

Shri Manmohan Singh,
Prime Minister of India,
Prime Minister's Office,
Room 152, South Block,
New Delhi, INDIA

December 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

The image of India as an economic force to be reckoned with today is sadly often accompanied by the image of a democracy gone awry. The increasing attacks, to the point of murder, on activists who use the Right to Information Act only seem to validate this second image.

The brutal attacks and murders of RTI activists these two years alone further strengthens the negative perception on those who are supposed to uphold the law, particularly the police and the judiciary.

It is disheartening especially for those who had high hopes for this Act to help bring back accountability and peoples' participation. It is also life threatening as RTI activists continue to use it despite receiving death threats and being subjected to various forms of harassment. Most notable is the lack of protection afforded to those who risk themselves in exposing graft and corruption, and the delays in investigating the cases.

The government has recently announced to critically review the RTI Act. We contend that it is not the Act which needs review, but the protection framework that its implementers should be using to ensure that the purpose of the law is accomplished. To this end, we welcome your announcement that a Protection of Whistleblowers Bill will soon be enacted. Yet again, this proposed new law will be useless if the institutions tasked with the delivery of justice are not reviewed and reformed.

A new law and review of institutions would be in line with India's international human rights obligations. In particular, the Declaration on the Protection for Human Rights Defenders states that human rights defenders, the likes of RTI activists, should be provided with effective remedy, not least a "prompt and impartial investigation into the alleged violations....as well as the enforcement of the decisions of judgments". (A/65/223, para.44) In view of the above, we hereby request the following:

1. Review of existing protection framework for whistleblowers;
2. Enact the promised Protection of Whistleblowers Bill; and
3. Investigate without further delay the killings of RTI activists.

The RTI Act also provides, as per Section 26(1), for the development and organization of "educational programmes to advance the understanding of the public...as to how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act". We further request that this be put into action at all levels of government. The enactment of a right to information law was one hopeful sign to the world that India is getting its act together, but attacks on RTI activists are surely

disputing that. We sincerely appeal that you act to stop further attacks on RTI activists, provide protection, investigate the related killings and uphold India's international human rights agreements.

Yours truly,

[SIGNATORIES OF THIS LETTER BELOW]

cc. to:
Diplomatic representatives of India in my countries.

Shri P. Chidambaram
Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
North Block, New Delhi - 110001

December 2011

Dear Ministry,

The image of India as an economic force to be reckoned with today is sadly often accompanied by the image of a democracy gone awry. The increasing attacks, to the point of murder, on activists who use the Right to Information Act only seem to validate this second image.

The brutal attacks and murders of RTI activists these two years alone further strengthens the negative perception on those who are supposed to uphold the law, particularly the police and the judiciary.

It is disheartening especially for those who had high hopes for this Act to help bring back accountability and peoples' participation. It is also life threatening as RTI activists continue to use it despite receiving death threats and being subjected to various forms of harassment. Most notable is the lack of protection afforded to those who risk themselves in exposing graft and corruption, and the delays in investigating the cases.

The government has recently announced to critically review the RTI Act. We contend that it is not the Act which needs review, but the protection framework that its implementers should be using to ensure that the purpose of the law is accomplished. To this end, we welcome your announcement that a Protection of Whistleblowers Bill will soon be enacted. Yet again, this proposed new law will be useless if the institutions tasked with the delivery of justice are not reviewed and reformed.

A new law and review of institutions would be in line with India's international human rights obligations. In particular, the Declaration on the Protection for Human Rights Defenders states that human rights defenders, the likes of RTI activists, should be provided with effective remedy, not least a "prompt and impartial investigation into the alleged violations....as well as the enforcement of the decisions of judgments". (A/65/223, para.44) In view of the above, we hereby request the following:

1. Review of existing protection framework for whistleblowers;
2. Enact the promised Protection of Whistleblowers Bill; and
3. Investigate without further delay the killings of RTI activists.

The RTI Act also provides, as per Section 26(1), for the development and organization of "educational programmes to advance the understanding of the public...as to how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act". We further request that this be put into action at all levels of government. The enactment of a right to information law was one hopeful sign to the world that India is getting its act together, but attacks on RTI activists are surely disputing that. We sincerely appeal that you act to stop further attacks on RTI

activists, provide protection, investigate the related killings and uphold India's international human rights agreements.

Yours truly,

[SIGNATORIES OF THIS LETTER BELOW]

cc. to:
Diplomatic representatives of India in my countries.

Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission
Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg,
New Delhi-110001, INDIA

December 2011

Dear Chairperson,

The image of India as an economic force to be reckoned with today is sadly often accompanied by the image of a democracy gone awry. The increasing attacks, to the point of murder, on activists who use the Right to Information Act only seem to validate this second image.

The brutal attacks and murders of RTI activists these two years alone further strengthens the negative perception on those who are supposed to uphold the law, particularly the police and the judiciary.

It is disheartening especially for those who had high hopes for this Act to help bring back accountability and peoples' participation. It is also life threatening as RTI activists continue to use it despite receiving death threats and being subjected to various forms of harassment. Most notable is the lack of protection afforded to those who risk themselves in exposing graft and corruption, and the delays in investigating the cases.

The government has recently announced to critically review the RTI Act. We contend that it is not the Act which needs review, but the protection framework that its implementers should be using to ensure that the purpose of the law is accomplished. To this end, we welcome your announcement that a Protection of Whistleblowers Bill will soon be enacted. Yet again, this proposed new law will be useless if the institutions tasked with the delivery of justice are not reviewed and reformed.

A new law and review of institutions would be in line with India's international human rights obligations. In particular, the Declaration on the Protection for Human Rights Defenders states that human rights defenders, the likes of RTI activists, should be provided with effective remedy, not least a "prompt and impartial investigation into the alleged violations....as well as the enforcement of the decisions of judgments". (A/65/223, para.44) In view of the above, we hereby request the following:

1. Review of existing protection framework for whistleblowers;
2. Enact the promised Protection of Whistleblowers Bill; and
3. Investigate without further delay the killings of RTI activists.

The RTI Act also provides, as per Section 26(1), for the development and organization of "educational programmes to advance the understanding of the public...as to how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act". We further request that this be put into action at all levels of government. The enactment of a right to information law was one hopeful sign to the world that India is getting its act together, but attacks on RTI activists are surely disputing that. We sincerely appeal that you act to stop further attacks on RTI

activists, provide protection, investigate the related killings and uphold India's international human rights agreements.

Yours truly,

[SIGNATORIES OF THIS LETTER BELOW]

cc. to:
Diplomatic representatives of India in my countries.