RTI ACTIVISTS : SITTING DUCKS OF INDIA

ASIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

RTI activists: sitting ducks of India

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I. Executive summary: Amend the RTI Act for protection of the RTI activists

Since 2010, at least 12 RTI activists have been murdered for seeking information to "promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority" of India. Ms. Shehla Masood, a prominent woman RTI activist of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh was murdered on 16 August 2011. She joined the growing list of RTI activists who have been murdered. Even policeman seeking information could not escape death. On 25 July 2010, Uttar Pradesh Police Home Guard, Mr Babbu Singh was killed allegedly for seeking information about government funds and work done by his village *Pradhan* (Head) at Katghar village in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh. Many face serious physical assaults on regular basis. Those who seek information from their village panchayat and other local administration also face social ostracisation. A large number of threats and attacks including murder do not make news.

RTI activists are the most vulnerable human rights defenders (HRDs) of India. Unlike other HRDs, a large majority of the RTI activists are not necessarily part of any organisation or group. They often act alone, moved by outrage against corruption and other illegal activities. RTI activists are extremely vulnerable as they live in the same areas as the corrupt public authorities, political leaders and mafia who do not want information about their illegal activities to be disclosed. The lucky ones come to the media attention only when killed, maimed or battling for life.

When complaints are made by RTI activists, the law enforcement personnel, who are usually hand in glove with those threatening the RTI activists, do not take necessary action. The Right to Information Act, 2005 provides no protection. The Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions are not mandated either to deal with such threats or attacks or to provide protection when needed.

The protection of the RTI activists has been raised in the parliament a number of times in 2010. The Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Shri V. Narayanasamy while replying to the Unstarred Question No. 3456 in the Lok Sabha on 1 December 2010 stated that reports have appeared in the media about the victimization of people who use Right to Information provisions. He, however, downplayed the situation by stating that the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure have adequate provisions enabling the law enforcement machinery in the States to take strict preventive and punitive action against such threats.

He further stated that the Government of India has urged the Chief Ministers of the States and Administrators of Union Territories to promptly inquire into such instances, if any, and take action against the offenders

Sadly, no action is taken even after the Court orders. The Bombay High Court while hearing the murder of RTI activist, Satish Shetty in Maharashtra on 7 May 2010 ordered the State government to immediately provide police protection to any person or organisation that complains of threat or use of force or has been attacked for filing applications under the RTI Act. The High Court also directed the state government to set up provisions for speedy investigation of cases of threats or attacks against social activists, a monitoring system and a database of social activists, within 90 days. However, the cases of attacks on activists in Maharashtra only increased. It is clear that State government had failed to comply with court orders.

There is a need for amendment of the RTI Act to provide for protection of those seeking information under the Act. Asian Centre for Human Rights recommends that a separate chapter, "Protection of those seeking information under the (RTI) Act", be inserted into the Act.

Protection measures should include (i) mandatory and immediate registration of complaint of threats, use of force or attacks against RTI activist as First Information Report and placing such FIR before the concerned magistrate/judge of the area within 24 hours for issuance of necessary directions for physical protection of those under threats or their family members, and review such protection measures from time to time; (ii) conducting inquiry into the threats and attacks by a Police Officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police/Assistant Commissioner of Police and conclusion of such investigation within 90 days; and (iii) trial of the accused, if offences made out after investigation, within six months. Further, concerned Public Information Officers, First Appellate Authorities and those directly related with the information sought under the RTI Act should be presumed to have abetted the offences against the RTI activists unless proven contrary.

Suhas Chakma
Director

II. RTI activists: sitting ducks of India

As Anna Hazare's fast for an effective Lok Pal Bill was continuing in full swing at Ram Lila Ground in Delhi, Ms. Shehla Masood, a prominent woman RTI activist and supporter of Hazare was shot dead by unidentified assailants outside her residence in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on 16 August 2011. She was on her way to participate in an anti-corruption rally in Bhopal.[1] Ms. Masood joined a growing list of RTI activists who have been targeted for their activism under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.

The Right to Information Act, 2005 was enacted to "promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority". However, those seeking information under the RTI Act have come under increasing attacks and India's landmark transparency law provides no protection. A dangerous nexus has been formed between corrupt officials, politicians and the mafia to silence the RTI activists.

