

April 16, 2020

## **Nepali Citizens against the Arrest of Dr. Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha**

Deploying the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the Indian authorities decisively moved to detain eminent Indian scholar Dr. Anand Teltumbde and human rights activist Gautam Navlakha on April 14, 2020. Dr. Teltumbde, friend to the Dalit movement in Nepal, has written extensively about the caste system and has tirelessly advocated for the rights of Dalits. He cared about the constitutional reforms in Nepal and wanted to see that the flaws visible to him in the Indian Constitution were not repeated in Nepal.

These politically motivated arrests, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, appears to us as a message not only to Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs, and other minorities in India but also to those in other parts of the subcontinent who have looked to the example of India's secular and democratic innovations for inspiration. On behalf of the Nepali public, we strongly condemn these unjust arrests, especially in the context when even repressive regimes in other parts of the world are releasing political prisoners in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.

The Indian authorities have laid absurd allegations against Dr. Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha of seeking to overthrow the Indian government. This bizarre persecution by the Indian police started after the retaliatory violence by anti-Dalit vigilantes following Dalit protests and recognition of Bhima Koregoan in January 2018. Nine human rights activists (Varavara Rao, Sudha Bharadwaj, Shoma Sen, Surendra Gadling, Mahesh Raut, Arun Ferreira, Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, and Vernon Gonsalves) have already been incarcerated for almost two years now in connection with the Bhima Koregaon case, with no sign of a trial commencing. All of them have been booked under the UAPA making bail impossible. This makes a mockery of the jurisprudence granting bail as a right.

In carrying out the arrests of Dr. Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha (both senior individuals), the Indian government demonstrates a galling neglect of the risks to their health. The death of either individual under Indian custody, a real possibility during the COVID-19 crisis, would be a stain on the conscience of the world.

It is outrageous that the Indian government, instead of defending human rights and securing the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, is cracking down on the very people who fight for justice in India. More disturbingly, public comments by political actors have indicated that Dr. Teltumbde was singled out precisely because of his Dalit identity and activism. These measures by the Indian government are effectively an attempt to create a culture of state terror in the region. This is a violation of democratic principles as well as a dismissal of Dalit dissent.

We staunchly denounce the rise of these tactics in South Asian nations and beyond, and we call upon the Indian government to live up to the spirit of the Constitution and cease these assaults on civil liberties. We, the undersigned, call upon Dalit, Adivasi/Janajati, OBC, and other minority leaders throughout the world to seek the preservation of justice and equity.

We stand in solidarity with those who fight for justice and those who safeguard Dalit rights.

The undersigned,

1. Aahuti Aahuti, Public Intellectual, Kathmandu
2. Abhilash Acharya, Educator, Kathmandu
3. Alina Saba, Researcher & Activist, Lalitpur
4. Amar Bk, Writer and Researcher
5. Amina Singh, Adjunct Faculty, Kathmandu University, Kathmandu
6. Amish Raj Mulmi, Writer/Editor, Kathmandu
7. Amita Sharma, Lawyer
8. Amuda Mishra, Gender Expert
9. Anushila Bhattarai, Activist, Kathmandu
10. Ashmina Ranjit, LASANAA, Kathmandu
11. Babita Rai, Activist and Writer, Dharan
12. Balram Prasad Raut, Assistant Professor, Tribhuvan University
13. Bandana Dhakal, Writer, Kathmandu.
14. Bandana Sharma, Development Consultant
15. Basanta Ranjitkar, LASANAA, Kathmandu
16. Bhogiraj Chamling, Writer and Researcher, Khotang
17. Bhola Paswan, Saptari
18. Bikash Basnet, Writer, Kathmandu
19. Bikash Shrestha, Journalist, Kathmandu
20. Bikkil Sthapit, Suna Mero Katha, Kathmandu
21. Bimal Khadka, Principal, K & K Collage
22. Binda Pandey, Trade Union/Political activist
23. Binod Bikram Kc, Poet, Kathmandu
24. Brabim Kumar, Activist, Kathmandu
25. Bunu Dhungana, Nepal Picture Library, Kathmandu
26. Chandreshwor Das, Activist, Dhanusha
27. Chandreshwor Sada, Activist, Dhanusha
28. Charan Prasain, Human Rights Activist, Kathmandu
29. Deepak Adhikari, Journalist
30. Deepak Paudel, Educator
31. Deepak Thapa, Researcher, Kathmandu
32. Dewan Rai, Writer, Kathmandu
33. Dhana Kumari Sunar, Writer and Activist
34. Dikshya Khadka, Leader
35. Dinesh Kafle, writer, Kathmandu
36. Dipendra Paswan, Saptari
37. Diwas Raja Kc, Nepal Picture Library, Kathmandu
38. Dr. Dovan Rai, Writer and Researcher, Kathmandu
39. Dr. Gopal Krishna Shiwakoti, President, INHURED International, Kathmandu
40. Dr. Renu Adhikari, Founding Chairperson WOREC, Nepal
41. Dr. Sachin Ghemere, Medical Anthropologist
42. Dr Saroj Dhital, General Surgeon
43. Dr Vishnu Singh Rai, Writer, Kathmandu

