

Call made from Jantar Mantar– Abki baar, humara adhikar!

Defend people's rights, Rise against corporate raj, Struggle for a democratic and secular society!

We, thousands of people who have gathered at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi on 2nd December 2014 representing social movements, campaigns and people's organisations from across the country are making this statement and call to the people of India.

Modi regime brings 'good times' for the corporate class, but 'tough times' for working people

Today India has entered an unprecedented period of history. Massive and rapid changes are being made at the political and social level, which are unlike anything our country has experienced since Independence. The BJP government led by **Prime Minister Modi has promised 'good times', but it is clear that this is only for the corporate class and political rulers, while very tough times lie ahead for the vast majority of ordinary people.** There is a systematic plan to withdraw even basic rights of working people, to impose an authoritarian regime while spreading communal hatred on a massive scale, in order to ensure corporate plunder. Existing social services and employment security are under threat, laws are being modified to accelerate corporate takeover of natural resources, and basic rights of workers are coming under attack.

Due to policies of 'Less Government', basic social services and social protection for working people are being withdrawn or majorly weakened. Plans are underway to massively downsize NREGA by restricting its implementation to only selected areas, after years of systematically dismantling the programme from within, reducing workers to distress migration and even bonded labour. A universal PDS had been demanded by the BJP in opposition, but now despite being in power for six months, the government has not even cared to implement the existing National Food Security Act 2013, instead it is now bringing in massive cuts in the food budgets. Health allocations by the central government have been massively slashed this year with serious consequences for essential health programmes, the scheme for free medicines is likely to be constricted to a totally inadequate set of 50 medicines, and various forms of privatization of health care including problematic health insurance schemes continue to be promoted. The Right to education is being denied by constricting funds, closing down schools and promoting privatization. Along with this education is being saffronised, with promotion of irrational and unscientific content. Pension is essential for working people who perform hard labour throughout their working lives, however the current pension is targeted only to the poor, and that too is pegged at the paltry level of Rs. 200 per month despite spiraling inflation. Yet the new government has maintained an ominous silence on the provision of pensions, which concerns one of the most vulnerable sections of our population.

Global capital is being asked to 'Make in India', with the intention to make India a hub for manufacturing based on a low cost workforce, inviting them to exploit our natural resources and cheap labour. Hence the act related to land acquisition and rehabilitation is being turned around to facilitate land grab by an increasingly aggressive corporate class, while denying

people their right to consent and fair rehabilitation. The Forests rights act is being diluted by removing the provision requiring Gram Sabha consent for forest land diversion, and denying community forest rights. Similarly, the Coal ordinance proposes to criminalize dissent, which indicates a future crackdown on democratic rights. Instead of improving their implementation, major labour laws such as Contract labour act, Factories act and Industrial disputes act have been significantly diluted by the BJP-led Rajasthan state government, and similar moves are underway to withdraw legal protection of workers at national level also. In public services, instead of appointing much-needed permanent staff, contractual workers are being employed on a large scale with low wages and insecure employment, leading to exploitation of staff and delivery of poor quality services.

With further weakening of provisions for Minimum support prices and decline in public investments in agriculture, the ongoing agrarian crisis will now assume massive proportions. Given this context and the added effects of displacement, marginal and small peasants are being pushed off their land. However next to no secure and safe jobs have been created in the manufacturing and mass services sectors, leading to crores of people being pushed to destitution and immiseration, and an exponential increase in migration of working people.

In this context, anticipating widespread popular discontent, repressive laws are being deployed to further constrict democratic rights including the right to dissent, key accountability provisions like RTI are being weakened, and mechanisms to ensure responsive services for people such as Grievance redressal are yet to be realised. Communal hatred and violence are being systematically perpetuated and the manufactured resurgence of Hindutva forces is increasingly threatening basic democratic freedoms, since this aggressive alliance of reactionary forces which resembles fascism, seeks to attack the democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution. The orchestration of large-scale communal violence in Western UP, followed by provoked incidents in Delhi and many other parts of the country, give us a glimpse of the inhuman and violent future for India which the RSS-BJP 'magicians' are conjuring.

While our rulers boast of our 'glorious traditions' and also about India becoming a 'modern' superpower, widespread and recurrent violence, including rapes and sexual assault, continue to be perpetuated against women in all parts of the country. Incidents of atrocities against Dalits, organised by powerful caste groups continue with regularity, as people from oppressed castes continue to face discrimination in education and jobs.

Confronting the Modi-led policy framework of corporate-raj

Given this unprecedented situation, we need to understand and challenge the core policy framework, which underlies the growing threat to people's rights on all fronts today. ***The new regime is planning to push through pro-corporate, anti-people policies in most brutal form,*** which earlier governments had not managed to push through. While the UPA government was also pursuing a pro-corporate agenda at the cost of working people, ***the Modi-led government has pressed the accelerator hard on pro-corporate economic policies, while putting a complete brake on social protection measures.***

It is clear that India is entering a time of unprecedented crisis, but this is also a time of

significant opportunity for diverse movements to unite their efforts and mobilise people. The alliance between globalised corporate class, aggressive Hindutva, and repressive state is becoming openly visible, in a manner never yet seen in this country. But we also need to keep in mind the tremendous vitality of movements and struggles of ordinary people across India today, which continue to expand despite the adverse policy environment. If these social movements and progressive forces can converge and collectively rise to the occasion, then there is major scope for combined mass mobilisation and transformative social action.

Given this entire context, we join our forces to ***call upon all social movements, people's organisations and progressive forces to launch a massive combined struggle*** that would challenge the entire established policy framework and system of social domination, which has been brought forth in its most aggressive form under the current regime. We need to powerfully resist all emerging specific attacks on popular entitlements, while demanding a comprehensive spectrum of rights, which are required by all ordinary people of this country to live a decent life. This would involve energetically defending democratic spaces, including the right to dissent and protest which are inscribed in our Constitution. We staunchly oppose aggressive Hindutva majoritarianism which is perpetuating widespread hatred and violence, and appeal to all democratic forces to resist growing communalization of public spaces, while striving for a genuinely secular society. We also affirm that an integral component of this process of convergence of movements would involve challenging gender, caste and social hierarchies, towards transformation of society in the direction of equity and social justice, and establishing an egalitarian social order.

While we oppose the dominant framework, we will also ***articulate a vision of the future that is radically different from the vision of its current rulers, while trying to reshape the national agenda from a people-centred perspective.*** Today ***the struggle for people's diverse rights, the fight for protecting democracy, and the movement for defending the secular fabric of society need to come together as part of a larger common convergence.*** We are entering a period where the challenge would be no less than ***a battle between two contending ideas of India.***

Hence we pledge to combine all our efforts and work tirelessly to defend the entire spectrum of people's rights in the present, while forging a radically different vision for the future of India, an India that would be for everyone, and not just for those who are exploiting and dominating the country today.

We must unite for rights to social services and social security!

We must unite to protect livelihoods and access to natural resources!

We must unite for the rights of labour!

We must unite to defend democracy!

We must unite to win a just and egalitarian society!

National Alliance of People's Movements, Pension Parishad, Right to Food campaign, Rashtriya Mazdoor Adhikar Morcha and over 80 other endorsing networks and organisations