Since 2010, at least 12 RTI activists have been murdered while scores have faced serious physical attacks, prosecution under false charges and many faced social ostracization. When the threats were brought to the notice of the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions, the interventions have been ineffective. The police who are supposed to investigate do not register the First Information Reports (FIRs), do not conduct the investigation and often turn out to be the perpetrators.

The murder of Ms. Shehla Masood and others calls for new protection mechanisms, if necessary, by amending the RTI Act, 2005.

i. Murder of RTI activists

The RTI applications are often seen by the officials as attempts to expose corruption, poor governance and human rights violations, among others. Demanding information, especially at the grassroots, are often met by threat and reprisals.

At least 12 RTI activists, including Ms Masood, have been killed for seeking information under the RTI Act so far since 2010. Few others were killed earlier.

On 2 March 2011, Niyamat Ansari, a NREGA activist, was beaten to death by unidentified persons after he was dragged out of his house at Jerua village in Latehar district of Jharkhand. Mr Ansari had exposed corruption in the NREGA by contractors through the RTI Act and based on his complaints three persons, including Block Development Officer Kailash Sahu were arrested for defalcation of funds.[2]

On 27 August 2010, RTI activist Ramdas Ghadegavkar (43 years) was killed allegedly for exposing corruption in public distribution system (PDS) and sand mafia in Nanded, Maharashtra.[3]

On 25 July 2010, a Uttar Pradesh police home guard identified as Babbu Singh was killed allegedly for seeking information about government funds and work done by his village pradhan (chief) at Katghar village in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh.[4]

On 20 July 2010, two unidentified assailants shot dead Amit Jethwa, RTI and environment activist, near the Gujarat High Court. Mr Jethwa, who was the president of Gir Nature Youth Club, had filed several petitions against the Forest Department and also filed a public interest litigation (PIL) on illegal mining in the Gir forests of Junagadh district.[5]

On 22 May 2010, Dattatray Patil was killed allegedly for exposing various malpractices and siphoning off public funds at Ichalkaranji in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra.[6]

On 20 April 2010, RTI activist Vitthal Gite (39 years) was killed allegedly for exposing irregularities in a school at Waghbet village in Beed district of Maharashtra.[7]

On 11 April 2010, Sola Ranga Rao was killed allegedly for seeking information about fund meant for a pipeline at Sitarampuram village in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.[8]

On 26 February 2010, RTI activist Arun Sawant was killed allegedly for fighting administrative corruption in Thane in Maharashtra.[9]

On 14 February 2010, Shashidhar Mishra was killed for exposing several scams in welfare schemes through the RTI Act at Phulwaria village under Bararuni-Phulwaria police station in Begusarai district in Bihar.[10]

On 11 February 2010, Vishram Laxman Dodiya of Ahmedabad in Gujarat was found murdered shortly after meeting officials of Torrent Power Company.[11] The deceased had filed an application under RTI Act to get details about the illegal electricity connection obtained by the company.[12]

On 13 January 2010, RTI activist Satish Shetty (38 years) who exposed many land scams at Talegaon Dabhade was killed near Pune, Maharashtra.[13]

ii. Attempts on the lives of RTI activists

Many have survived the attacks. In the first six months of 2011 alone, many attacks were reported. While many incidents go unreported.

On 21 August 2011, RTI activist Jaisukh Bambhania (39 years), a resident of Union Territory of Diu, was attacked with sharp weapons and pipes and acid thrown on him by unidentified persons alleged to be officials and politicians at Una in Junagadh district

of Gujarat. The victim had sought information in connection with the construction of an alleged illegal restaurant and bogus licences issued by Road Transport Office to bike vendors.[14]

On 24 June 2011, RTI activist Bhagu Devani (72 years) was stabbed in Porbandar, Gujarat by five to six people. The activist has accused a former BJP minister and two others for illegal construction of a hotel and a building.[15]

On 18 April 2011, three RTI activists Popat Pandurang Barge (37 years), Vishal Chandrakant Pawar (37 years) and Vishal Pandurang Barge (35 years) were attacked allegedly by members of a political party at Phaltan taluka in Satara district of Maharashtra.[16]