44. Dwarika Thebe, Writer & Researcher, Ilam
45. Ekal Silwal, Journalist
46. Ganesh Bk, Chairperson, RDN Nepal & Secretary General Forum for Human Rights protection, Nepal.
47. Gurung Sushanta, Writer, Bhaktapur
48. Harinandan Ambedkar, Activist, Sarlahi
49. Heema Rai, Agricultural Engineer, Khotang
50. Ishwari Bhattarai, Researcher, Lalitpur
51. Ishwor Shrestha, Buddhist Academician
52. Itisha Giri, Writer and Podcaster, Madrid
53. J.B. Biswokarma, Writer, and Chairperson-Dignity Initiative, Kathmandu
54. JB Pun Magar, Journalist, Kathmandu
55. Kabin Maleku, Pharmacist
56. Karan Shrestha, artist & filmmaker, Kathmandu
57. Khyamu "Gaunle" Biswokarma, Dalit Activist and Researcher
58. Krishna Gopal Ranjit, Artist, Kathmandu
59. Leah Everest, Newzealand,
60. Lhamo Yangchen Sherpa, Sr. Advisor Research & M&E
61. Luna Ranjit, Writer, Kathmandu
62. Luv Yadav, Educator
63. Madhusudhan Subedi, Social Scientist, Professor, Tribhuvan University.
64. Mallika Aryal, Journalist, Oslo, Norway
65. Mandira Sharma, Human Rights Advocate and Researcher, UK/Nepal
66. Manoj Paswan, Human Rights Activist, Sarlahi
67. Mausham Shakya, psychological well-being coach
68. Milan Kumar Singh Tharu, Educator
69. Mohan Kumar Karn, Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance, Kathmandu
70. Mukesh Jha, Madhesi Youth, Nepal
71. Muna Gurung, Writer, Kathmandu
72. Nasala Chitrakar, Poet and Educator, Kathmandu
73. NayanTara Gurung Kakshapati, Photo Circle, Kathmandu
74. Niraj lawoju, Writer and Activist, Bhaktapur.
75. Niranjan Kunwar, Writer and Educational Consultant, Kathmandu
76. Nirvaya Subedi, Writer, Kathmandu
77. Pooja Pant, VOW Media, Kathmandu
78. Prabindra Shakya, Community Empowerment and Social Justice Network, Nepal
79. Pradip Pariyar, Samata Foundation, Lalitpur
80. Pradipta Kadambari, Principal, Kadambari Memorial Collage
81. Prakash Aryal, Lawyer, Kathmandu
82. Prakash Mahara, Human Rights Activist, Kathmandu
83. Pranika Koyu, Poet, Kathmandu
84. Praveen Kumar Yadav, Activist and Researcher, Kathmandu
85. Prawin Adhikari, Writer, Lalitpur
86. Rabindra Baniya, Actor
87. Rabin Sayami, Cartoonist, Kathmandu.
88. Rahul Rajak, Law Student, Rautahat

