

Letter of Protest to the Indian Prime Minister on the Blacklisting, illegal detention and ill-treatment of Indian civil society representatives by the Singapore Government

Saturday 23 September 2006, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 19 September 2006).

To: Dr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
South Block
New Delhi

September 19, 2006

Subject: Blacklisting, illegal detention and ill-treatment of Indian civil society representatives by the Singapore Government

Dear Dr. Manmohan Singh:

You must be aware that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are having their Annual Meetings in Singapore, September 19-20, 2006. Prior to these meetings, the World Bank-IMF organized a civil society forum and other meetings and seminars with civil society representatives, which started on September 14

Several civil society representatives from around the world had been accredited by the World Bank-IMF to participate in these meetings.

As the Singapore Government refused to allow protests, marches and other outdoor events, the International Peoples' Forum vs, the IMF and World Bank (IPF), a platform of more than 100 civil society groups decided to organize peaceful seminars and conferences to protest the policies of the World Bank and the IMF in Batam, Indonesia, a 30 minutes ferry ride from Singapore.

While the events in Batam, which ended yesterday, successfully demonstrated to the world that many diverse civil society organisations and social movements can organize a protest meet in peace and unity, the Singapore Government, aided and abetted by the World Bank and the IMF, imposed totally unwarranted, undemocratic and draconian measures to stifle protests against the World Bank and the IMF.

First, they blacklisted 27 civil society participants accredited to the World Bank-IMF meetings from entering Singapore. According to a communication sent out by the World Bank-IMF staff quoting Mr. Goh Chye Boon, the Co-Chair of the Organising Committee for the Singapore 2006 Annual Meetings, the Singapore Government objected to the attendance of these participants "based on security and law and order considerations". They were barred from entering Singapore and if allowed entry at all would not be given access in to the Annual Meetings Venue.

Secondly, at least 54 other individuals from 17 organisations across the world who were transiting

through Singapore on their way to Batam, Indonesia, were detained for several hours at the Singapore's Changi airport without explanation, subjected to custodial interrogation and utmost humiliation, and many were deported back to their country of origin.

Till yesterday night, many more participants on their way back from Batam, faced problems upon re-entering Singapore, were detained for hours and interrogated.

Regrettably, many Indian participants from various civil society organisations and social movements were victims of these illegal and highly objectionable acts of the Singapore Government.

The blacklist prepared by the Singapore Government includes Ms. Shalmali Guttal, an Indian citizen, working with the policy analysis organisation, Focus on the Global South. Though she was accredited by the World Bank-IMF to attend their Annual Meetings in Singapore and had a valid visa to enter Singapore, she was communicated by the World Bank-IMF and not the Government of Singapore, on September 8, 2006 that she is barred from entering Singapore and participating in the Annual Meetings. Shalmali Guttal has already written to the Ministers Anand Sharma and E Ahamed at the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, requesting that they 'take up the matter urgently with the Singapore Government, the World Bank and the IMF and urged the Indian Government to lodge a formal protest in this regard. Ms. Guttal also wrote to India's Executive Directors in the World Bank-IMF Board, Mr. Dhanendra Kumar and Mr. Zakir Ahmed Khan seeking clarification of the matter and the grounds on which she had been placed on this blacklist.

While the Singapore Government has neither provided any acceptable explanation for putting up such a blacklist and blocking participation in the Annual Meetings, nor did they notify the blacklisted persons that they will not be allowed to enter Singapore, your UPA Government and the Ministry of External Affairs have not taken any action so far. The Ministry as well as India's Executive Directors in the World Bank-IMF have also not responded to Ms. Guttal's letter.

Mr. Wilfred D' Costa, the General Secretary of INSAF, Mr. K Raghu and Mr. Biswaranjan Mishra, both representing the National Confederation of Officers' Association (NCOA) were detained at the Singapore airport while on transit to Batam, Indonesia. Mr. D' Costa was detained for 12 hours and Mr. Raghu and Mr. Mishra were detained for 38 hours, subjected to intense and humiliating interrogation, and deported back to India after being finger printed and photographed like criminals. They were not allowed to speak to anyone or make a phone call. Neither was the Indian Embassy informed about the detentions and deportations.

Yesterday, on September 18, 2006, three Indian representatives of National Centre for Labour (NCL) including Mr. N P Sami and Dr. Sarat Babu were detained at the Singapore ferry station while coming back from Batam, Indonesia, on their way home. Till late evening they were not released. Mr. Virendra Kumar from Delhi was similarly subjected to detention and interrogation for more than 2 hours at the ferry station.

We are extremely concerned by these developments. We notice a familiar pattern in which institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collusion with governments, manage to trample on democracy and human rights wherever they choose to hold their respective meetings.. Your own UPA government - along with the State Government of Andhra Pradesh - was responsible in May this year for banning a film festival - voices of resistance - and protests at the venue of the ADB's Annual Governors' Meeting in Hyderabad!

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn all actions that violate the basic civil liberties of peoples, suppress their rights to express dissent and associate and profile those who choose to exercise these rights as security threats. We demand that the Indian Government lodge a formal protest with the

Government of Singapore against the blacklisting, detentions and deportations of Indian citizens as detailed above and conduct an enquiry into these incidents followed up by appropriate steps to protect the democratic rights of the citizens of this country.

As an influential Member Government of the World Bank-IMF, we urge you to look in to the role played by the World Bank and the IMF in abetting the Singapore Government to create an unwarranted climate of insecurity and siege, and stifle peaceful and rightful events to express dissent, such as conferences, press conferences and protest actions.

Sincerely Yours,

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CC to:

Minister for External Affairs