On 5 April 2011, RTI activist Dilip Jaiswal was beaten up by three officials of Regional Transport Office identified as Kishore Chimnikar, Ram Wandile and Pradeep Gattewar for seeking information in Nagpur City, Maharashtra.[17]

On 3 March 2011, Dalit RTI activist Mangal Ram Meghwal was beaten up and abused by Sarpanch Gulam Shah and others for seeking information on work done under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) at Bamgore village in Barmer district of Rajasthan.[18]

On 19 February 2011, RTI activist Santosh Daundkar was attacked allegedly for filing complaints against a construction company for developing a plot of land illegally in the Nagpada area in Mumbai, Maharashtra.[19]

On 10 February 2011, RTI activist Jagdish Sharma was injured and his daughter-in-law killed by the Sarpanch for exposing corruption at Chandrawal village in Fatehabad district, Haryana.[20]

On 26 January 2011, Amarnath Pandey (55 years) was seriously injured after being shot at allegedly for trying to expose corruption in Deepnagar locality in Sonebhadra in Uttar Pradesh.[21]

On 25 January 2011, RTI activist Vikrant Karnik was attacked allegedly for trying to expose illegal activities against builder and a politician at Ghantali in Thane (West), Maharashtra.[22]

On 17 January 2011, RTI activist Safdar Ali was beaten up by unidentified persons at Bhandoga area in Doda district in Jammu and Kashmir for seeking information against misappropriation of funds in the construction of a village tank.[23]

On 17 January 2011, RTI activist Salman Reddy sustained severe injuries after being attacked by unidentified persons for seeking information under the RTI Act on the outskirts of Rayagada town in Rayagada district, Orissa.[24]

On 2 January 2011, RTI activist Yashwant Gavand (42 years) sustained multiple head

injuries after being attacked by about 30 people in Bhandup in Mumbai, Maharashtra for exposing corruption.[25]

On 2 January 2011, RTI activist Arun Mane was attacked by unidentified persons in his shop at Jijamata Chowk in Telegaon-Dabhade, in Maharashtra for allegedly pursuing the cases of slain activist Satish Shetty.[26]

Many were threatened and attacked in 2010.

In September 2010, RTI activist Anwar Sheikh approached the Bombay High Court seeking protection after he was threatened with death for exposing an illegal land transfer in Vikhroli area in Mumbai, Maharashtra.[27]

On 8 August 2010, RTI activist Budhai Kumar was attacked allegedly by goons of the chairman of Nagar Panchayat of Sitapur district in Uttar Pradesh for seeking information under the RTI Act.[28]

On 14 July 2010, RTI activist Ashok Kumar Shinde was beaten up by unidentified persons for seeking information under the RTI Act and filing a PIL against the Public Works Department in Mumbai, Maharashtra.[29]

On 31 May 2010, RTI activist Ghulam Nabi Shah of Budgam, Jammu and Kashmir was beaten up for seeking information regarding Indira Awas Yojana and NREGA funds from Block Development Officer (BDO) of Khansahib.[30]

On 17 April 2010, RTI activist Mulkh Raj of Ramnagar was threatened with death and driven from his village after he filed an RTI application seeking information from a school.[31]

iii. False cases and harassment

Many RTI activists have been implicated in false cases to stifle their voices.

On 6 June 2011, an attempt was made to frame RTI activist Payi Gyadi by planting a pistol and explosives in his car in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. Mr Gyadi had exposed through the RTI Act, the illegal appointments in various departments of the state government on the basis of favouritism and recommendations by some politicians of the state in connivance with a high-ranking officer of the state through fake certificates. Earlier on 4 March 2011, Mr Gyadi lodged an FIR in the Itanagar Police Station against senior Cabinet Minister for Health and Family Welfare and Rural Works Department Atum Welly and Chief Information Commissioner Y.D. Thongchi for their involvement in favouring illegal appointments in the government departments. Later, police arrested three persons for trying to frame Mr Gyadi.[32]

