

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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Lok Sabha Elections, 2014: Fascism, Democracy's Challenges and Role of Citizens.

Vote for Principled Politics: USE NOTA effectively

As the voting dates for the Lok Sabha election, 2014 come closer, the entire country is witnessing the naked drama of corrupt, caste-communal oriented, immoral, unprincipled alliances amongst and between political parties with the only intention of somehow coming to power. Irrespective of whether it is an alliance led by a national or regional party(ies), alliance logic is based on unprincipled, ethics-less and immoral considerations. PUCL through this statement, wishes to bring to the attention of the people of India, the serious threat to democracy itself and the human rights challenges posed by the electoral alliances and calls upon the common citizen of India to rise up and challenge all the political parties about their commitment to democracy, rule of law, equitable and sustainable development and the welfare of the common citizen.

1. Challenge to democracy: Threat of Fascism and consolidation of a police state

PUCL is extremely worried that the type of electoral alliances and the total lack of choice to the people of India. The human rights record of none of the major alliances inspires confidence that if they come to power they will respect the rule of law, the Indian Constitution and human rights. In the last 6 months itself, across India, we have witnessed ugly face of violent, communal intolerance, whether it is in the demand to ban history books (as for example Wendy Donniger's books on Hinduism) or the opposition to films or dramas on communal considerations or the murderous rise of Khap Panchayats with all the major political parties remaining collusively silent or the killing of RTI activists and social workers and others.

The rise of political intolerance is not just a threat to fundamental freedom of right and expression but undermines the very basis of democratic politics – which is the RIGHT TO DISSENT. This is particularly crucial when increasingly corporate interest are controlling policy making and development policies are turning anti-people.

PUCL would like to bring to the attention of citizens of India, that across the country, all governments are using the police as weapons and abusing the law as a means to break down people's struggles by violently suppressing them, arresting them under draconian laws like

anti-sedition laws, UAPA and other anti-people laws.

2. Destructive Development and the murder of Directive Principles of State Policy!

Irrespective of whether it is BJP or Congress or regional parties like the SP, BSP, AIADMK or TMC one common factor in all their state policies. It is the open support to a development policy which supports big industrial and mining projects which throws out farmers, tribals and rural and urban poor, enables total capture of all common resources like land, water, minerals and other resources by corrupt and venal industrial interests and criminalises local people who fight against these unjust, unfair laws and policies.

Agitation against Mithi Viridi nuclear plant or the extreme ground water pollution in Baroda, Vapi or Bharuch industrial zones in Gujarat or the POSCO struggle in Odisha or Koodankulam anti-nuclear plant struggle in Tamil Nadu or anti-Polavaram struggle in AP – the list is endless.

Increasingly it is becoming clear that big corporate lobbies are financing political parties. Many sections of the media are also controlled by corporate interests. All this seriously threatens democracy and democratic way of life.

Development has become destructive, for most ordinary Indians. None of the political parties are worried about or talk about devastation of ground water tables, chemical and air pollution, contamination of water bodies, destruction of eco-systems including fisheries systems and a malnutrition time bomb which is making India a nation of stunted people. PUCL would like to stress that a close scrutiny of the ‘Gujarat development’ model or the UPA’s growth story both disclose the story of crony capitalism, destructive development and open and collusive looting and plundering of natural resources of the people of India. That both the political formations are no different is revealed by the silence of both the principal national parties – BJP and Congress – and their allies to making public the Justice MB Shah Commission report on coal mining in all the states of India.

3. Development with dignity and democracy: The Promise of the Indian Constitution

PUCL would like to stress to the citizens of India, that the Directive Principles of State Policy demand that state policies do not increase divide between rich and poor and do not increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The Indian Constitution repeatedly highlights that the right to life, to live with dignity, right to health, environment and water and other basic rights are fundamental rights not to be mortgaged or sold away by governments to corporate interests.

PUCL calls upon the citizens to be vigilant and to vigorously question all political parties on their support to pro-people, sustainable, equitable development policies. What is at stake is the future of India.

4. NOTA: First step to Recall of Representatives - Call to the citizen to use widely

PUCL calls upon all citizens to come out and cast their vote and that they are not entirely powerless to counter corrupt political parties who view elections as a once in 5 years gamble. Today the citizen has the right to make known their opposition to unprincipled politics by

using NOTA (None of the Above) button in the voting machine.

We would like to point out that wherever citizens do not find candidates who respect human rights and the Indian constitution or supports a pro-people, pro-environment sustainable development policy, they can express their displeasure through using NOTA.

PUCL was also responsible for the introduction of NOTA. We feel that NOTA is an important right available to the voter from this election. This will eventually lead to the next step of electoral reform – recalling of elected representatives, if they do not live up to their promises, by the voters in their constituencies.

Sd./-

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