

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

RAJASTHAN STATE UNIT

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Founded 1976 • A national civil liberties and human rights organisation

PRESS NOTE

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PUCL Rajasthan urges the Chief Justice of India to intervene to safeguard judicial integrity, and demands the immediate appointment of a regular Chief Justice to the Rajasthan High Court

The People's Union for Civil Liberties, Rajasthan, views with the gravest concern the allegations levelled against Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma, Acting Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court, by Justice Sandeep Mehta of the Supreme Court of India. In three letters dated 2, 10 and 17 August 2026 addressed to the Chief Justice of India, Justice Mehta has, according to reports in the national press, alleged maladministration, favouritism and the selective listing of cases contrary to settled procedure, and has stated that judges of the Rajasthan High Court have complained to him of being threatened with retributive action. He has sought the appointment of a Chief Justice from outside the State with immediate effect. PUCL Rajasthan urges the Chief Justice of India to intervene without delay to protect the integrity of the institution.

That a sitting judge of the Supreme Court has found it necessary to place a complaint of this nature on record, in writing, against the head of a High Court is an extraordinary event. Allegations of the manipulation of listing and of the intimidation of judges strike at the working of the entire justice delivery system. PUCL Rajasthan is conscious that these remain allegations which are yet to be tested, and that the Chief Justice of India has stated that they cannot be treated as findings and that Justice Sharma must be given an opportunity to respond. Our demand is therefore not for a verdict, but for a transparent, time-bound and institutionally credible process — and for that process to be seen to be at work.

PUCL Rajasthan is equally concerned that a State as large as Rajasthan has been left without a regular Chief Justice for over eleven months. Since the retirement of Chief Justice K. R. Shriram on 27 September 2025, the High Court has functioned under an Acting Chief Justice appointed under Article 223 of the Constitution. A vacancy of this duration raises questions about the working of the Collegium itself. It is also relevant that the Rajasthan High Court is Justice Sharma's parent High Court and that he is a resident of the State — an arrangement that sits uneasily with the long-settled convention that a High Court should be headed by a Chief Justice drawn from outside it. PUCL Rajasthan demands that a regular Chief Justice be appointed to the Rajasthan High Court forthwith.

Concerns about Justice Sharma's administrative functioning are not new. Members of the Bar have objected to his decisions on earlier occasions, and a lawyers' body is reported to have sought his transfer months before the present letters were written. Among the matters now in the public domain is the listing, before Justice Sharma's own Bench at the Jaipur seat, of a batch of appeals concerning valuable land in Udaipur — although, as Justice Mehta has pointed out, those matters fell within the jurisdiction of the principal seat at Jodhpur, on the strength of an earlier judgment delivered by Justice Sharma himself. That a judge due to demit office on 26 September 2026 should take a particular interest in such matters is a circumstance that calls for scrutiny. PUCL Rajasthan demands that the administrative decisions and listing practices of this tenure be independently examined and that appropriate action follow.

We note that the Rajasthan High Court Lawyers Association has resolved upon a strike and that Justice Sharma has, for the present, opted out of judicial sittings. Such a step, however, is no substitute for a decision by the competent authority.

PUCL Rajasthan appeals to the Chief Justice of India, as the guardian of the judicial system, to dispel every doubt that this episode has raised, so that the faith and confidence of the people in the administration of justice is preserved. We urge the Collegium to hear all concerned fairly and to take the necessary action swiftly.

PUCL Rajasthan places on record its appreciation of the courage shown by Justice Sandeep Mehta in raising his voice in defence of the institution while still holding office, and urges that he be afforded the fullest institutional protection.

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