On 28 May 2011, RTI activist Ramesh Agarwal was arrested and chained to a hospital bed in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh. Agarwal was arrested based on a complaint filed by the Jindals. The complaint was filed allegedly for exposing environmental violations

by the Jindals business group, which resulted in the cancellation of the environment clearance by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.[33]

On 11 April 2011, RTI activist Pawan Sharma, a resident of Shalimar Garden-II in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, was arrested allegedly on false charges of extortion and criminal intimidation case filed on 8 April 2011. Mr Sharma had exposed the nexus between builders and officials of the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) to allow illegal construction through the RTI Act. He was later released on bail. However, another FIR was filed and Mr Sharma was arrested on the same charges on 11 July 2011.[34]

On 9 March 2011, RTI activist Mary Anne Pohshna was arrested by the police in an alleged false case in Meghalaya. Mary Anne Pohshna with another activist Agnes Kharshiing were framed in a false criminal case at the behest of police officials. Agnes Kharshiing had in 2009 filed a RTI application seeking information pertaining to the jailbreak and subsequent custodial killing of undertial Fullmoon Dhar in June 2009 who was allegedly killed in a fake encounter.[35]

On 2 March 2011, RTI activist Mr Emmanuel was allegedly threatened by the police not to file RTI queries regarding works undertaken by an MLA in Chirala in Andhra Pradesh. The activist alleged that the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Chirala had threatened him to charge him with having links with the Maoists if he continues with his RTI activism.[36]

On 11 February 2011, RTI activist Venkatesh Bhovi, who was named in a complaint filed before the Lokayukta of Karnataka on the misuse of the RTI Act, alleged that the charges against him were false. Mr Bhovi was reportedly instrumental in exposing several scams in various government agencies.[37]

On 6 August 2010, RTI activist Davinder Khurana (60 years), a physically challenged, was arrested in an alleged false case in Ludhiana, Punjab. The activist was accused of beating a ration depot owner with sticks. However, the victim alleged he was framed in a false case for seeking information from the Food and Civil Supplies Department regarding the total number of beneficiaries of the depot, which resulted in his harassment prompting him to file complaint with the State Information Commission. Earlier on the same day before he was arrested, State Information Commissioner P K Verma asked the Director General of Police, Punjab for an immediate enquiry into the allegation.[38]

In May 2010, Goverdhan Singh (32 years) paid a heavy price for running a campaign against corruption in his native district of Bikaner, Rajasthan. Mr Singh filed about 100 RTI applications which exposed corruption in banks and government departments. But things got uncomfortable for him when he filed RTI applications asking information

about the properties and assets of police personnel. Overnight there were nine FIRs lodged against him. The police also raided his house, seized his car and locked his office and his family members were being constantly harassed. The state government was forced to transfer the Superintendent of Police, Bikaner following the investigation conducted by the People's Union for Civil Liberties.[39]

On 14 March 2010, five RTI activists were arrested and detained at the Chadoora police station in Budgam, Jammu and Kashmir allegedly on false charges of robbery, assault etc. According to the victims, the wife of a village headman leveled false charges of beating, stealing of gold ornaments of Rs 30,000 etc against them on 27 February 2010.[40]

iv. Social ostrasization of the RTI activists

RTI activists also faced social ostracisation and fined by the village council (panchayat) for seeking information under the RTI Act.

On 10 August 2011, three RTI activists identified as Nelapati Papireddy (who is blind by birth), Pachalla Suryanarayana Reddy and Kovuru Satyanarayana Reddy sought police protection after the village elders of Gollalamamida in Pedapudi mandal in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh imposed a social boycott on them. The activists had exposed irregularities by officials.[41]

Again in August 2011, RTI activist Th Biren Singh (55 years) was ostracised by the residents allegedly influenced by the local politicians in his own village in Manipur's Imphal East district. Mr Singh had filed an RTI application enquiring about the construction of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan school building in an unauthorized land.[42]

On 4 July 2011, 17 families were ostracized by a village council of Mawsynram village in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya for seeking information under the RTI Act. The villagers sought information from the village authorities about the denial of food grains to them.[43]

