

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE AT THE WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HELD ON 12TH OCTOBER 2009

The National Human Rights Commission organized a Workshop on Human Rights Defenders on 12th October 2009 in New Delhi. The objectives of the Workshop were (a) To discuss and analyze roles, functions and obligations of the State and the human rights defenders in promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms especially with reference to international standards (b) To share difficulties faced by human rights defenders and suggest appropriate remedial measures.

2. The following recommendations of the workshop were approved by the Commission:-

- (i) It is the obligation of the State to protect human rights of all. Individuals, groups or associations who work for promotion and protection of human rights, commonly referred to as Human Rights Defenders, should also be provided protection by the State against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any arbitrary action as a consequence of their activities for promotion & protection of human rights & fundamental freedom. NHRC and SHRCs can also play an important role in this regard.
- (ii) There is a need to draw a clear line of distinction between genuine human rights defenders and those who wear the garb of human rights defenders to gain advantages for their personal ends.
- (iii) The Human Rights Defenders have also duties towards the society. In carrying out their activities, they should act in a peaceful manner and should not take law into their own hands.
- (iv) There is a need to set up a Focal Point for human rights defenders, preferably at NHRC, so that human rights defenders can reach out to it for support. The focal point should be accessible through a phone no. or email etc.
- (v) For protection of human rights, modern technology like satellite T.V. coverage and SMSs etc. could be effectively utilized. Print media and electronic media can play an important role in this regard.

- (vi) Complaints of harassment of human rights defenders could be posted on NHRC/ SHRC websites to draw specific attention of the people to such cases.
- (vii) The UN Declaration on the “Rights and responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organisations of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights & Fundamental Freedoms” adopted by the General Assembly in 1998 should be disseminated to the Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police of all States and UTs as also other Government functionaries. Likewise, other National and State Commissions/ institutions related to human rights issues should also be apprised about the aforementioned declaration and other important international covenants and instruments.
- (viii) NHRC may consider including cases of violation of rights of human rights defenders along with action taken thereon in a section of its annual report.
- (ix) NHRC may consider writing to the Government of India for granting permission to UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders to visit India.
- (x) All training institutions for public functionaries in the country like LBS National Academy of Administration, SVP National Police Academy, should include human rights awareness including international declaration and covenants and role of human rights defenders in their training programmes.
- (xi) The human rights defenders should also focus more attention to the victims of human rights violations by the non State actors.
- (xii) Human Rights Defenders should not only focus attention on Civil & Political Rights but also on the Economic & Social rights, especially in backward areas. Some of the areas could be rights of persons with disabilities and rights of children.
- (xiii) There is also a need to disseminate knowledge about provision of various laws, rules, regulations as well as international covenants etc. amongst NGOs working in the field of human rights such as rights of women, children, persons with disabilities etc. Human Rights defenders should take initiative in this regard also.
