

Rise!

Resist!

Liberate!

REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC FRONT (RDF)

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PRESS RELEASE

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Oppose and Fight Against Ban on RDF in Andhra Pradesh

Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF) has been banned by the Andhra Pradesh government on 9 August 2012 through Government Order No.430 under Andhra Pradesh Public Security Act 1992. This comes as the latest of the anti-people repressive measures that the Andhra Pradesh government have persistently adopted to over the last few decades to crush democratic voices and peoples' movements under the garb of fighting Maoism. This comes as another glaring example of the hollowness of Indian government's claim as 'largest democracy of the world'. We strongly condemn this act of banning and criminalisation of our organisation and demand the immediate withdrawal of this authoritarian ban.

The Government Order brands RDF as "unlawful" and bans it "with immediate effect". The GO links RDF with the banned CPI(Maoist) by calling it a "frontal organisation" of the Maoist party. Falsely implicating RDF as "part of Tactical United Front", it dubiously enlists the following as "unlawful activities" of the organisation:

- (1) Sub serving the interest and objectives of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) whose avowed objective is to overthrow the lawfully established Government by means of force and violence through terrorist activities involving the use of firearms and explosives;*
- (2) Urging people to fight against the Police and join the Maoist movement;*
- (3) Opposing and demanding stoppage of anti extremist combing operations of the police and security forces in the left wing extremism affected area of the States and there by abetting and encouraging the violent activities of Maoist;*
- (4) Organising dharnas, rallies and other forms of agitations in support of the unlawful activities of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and*
- (5) Opposing lawful actions of police and criminal justice system and inciting the people to take violence against the democratically elected government established by law.*

The arbitrary and knee-jerk reaction of the AP government in banning RDF in the state comes just three months after the organisation successfully held its First All India Conference in Hyderabad on 22-23 April 2012. The indication of the AP government's response was visible during the conference as well. It banned the Public Rally of 23 April in an arbitrary manner by serving us a letter which alleged that some Maoists were present in the conference and that the Rally would 'disturb' the law

and order situation of the state. Under instructions from the state government, Andhra Pradesh police also arrested a team of 35 cultural activists from Chhattisgarh on false charges and prevented them from attending the conference.

There is no organisational structure of RDF in Andhra Pradesh at present. It is therefore ridiculous to attribute the so-called unlawful activities to our organisation. Presently only the RDF All India President Varavara Rao (member of Virasam or Revolutionary Writers' Association) and Vice-President Ganti Prasad are our members from this state. The only activity conducted under the banner of RDF in Andhra Pradesh after the Conference was a round-table meeting that raised voices of protest against the recent massacre of 20 adivasis in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh. This was a well attended meeting with the participation of several prominent intellectuals, writers and representatives of civil rights organisations besides being attended and addressed the meeting by three senior editors of newspapers. Is there any basis or justification for terming such a meeting as 'unlawful'?

Opposing and resisting the massacres of adivasis or protesting against the police and armed forces' operations in the tribal tracts is being frivolously mentioned in the Government Order as unlawful activities. All democratic individuals and organisations across the country and the world have been opposing and demanding a stop to the paramilitary operations in the tribal regions of central and eastern India in the name of fighting the Maoists. RDF too has been consistently raising its democratic voice against all forms of state and ruling-class violence – be it massacres, murders in the name of encounters, torture, arrest and burning down of tribal villages, and so on. By criminalising dissent and silencing democratic political opposition through the ban on RDF, the government has once more exposed its fascist fangs.

RDF held a day-long dharna against the Bijapur massacre on 31 July 2012 at the Parliament Street with space allotted by the Delhi Police in front of the Parliament Street police station. A number of prominent speakers and democratic organisation from different parts of India participated and addressed the dharna. A number of renowned public personalities of the country including Justice Rajinder Sachar, Dr. B D Sharma, Bojja Tharakam, professor of economics, Jean Dreze, prominent Hindi writers and poets like Madan Kashyap, Manglesh Dabral and others joined their voices with us against the massacre of adivasis. After the dharna RDF submitted two memorandums with a charter of demands to the President Mr. Pranab Mukherjee as well as UPA and NAC chairperson Ms. Sonia Gandhi. In fact, we requested both the President and Ms. Gandhi for a meeting with a delegation of concerned citizens, which was duly acknowledged. Does the Andhra Pradesh government consider these activities too as unlawful?

We stand against the draconian instrument of ban which the government have consistently used to stifle political opposition. In 2005, Revolutionary Writers' Association (Virasam) was banned by Andhra Pradesh government. Varavara Rao and G Kalyana Rao, two members of the organisation acted as the emissaries of CPI(ML) Peoples' War and participated in the talks with the AP government. The same government banned their organisation and arrested them soon after the talks broke down. Virasam waged a successful struggle along with intellectuals, writers and democratic forces against the Andhra Pradesh government to withdraw the ban.

Similarly, Odisha government imposed a ban on RDF, Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh, Kui Labang Sangh, Bala Sangam, Daman Pratirodh Mancha and Krantikari Mahila Sangh in June 2006 under sections of the colonial CRPC of 1881 amended in 1967 as Criminal Amendment Act. RDF has been consistently fighting against these bans. After Daman Pratirodh Manch challenged the ban in Odisha High Court, it did not approve of the ban and suggested that these organisations should register their names and fight elections. A second option given by the High Court was that the organisations should approach the government to review its decision. The case at present is before the Supreme Court which has issued notice to the Odisha government to file its affidavit.

RDF strongly condemns the ban imposed on the above organisations by the Odisha government and demands their withdrawal. We demand that the Andhra Pradesh government revoke the ban on CPI(Maoist) and six mass organisations – All India Revolutionary Students Federation (AIRSF), Federation of Workers of Singareni Coal Mines, (Singareni Karmika Samakhya or SIKASA), Radical Students Union (RSU), Peasants and Workers Association (Rythu Coolie Sangham), Radical Youth League (RYL) and Revolutionary Workers' Federation (Viplava Karmika Samakhya or VIKASA). We also demand that the ban imposed by the central government on CPI(Maoist) and 30 other organisations under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) be lifted immediately.

RDF is a peoples' democratic organisation working at the all-India level, raising issues and demands of the masses. We consider this ban as a direct assault on the democratic rights of the people to organise and protest against the anti-people policies of the government and the ruling classes. RDF refuses to be cowed down by this authoritarian ban. We pledge to resolutely stand amidst the people and join shoulder to shoulder with all democratic and revolutionary organisations in the country and worldwide to fight against this undemocratic and criminal ban on our organisation. We declare that we will take up all means of democratic protests, rallies, meetings and dharnas to put pressure on the AP government to withdraw the ban. We will also explore all judicial avenues to remove the ban and to challenge the draconian AP Public Security Act, 1992.

RDF appeals to all the democrats and democratic organisations in the country and worldwide to raise voices against the authoritarian, arbitrary and undemocratic ban imposed on our organisation by the Andhra Pradesh government, and fight for its immediate withdrawal.

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