On 1 February 2011, social activist Bobby Basaiawmoit alleged that he was imposed a fine of Rs 500 by the Dorbar (Council) of Mairangbah in Meghalaya for filing an RTI to seek information about appointment of a PDS dealer.[44] He was allegedly summoned by the Council three times where he was mocked at by the Council elders, abused and even threatened to ostracize him.[45]

On 12 August 2010, three women identified as Fatima Mynsong, Aquiline Songchan and Malinda Suting and their families were ostracized by the Dorban Shnong (Village Council) for exposing scam under the NREGA from Jongsha village in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. As per the RTI findings, the Village Headman Karmelin Rynjah, who was the chairperson of the NREGA project in the village along with others forged

signatures of job cards holders of the village and kept them with him illegally and funds for the various NREGA projects were not accounted.[46]

v. Lack of protection: the key issue

Lack of protection remained one of the main reasons for increasing attacks on people seeking information.

The protection of the RTI activists has been raised in the parliament a number of times in 2010. The Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Shri V. Narayanasamy while replying to the Unstarred Question No. 3456 in the Lok Sabha on 1 December 2010 stated that reports have appeared in the media about the victimization of people who use Right to Information provisions. He, however, down played the situation by stating that the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) have adequate provisions enabling the law enforcement machinery in the States to take strict preventive and punitive action against such threats. He further stated that the Government of India has urged the Chief Ministers of the States and Administrators of Union Territories to promptly inquire into such instances, if any, and take action against the offenders

The murder of Ms. Masood is a testimony to the fact that IPC and CrPC are not adequate. Before her death, Ms Masood had written to the Madhya Pradesh Director-General of Police S.K. Raut, complaining against a particular senior police officer. In the letter, Ms. Masood had accused him (senior police officer) of harassment and making threatening calls to her, about which she had lodged a complaint at the city's Maharana Pratap Nagar Police Station in 2008. In her letter, she had categorically stated that "I fear for my life" but no protection was provided to her.[47] A week before her death, Ms Masood spoke to *The Hindu* newspaper correspondent about her plan to file a Public Interest Litigation petition against a private college which involved, according to her, "a very powerful group of people, including local political leaders".[48] Yet, no steps were taken which ultimately led to her death.

The police often refuse to file FIRs when activists approach them. For instance, four women RTI activists Ibempishak Takhellambam, Memcha Sagolsem, Anita Konjengbam and Momon Mayanglambam, members of Manipur Chanura Leishem Marup (also known as Macha Leima) were allegedly threatened with death by unidentified persons in Manipur on 2 April 2011. They received the threats following the refusal of the State Public Information Officer of Manipur government to inform them on action taken by local authorities of Pallel Gram Panchayat to implement the NREGA. On 6 April 2011, complaints were filed at the Kakching and Pallel police stations. However, officers of the two police stations reportedly refused to register an FIR on their case.[49]

Even in cases where an FIR has been registered, police investigation has been questionable. In March 2011, the Detection of Crime Branch (DCB), Ahmedabad probing into the murder of RTI activist Amit Jethava, had given a clean chit to the controversial BJP MP from Junagadh, Dinu Solanki accused of killing RTI activist Amit Jethwa. In its affidavit submitted to the Gujarat High Court, the DCB stated that they had interrogated Solanki on 16 September 2010 and found no evidence showing his involvement in the same. Jethava's father, Bhikha Jethava, alleged that the BJP MP was behind the killing since his son had filed a PIL in the High Court to check illegal mining in the periphery of Gir Sanctuary, which is allegedly going on at the behest of Dinu Solanki.[50]

In yet another incident, a case was registered on 27 January 2011 against Mangrol BJP MLA Bhagwan Kargathia for allegedly attempting to kill Ram Kargathia, the sarpanch of Madhapar village, and his father after they sought information under the RTI Act in connection with a mining site owned by the MLA inside forest area. Kargathia, however, has never been arrested or questioned at the end of June 2011.[51]

The Central Information Commission and its state equivalents do not have the mandate either to protect or provide shelter. They have been mere spectators.

