submitted to the Tamil Nadu government on December 10. When enacted, such a policy would be in place for the first time in the country, Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch said on Sunday.

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly was used as the background for formulating such a policy, which the State requires, Mr. Tiphagne told media persons after it was formulated at a workshop here.

The workshop convened by Human Rights Defenders Alert - India, witnessed a gathering of activists across the State to discuss the draft policy for protecting human rights defenders. Offering such protection is the duty of the government, according to the United Nations.

“The government needs to set a clear definition of ‘human rights defenders’ – who can be identified with that term and what the term entails”, said Thiyagu, General Secretary, Tamil National Liberation Movement. “The functioning of the State requires societal outlook and social monitoring, which the human rights defenders will perform,” Mr. Thiyagu said. For such a duty, they require recognition, approval and protection, he added.

The defenders will be able to function as an early warning system, he added.

The activists also said that they condemned the notification to restrict the usage of the words ‘human rights’ in the name of any organisation. Activists from various parts of the State have planned to take part in a protest in Chennai on October 30, seeking the Chief Minister’s direct intervention into the matter.

Thirumurugan Gandhi, founder, The May 17 Movement, former Professor and anti-Sterlite activist Fathima Babu were among the several activists who took part in the workshop.

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