

**DECLARATION  
OF  
ALL INDIA FEDERATION  
OF  
ORGANISATIONS  
FOR  
DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**

**Price : PAISE FIFTY**

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## FOREWORD

There are ongoing and ever-increasing onslaughts on the democratic rights of the various sections of the people. The democratic rights movement, on the other hand, is disproportionately weak. The signatory organisations, therefore, have resolved to develop a strong and correctly-oriented democratic rights movement.

After having gone through a series of deliberations on the perspective of democratic rights movement and on the concrete experiences of different parts of the country, they have decided to form the All India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights ( hereafter referred to as the Federation ). The Federation will in due course not only further help to bring these organisations close as regards theory and practice but will also play an active role in rallying other organisations and individuals on the basis of the common understanding and approach spelt out in the Declaration.

# DECLARATION

## **Preamble**

The Federation declares the people's right to struggle for their social, economic, political and cultural advancement to be the most fundamental democratic right. Flowing from this it holds that the right to free access to knowledge and information, the right to free expression and propagation, the right to assemble, and the right to unite and organise are inalienable rights of the people.

It commits itself to mobilise the people for the promotion, assertion, extension and defence of these democratic rights for the people of India.

We assert that, today, in India even after 34 years of the end of British rule the need for a democratic rights movement is still greater.

## **Struggle of Indian People against British Colonialists**

People all over the world throughout history have won their rights only through their own struggle and organisation. The people of India, who suffered at the hands of the British colonial rulers for over two centuries, waged many heroic battles to drive them out of the country. For

the people of India the fight against British colonialists was the fight against exploitation and oppression—foreign, princely, feudal. The struggle for independence and the struggle for democracy were intertwined.

On 15th August, 1947, power was transferred to the new rulers of the country through the “India Independence Act” which was enacted by the British parliament. People of India believed that the new government would replace the repressive State machinery—bureaucratic, legal, police and military systems—which were forced upon them by the British to plunder and suppress them and would take necessary steps to restructure the economy to suit and fulfill their economic, social and cultural aspirations.

### **Present Situation**

But today even after 34 years, as is evident from the prevailing conditions of abject poverty, alarming unemployment, unabated price-rise, illiteracy, mounting foreign debt, and above all the preservation and strengthening of the repressive State apparatus and laws, the new rulers have not fulfilled people’s expectations.

As a consequence, the country is caught in a vortex of socio-economic and political problems. Day by day, the living conditions of the people are deteriorating. Of

course these conditions and associated relations vary from region, to region in the country. However, taking the country as a whole the following scene emerges. The poor and middle peasants, the artisans, the agricultural labourers are in the stranglehold of moneylenders and landlords. Workers, facing lock-outs and retrenchment, are leading a miserable life and parting with a great part of their daily labour to fill the coffers of industrialists. The employees face day to day crisis with their meagre salaries and job insecurity. The small retailers and small traders are exploited by the big business and monopoly houses. The students face inadequate educational facilities, and unemployment after years of gruelling study and acquisition of number of degrees. Intellectuals and professionals are feeling choked because the environment is not conducive to the fuller and richer development and utilization of their faculties. In fact, hundred millions in the cities as well as rural areas remain unemployed or are underemployed. All these sections face continuous threats from goondas of locally "powerful persons" and are exposed to continual police harassment and atrocities. The weaker sections in the rural and urban areas and the women have become a special target. Thus, in our country, big landlordism, monopoly industrial houses and foreign interests, the bureaucracy-top administration, and political

elements who are socially and economically tied to the above and hence in their service, are essentially enemies of the movement for democratic rights of the broad sections of the people. Religious fanaticism and nation-caste-male chauvinisms serve the interests of the above-mentioned anti-democratic forces.

### **Struggles of the People : Government Reforms : Brutal Repression by Government and Ruling Classes**

People, as they continue to face untold miseries, are gradually realising that the fruits of their labour are not reaching them. Their bitter experience is leading the people to unrest and to struggle to gain greater and greater control over the fruits of their labour and their destinies.

But the ruling classes and governments, too, have observed the growing unrest among the people and their increasing desire and capacity to organise and fight against the injustices meted out to them. They have been trying to deceive the people with slogans such as five years plans, land reforms, "20-point programme", "bread and liberty", "garibi hatao", "socialism", etc. But when the people have been seeing through the deception and have come into struggles, the same governments let

loose a reign of terror and brutal repression on them. They have even branded these struggles as "law-and-order" problems. Arbitrary arrests, beatings in lock-ups, framing of the organisers of struggles with trumped-up charges and cases, arrests and if cleared rearrest on different charges, forced entry into homes and beatings up, right upto "conspiracy cases" against those who stand for political dissent and opposition, and "encounters" which are murders in cold blood of those whom the State would want eliminated, declaring vast tracts of land as "disturbed areas" and denying any security to the life, dignity and property of the people, etc., are all methods resorted to for terrorising the people and employed with a brutality intended to prevent any resilience. The custodians of law have proved to be the major law-breakers.

