

# Bhim Army Protests in Delhi, Thousands Congregate to Demand Chandrashekhar's Release

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**The state has been extending Azad's detention under the National Security Act after its expiry every three months.**



**New Delhi:** Thousands from around the country gathered in Delhi on August 19 under the banner of the Bhim Army from western Uttar Pradesh to demand the release of leader Chandrashekhar Azad, who has been in jail since June 2017. The protestors also demanded the release of those still in jail after the April 2 Bharat Bandh, the arrest of those accused in the lynching of a Dalit youth in Meerut earlier this month and the arrest of those responsible for the Bhima Koregaon violence, and raised issues concerning other 'oppressed' communities including farmers, Muslims, women and tribals.

The protestors who had gathered on Parliament Street in central Delhi had travelled from various parts of the country, but most of them came from UP – Bhim army's home state.

Manoj Gautam had travelled from Saharanpur in western UP. "Our leader (Azad) has been in jail for a year and a half only for standing up for our rights. It clearly shows how this government wants to treat the Dalits of this country. We should remain quiet and suffer injustices. If we speak up we will either be killed or put behind bars," he said.

After [caste-related violence broke out](#) in Saharanpur in May 2017, Azad and several others were booked in 27 separate cases. In November, however, the Allahabad high court granted bail to the Bhim Army leader, noting that the charges were [politically motivated](#). A day later, the Uttar Pradesh government [booked](#) Azad under the draconian National Security Act (NSA), using which the state can place any citizen under preventive detention without legal recourse. Since then the state has extended the NSA on Azad after its expiry every three months.

The NSA allows the state government to detain any person it feels poses a 'threat to the security of India' or could 'disrupt public order' for a period extending up to two years. After the initial order is made, an advisory board – formed by the state government itself – can review the detention. The

accused is not even allowed representation by a lawyer.

“The NSA is being used to settle political scores by the UP government. A leader of the oppressed was being born in UP and the Brahmanvadi (ideology that believes in the superiority of Brahmins) BJP government did not like that. There is no other reason for him to be in jail. No weapons were recovered. The government has never told anyone what anti-national activities he was planning. This is purely because they don’t want to crush the Dalit movement,” said Vinay Ratan Singh.

Recently Azad’s lawyers approached the Supreme Court [challenging](#) the detention and seeking compensation for the ‘illegal’ detention. The Supreme Court has now issued a notice to the UP government and to the district magistrate of Saharanpur, who have to respond within four weeks.

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