89. Rajendra Maharjan, Writer, Kathmandu
90. Rajkumar Paswan, Saptari
91. Raj Rajak, Ambedkarite and Bahujan activist
92. Raju Prasad Chapagai, Constitutional/Human Rights Lawyer, Kathmandu
93. Raju Sarkar, Human Right Activist
94. Raju Syangtan, Poet, Kathmandu.
95. Raju Yonjan, Art Entrepreneur
96. Rakesh Kayastha, Film Maker
97. Raksha Ram Harijan, Advocate
98. Ram Gurung, Writer and Researcher, Kathmandu.
99. Ram Kumar Bhandari, Human Rights Activist
100. Rojita Adhikari, Writer, Kathmandu
101. Rukamane Maharjan, Assistant Professor, Nepal Law Campus
102. Rukh Gurung, Researcher, Kathmandu
103. Rup Sunar, Dignity Initiative, Kathmandu
104. Sabin Ninglekhu, Researcher, Nanyang Technological University
105. Sabitri Gautam, Writer , Pokhara
106. Sagar Chhetri, Photographer, photo.circle, Kathmandu
107. Sangeet Srota, Writer, Kathmandu
108. Sanjeev Maharjan, Visual Artist/Art Educator
109. Santosh Pariyar, Educator
110. Sarita Pariyar, Darnal Award for Social Justice, Kathmandu
111. Sarita Tiwari, Writer, Chitawan.
112. Shailendra Ambedkar, Human Rights Lawyer, Bhairahwa/Kathmandu
113. Sharareh Bajracharya, Art educator, Srijanalaya, Kathmandu
114. Shiva Hari Gyawali, Writer, Kathmandu
115. Shova Ranjit, House Wife, Kathmandu
116. Shubha Kayastha, Body & Data, Bhaktapur
117. Sirjana Pant, Public Health Worker, Kathmandu
118. Slesh Shrestha, Kathmandu
119. Smriti Rai, Development Professional, Dharan
120. Sona Katik, Kapilvastu
121. Sophia Pande, Kathmandu
122. Subima Shrestha, Kathmandu
123. Sumitra Manandhar Gurung, Mahila Sahayatra Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha, Chitlang
124. Sunil Shakya, Indigenous Art Promoter
125. Suresh Kiran, Poet, Kathmandu.
126. Suresh Thapa, Software Engineer, Lalitpur, Nepal
127. Sushan Acharya, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu
128. Suvani Singh, Quixote's Cove, Kathmandu
129. Tula Narayan Shah, Activist, Nepal Madhesh Foundation
130. Ujjwala Maharjan, Poet, Educator, Word Warriors
131. Ujjwal Prasai, Writer Activist, Kathmandu
132. Yug Pathak, Writer, Kathmandu.

# आनन्द तेलतुम्बडे र गौतम नवलखाको गिरफ्तारीको विरोध

दलित आन्दोलन पक्षमा र जात व्यवस्थाको विरुद्धमा निरन्तर पैरवी गर्दै आइरहेका भारतीय विद्वान, मानवअधिकारकर्मी तथा लेखक डा। आनन्द तेलतुम्बडे र गौतम नवलखालाई गैरकानुनी कार्यविरुद्धको कानून अन्तर्गत वैशाख २ गते थुनामा राखिएको कार्यप्रति हाम्रो ध्यानाकर्षण भएको छ । उहाँहरू नेपाली दलित आन्दोलनको सुभेच्छुक हुनुका साथै दलित मुद्दाको सम्बोधनमा भारतीय संविधानमा भएका कमजोरीहरू नेपालको संविधान निर्माणका क्रममा नदोहोरिउन भन्ने चाहनुन्थ्यो ।