We have recently seen, during the 1975-77 emergency, that even a section of the ruling classes can become victims of the fascist acts of the ruling clique in power. In the implementation of all these measures the State machinery is the major instrument of repression.

## **Repressive Laws**

The government uses repressive laws inherited from British colonial rule and also uses new repressive laws like preventive detention provisions, MISA, DIR, NSA



and ESMA. Large tracts of the country are declared "disturbed areas" wherein the word of a head constable can cost a citizen his life. "Shoot-at-sight" orders, Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, declaration of curfews, Section 144 of the Cr. P. C., etc., are imposed with ease to prevent people from getting organised. The governments have been strengthening the repressive machinery under different heads, viz., police, Border Security Force, RAW, various intelligence and censor agencies, repressive laws, and the armed forces which are at times used to suppress people's movements. Fascist trends can only be fought unitedly and incessantly.

### **Judiciary and Tribunals**

The agencies, such as judiciary and tribunals, set up by the State, Constitution, and the governments, to redress the grievances of the people and the injustices meted out to them, have in fact proved not so effective.

### **Democratic Rights and Democratic Rights Movement**

Under these awful economic and oppressive conditions, the right to struggle becomes the most fundamental democratic right. Stemming from this, the right to free access to information, the right to free expression, the right to

assemble and the right to organise, become necessary democratic rights. To achieve this a strong democratic rights organisation is a prerequisite. Such a democratic rights organisation is a common rallying point for all democratic elements. It is its paramount duty to carry that consciousness about democratic rights among the people.

While promoting, asserting, extending and defending the basic democratic rights, it is our basic approach to democratic rights that demarcates us from others. Our basic approach is derived from our recognition of the right of the people to struggle against all exploitation and oppression. It is also that which distinguishes us from those who oppose people's struggles in the name of "social peace"; those who campaign for placing all individuals on par failing to see that the question of democratic rights is not a question only of exercising a few formal rights mentioned in the Constitution but that it stems from the objective realities of the socio-economic life of the people; as well as those who try to convert the democratic rights platform into a party platform.

Hence, this Federation is pro-people and anti-repression in each and every aspect, where it concerns the indi-

vidual, the collective of working people at their place of work, the life and integrity of nationalities. It recognises the right of the people to organise and struggle against all kinds of exploitation—internal and foreign—as the most fundamental democratic right. It is thus complementary to all democratic movements.

We declare that the democratic rights platform is not a political party, or a conglomeration of different political parties, or a united front of various political parties or of sectional organisations. This Federation addresses itself to all individuals, intellectuals, employees, workers, peasants, artisans, students, who accept this Declaration, in principle and practice, and the approach defined in it.

## **Tasks**

Since the onslaught on democratic rights affects all sections of the people, they—workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, artisans, employees, intellectuals, students, and the specially oppressed socially and economically, should all unite to fight for their democratic rights. We must work on a continuing basis to detect and consciously and collectively oppose each such onslaught in our experience. This is an immediate task at the all-India level as the government is gathering in its hands more repressive

powers such as the National Security Act and Essential Services Maintenance Act, in addition to the innumerable earlier ones such as preventive detention law, etc.

Hence, the basic tasks before us are :-

a) To mobilise public opinion to oppose all anti-democratic and fascist measures, laws, acts, and atrocities by the ruling classes and their governments.

b) To propagate and organise among the people about the democratic rights.

c) To extend all possible assistance and co-operation to people whose democratic right has been abused.

d) To help build unity of all sections to the extent possible for each of these tasks by showing the connection between their own interests and the specific democratic rights task in hand.

e) To build a movement to protect the right to political dissent and opposition. In this context, to work for the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

f) To mobilise public opinion against, and to oppose, capital punishment.

g) To protect academic and cultural freedoms and to oppose State interference, coercion and influence, in these spheres.

h) To strive to establish the correct concept and practice of democratic rights movement.



## **SIGNATORIES TO THE DECLARATION**

- ★ ASSOCIATION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS  
(A. F. D. R.)—Punjab
- ★ AIFOFR West Bengal Unit
- ★ GANATANTRIK ADHIKAR SURAKSHA  
SAMITI—Orissa
- ★ JANADHIPATYA AVAKASA SAMRAKSHANA  
SAMITI—Kerala
- ★ LOKSHAHI HAKK SANGHATANA—  
Maharashtra
- ★ ORGANISATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF  
DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS (O. P. D. R.)—  
Andhra Pradesh
- ★ PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES AND  
DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS (P. U. C. L. & D. R.)—  
Rajasthan



(Adopted by the Steering Committee of the  
Federation on June 1, 1982, following the  
First Conference of the Federation on  
May 29-30, 1982, at Guntur - A. P.)