On 13 July 2010, the Central Information Commission (CIC) directed the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to use his own 'sources' and look into the alleged threatening calls made to RTI applicant Manish Bhatnagar for seeking information about asset details of the Director of CBI. The Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah in his decision notice stated that if criminal intent is discovered, remedial action will be taken. RTI applicant Manish Bhatnagar had sought information about the details of service records, property statements, details of mobile connections and service perquisites availed by the CBI Director Ashwani Kumar. However, no reply was given and he approached the CIC for intervention alleging harassment by the CBI officials. Mr Bhatnagar also stated that he was receiving threatening calls from a mobile phone.[52] After CIC issued complaint notice to the CBI, the agency stated that the information sought was personal in nature and cannot be disclosed. It further said the information was sent to Bhatnagar but the dispatch was returned with remarks that address "remain closed". However, the CIC in its decision notice observed "There remains a shadow of doubt in this regard as the correspondence sent by the Commission to the same address has indeed been responded to by complainant."[53]

Earlier, in its order dated 30 September 2008, the Karnataka Information Commission issued instructions to the Director General of Police (DGP) that police personnel should

not visit RTI Applicants nor ask them to come to the Police Station unless they have asked for inspection of documents. RTI applicant Sunil Kumar Panchariya sought certain information with regard to a complaint registered at High Grounds Police Station. The petitioner stated that he was threatened by the constable from High Grounds Police Station stating that in case he went against local police he would face the consequences. While giving its order, the Karnataka Information Commission observed that "it has received several similar complaints against police stations, wherein it has been alleged that when an applicant files an application under RTI Act with a police station, either the constables from the police station repeatedly visit his house or he is repeatedly summoned to the police station. Commission is of the view that these practices are hindering the proper implementation of the provisions of the Act and exercise of the right to information by the citizens vis-à-vis police authorities."[54]

The governments even do not comply with court orders. On 7 May 2010, the Bombay High Court, while hearing the murder of RTI activists, Satish Shetty, ordered the State government to immediately provide police protection to any person or organisation that complains of threat of use of force or has been attacked. The High Court also directed the state government to set up provisions for speedy investigation of cases of threats or attacks against social activists, a monitoring system and a database of social activists, within 90 days.[55] However, the cases of attacks on activists in Maharashtra only increased.

III. Recommendations to the Government of India

There is an urgent need for amendment of the Right to Information Act, 2005 to provide for protection of those seeking information under the Act. Asian Centre for Human Rights recommends that a separate chapter, "Protection of those seeking information under the (RTI) Act", be inserted into the Act.

Asian Centre for Human Rights recommends the following:

"(1) Any applicant seeking information under this Act faces threats, shall have the following protection:

1. It shall be the duty of the Station House Officer to record the complaint of any person seeking under the Act against any kind of intimidation, coercion, threat, bribery, inducement, violence or threats of violence, whether given orally or in writing as First Information Report (FIR) under relevant provisions of Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code and place the FIR to the concerned Assistant Commissioner of Police/Deputy Superintendent of Police, the Concerned Information Commission, and the concerned magistrate/judge of the area within 24 hours.

2. The Magistrate shall issue necessary directions for physical protection of the concerned applicant under the Act and his/her family members and the expenses for providing protection including security protection shall be borne by the concerned State government. The protection measures shall be periodically reviewed by the concerned Judge.

3. Inquiry into such FIRs shall be conducted by a Police Officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police/Assistant Commissioner of Police.

4. Investigation into such FIRs shall be completed within 90 days.

5. Trial of the accused, if offences made out after investigation, shall be completed within six months after the conclusion of the investigation.

5. In a prosecution for an offence under this Chapter, concerned Public Information Officers, First Appellate Authorities and those directly related with the information sought under the Act shall be presumed to have abetted the offences against the complainant applicant under the Act unless proven contrary."

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Asian Centre for Human Rights is dedicated to promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Asian region by:

- **providing accurate and timely information and complaints to the National Human Rights Institutions, the United Nations bodies and mechanisms as appropriate;**
- **conducting investigation, research, campaigning and lobbying on country situations or individual cases;**
- **increasing the capacity of human rights defenders and civil society groups through relevant trainings on the use of national and international human rights procedures;**
- **providing input into international standard setting processes on human rights;**
- **providing legal, political and practical advice according to the needs of human rights defenders and civil society groups; and**
- **by securing the economic, social and cultural rights through rights-based approaches to development.**

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