डा. भीमराव अम्बेडकरको जन्मदिवसको अवसरमा गरिएको यस्तो गिरफ्तारीले भारतको धर्मनिरपेक्ष तथा लोकतान्त्रिक पहललाई प्रेरणाका रूपमा लिइरहेका दलित, आदिवासी, जनजाति र पछाडि पारिएका अन्य सीमान्तीकृत समुदाय मात्र होइन सिंगो भारतीय उपमहाद्वीपलाई यो गिरफ्तारी राजनीतिकरूपमा अभिप्ररित हो भन्ने सन्देश दिएको छ । कोरोनाको प्रकोपको यस्तो कठीन परिस्थितिमा विश्वका तानशाहहरूले समेत राजनीतिक आस्थाका बन्दीहरूलाई थुना मुक्त गरिरहेको बेला उहाँहरूको गैरन्यायिक गिरफ्तारीलाई नेपाली नागरिकहरूको तर्फबाट हामी भत्सना गर्दछौं ।

भारतीय अधिकारीहरूले उहाँहरूमाथि राज्यद्रोहको निराधार आरोप लगाएका छन् । यो हिंसाको सुरुवात दुई वर्षअघि दलितहरूको एक विरोध न्यालीमा घुषपैठ गरी गैरदलित समुदायका व्यक्तिहरूले भारतको भीम कोरेगाउँमा गरेको बदलापूर्ण हिंसा पश्चात् प्रहरीले उहाँहरूलाई पक्राउ गरेपछि सुरु हुन्छ । उक्त घटनामा संलग्न भएको आरोपमा यसअघि नै नौजना मानवअधिकारकर्मीहरूलाई स्वच्छ सुनुवाइको अवसर समेत नदिइ कारागार चलान गरिएको छ । उहाँहरू सबैलाई गैरकानुनी कार्यविरुद्धको कानूनअन्तर्गत थुनामा राखिएको हो । यस्तो कार्यले जमानतमा छुट्न पाउने न्यायिक प्रणालीमाथि उपहास गरेको छ ।

पाको उमेरका तेलतुम्बडे र गौतमको गिरफ्तारीले भारत सरकारले उहाँहरूको स्वास्थ्य जोखिमलाई गम्भीर बेवास्ता गरेको महसुस हुन्छ । अन्य व्यक्तिगत कारणले नै किन नहोस् वा कोरोनाको महामारीको अवस्थामा उहाँहरूको जेलभित्र मृत्यु भएको खण्डमा भारत सरकारलाई अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय रूपमा नैतिकताको प्रश्न उठ्न सक्छ ।

न्यायका लागि संघर्ष गरिरहेका आम नागरिकहरूको मानवअधिकारको रक्षा गर्नुको सट्टा उनीहरूको शान्तिपूर्ण भेला गर्ने अधिकार र अभिव्यक्ति स्वतन्त्रतालाई जसरी कुण्ठित पार्ने प्रयास गरिरहेको देखिन्छ यसले भारत सरकारको छविमाथि नै आँच पुऱ्याएको छ । दलित राजनीतिक अभियन्ताले सार्वजनिक रूपमा गरेको टिप्पणीका आधारमा नै उहाँहरूलाई यस्तो व्यवहार गरिएको हो । यसले यस क्षेत्रमा भारतले कसरी राज्य आतंक फैलाउन चाहन्छ भन्ने स्पष्ट हुन्छ । यो लोकतान्त्रिक मूल्य-मान्यतामाथिको प्रहार मात्र होइन, दलित आन्दोलनमाथिको समेत प्रहार हो ।

हामी विश्वभर र दक्षिण एसियाली देशहरूमा भइरहेका यस्ता हरकतहरूको विरोध गर्दछौं । र, हामी भारत सरकारलाई संवैधानिक नागरिक अधिकारको सम्मान गर्नका लागि आग्रह गर्दछौं । हामी संसारभरका दलित, आदिवासी, जनजाति तथा सम्पूर्ण सीमान्तीकृत समुदायका अगुवाहरूलाई समानता र न्यायका लागि उभिनका लागि आव्हान गर्न चाहन्छौं ।

हामी न्याय र दलित अधिकारका लागि भएका सम्पूर्ण संघर्षहरूप्रति ऐक्यवद्धता व्यक्त गर्दछौं ।