



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Integrated Youth Empowerment - Common Initiative Group (I.Y.E. – C.I.G.), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## Protection Of Human Rights Defenders In India

The UN Human Rights Council has adopted a landmark resolution on the protection of human rights defenders working to promote economic, social and cultural rights by a resounding vote on 24 March 2016. Many States and business enterprises now act to implement the resolution at the national level but country like India where human rights defenders are facing a diverse range of attacks and harassment from state and non-state actors alike, including killing, physical assault, arbitrary detention, threats and judicial harassment. Police officials are often the perpetrators of violence against HRDs, which is usually carried out with impunity. Armed groups and private companies also target HRDs for work related to economic development projects and their impact on the local communities or the environment. HRDs are increasingly the target of online smear campaigns by radical nationalists. In India, HRDs making use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act are liable to be killed, assaulted or harassed for exercising their fundamental right to demand and receive information from public authorities. Women HRDs are targeted with gender-specific threats like death, gang rape or acid attacks – both online and offline. HRDs are particularly vulnerable in regions with a heavy presence of the military and armed groups. In the Red Corridor, a region in East India experiencing Naxalite-Maoist insurgency, HRDs, including lawyers, researchers and journalists face acts of intimidation and persecution and work under tremendous pressure from authorities, rebels, and vigilante groups. People defending the rights of marginalised communities such as the Adivasi and the Dalit encounter death threats, destruction of their properties, fabricated charges, physical attacks, as well as caste-based discrimination by state and non-state actors alike. On 25 June 2022, a Human Rights Defender and journalist named Teesta Setalvad was violently assaulted and then detained and later arrested by Gujarat ATS on fabricated cases. She was trying for justice for victims of Gujarat riots of 2002. Ismat Ara, a Human Rights Defender and journalist, was associated with The Wire when on January 2022, her name featured on the ‘Bulli Bai’ app which auctioned Muslim women, using their online photos. She filed an FIR in this matter with Delhi Police but police took no action. On 24th April 2022, the West Bengal police arrested Human Rights Defender Arkadeep Goswami and Tipu Sultan (Mustafa Kamal) from their home in the Birbhum district. A fake complaint for their arrest was filed by the police in January 2022, in connection with an alleged conspiracy against the government of India on behalf of the banned CPI (Maoist) group. Police claimed that they seized leaflets that contain speeches by wanted Maoist leader Akash from the arrested persons but refused to share the alleged evidence with the lawyers and family members. Several student activists protesting the arrests of the activists have also been arrested. We urge this council to ask Indian government to stop intimidation and persecution against HRDs and protect their rights.

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