

URGENT ALERT

Prohibition of a passport for Parvez IMROZ to go and receive Human Rights Prize in France

In spite of several requests since July 2006, Indian authorities refuse to give a passport to M. Parvez Imroz, human rights Lawyer in Srinagar(Kashmir) who heads the J&K coalition of Civil Society, to go and receive in France the eleventh « Ludovic-Trarieux » Prize 2006.

The Prize created in 1984 is awarded every year to a lawyer, regardless of nationality or Bar, who, by his work, will have illustrated his activity or his suffering, the defence of human rights, of defence rights, the supremacy of law, the struggle against racism and intolerance in any form, jointly by the HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTES OF THE BAR OF BORDEAUX, OF BRUSSELS and of PARIS and the EUROPEAN BAR HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE (IDHAE), after consulting humanitarian associations and NGOs.

The first winner of this Prize in 1985 was Nelson Mandela, then in jail. He was prevented to come in France to receive the Prize by the apartheid government of South Africa in 1985.

According to the rules of the award, the prize winner must attend the award ceremony, with takes plane in Bordeaux in the National School of the Magistra on Friday October 13th 2006 at 17 .30 p.m.

The above Institutes and lawyers of the Bar protest against the fact that a great Democracy as India prevents Mr Parvez Imroz, lawyer in Srinagar, to come in France and receive the prestigious human rights Prize for a lawyer "Ludovic Trarieux" on October 13th.

They think that the denial of a passport would be an unfair attack against human rights and do hope that this refusal could be dropped.

Parvez Imroz is a human rights lawyer and a civil rights activist in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir. He graduated in Science from Srinagar in the year 1972 and then got his LLB degree at the Law College Aligarh Muslim University in 1975. Imroz joined the J&K High Court as a lawyer in 1978. Since the end of the eighties, he has initiated and led campaigns for human rights in a context of grave violations, including killings, tortures and rapes, or forced "disappearances" with impunity. He is founder and President of the J&K Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) that works to build local alliances between Kashmiri civil society groups.

In response to the large volume of parents at the Jammu and Kashmir High court who were filing or pursuing habeas corpus petitions, Imroz founded in 1994 the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), which brings together hundreds of Kashmiri families whose members have been the victims of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (EID). The APDP is a collective campaigning organization that seeks truth and justice on this human rights issue in Kashmir. The APDP is not a human rights group but an association of those suffering by the State's tactics and they are campaigning for knowing the whereabouts of their missing relatives. Any person related to a victim of a disappearance could be a member of the association. The association has no political affiliations or political positions; it is an independent group seeking justice and information from the state.

Parvez Imroz has lost four colleagues in seven years at the hands of the security forces. Imroz's senior partner, H N Wanchoo, was assassinated in the early 1990s, and on April, 12, 1995, Parvez Imroz was shot when he was driving home after visiting a friend some eight kilometres from Srinagar. Two men armed with automatic weapons signalled him to stop. Imroz sped up, and as he passed beyond them he was hit in the upper left back. He lost control of the car and stopped in front of a mosque. Someone came out of the mosque and drove Imroz to the SMHS hospital. Fragments of AK-56 bullets were found in Imroz's upper back, and his left lung was damaged. After six days, Imroz was transferred to a hospital in Delhi, where he remained for fifteen days. When he returned to Srinagar, several militants of Hezb-ul Mujahedin apologized for shooting him, claiming that it was a case of mistaken identity. He was tempted to quit.

One year later, on March 8, 1996, Imroz had tea with another High Court lawyer specialising in human rights, Jalil Andrabi. Thirty minutes later, Andrabi and his wife were stopped by a unit of the 35 Rashtriya Rifles (35RR), an Indian paramilitary force.

On July 18, 2001, Imroz realized his dream, in Srinagar, he laid the foundation stone of a monument built by the APDP, in memory of Kashmiri men who have gone missing in the past 12 years of violence. In less than eight-hours, Indian police razed the foundation.

Parvez Imroz did not resign and founded the Public Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) that works extensively on the documentation of human rights violations and the dissemination of the information through its monthly dossier "The Informative Missive". The PCHR also provides free legal assistance to the victims of human rights violations. The PCHR has published a comprehensive report on Human Rights situation in Kashmir, which includes the time period of last 16 years. Besides documentation, the commission is providing free legal assistance to the victims of human rights violations. Thousands of victims have been benefited from the PCHR's free legal assistance.

Recently, in April 2003, Imroz organized a worldwide hunger strike, coordinated in different cities across the world, pressing for an end to disappearances, prosecution of perpetrators, and appointment of a commission to probe into all enforced disappearances. During the hunger strike the APDP received the letters of solidarity from the civil society groups from India and abroad. In March 2004, the Association of Disappeared Persons organised a protest in Srinagar. Violent protest demonstrations followed alleged police high-handedness and over a dozen people, mostly women, were injured. Witnesses said that police targeted women in a procession by the APDP heading towards the office of the United Nations who were demanding for the fate of their relatives who had gone missing in police custody during the last 13 years. Soon after the procession started from the APDP office, police used force to disperse it. Over a dozen women and the APDP patron, Parvez Imroz, were injured. Later police arrested 10 women and Parvez Imroz and they remained in custody for 7 hours.

On April 30, 2005 Imroz came out with a statement that he is receiving death threats from an unidentified man he called a government-sponsored gunman who came to his house at Kralpora area and that the Indian army and the Jammu and Kashmir government are conspiring to kill him.

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Loi Informatique et Libertés du 6.1.78

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