

National Convention to commemorate International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

A National Convention in Solidarity with the Victims of Torture was held at ICC- New Delhi on June 24-25 2016. The convention was organised to commemorate June 26; the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Mr. Kirity Roy; Secretary- MASUM attended the convention on behalf of the organisation and facilitated one session on impunity. The convention was attended by lawyers, doctors, activists, academics and representatives of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) that included the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Backward Classes, participants strongly affirmed the repeated demand that India should without further delay ratify the Convention against Torture (CAT). This has been pending since 1997. Second, that Parliament immediately enacts the Prevention of Torture Bill, incorporating within it the recommendations of the Select Committee of Indian Parliament. This too has been pending since 2010. Third, India must immediately pass comprehensive statutory scheme for reparation and rehabilitation of torture victims. Fourth, India must facilitate the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Torture whose request has been pending for many years. As India is signatory to the Convention against Disability that also addresses the issue of *disabilities caused by torture*, a logical and necessary corollary is that India immediately ratifies CAT.

The convention opined that there is now strong evidence of widespread impunity for illegal and appalling actions as a primary means of investigation when in custody and control of state actors and of torture being used as a means of coercing and subduing dissent amongst voiceless and vulnerable populations. These include large sections in the North Eastern region, Jammu and Kashmir, migrant labour, construction workers, unorganised workers, Adivasis and indigenous peoples, Dalits and India's religious minorities who bear the additional burden of being often wrongfully associated with acts of terror. Within this women and children are especially vulnerable targets. Indeed, it is seldom recognised that children are victims of torture, often in the name of 'disciplinary action' in educational, care and custodial institutions.

