

AIP

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The International Peoples Assembly strongly condemns the illegal arrests of Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty of NewsClick and intimidation of more than 50 journalists by the Delhi Police backed by the Modi regime. Their arrest based on a First Information Report that – under the terms of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967 – gives the authorities broad leeway. The most recent escalation in attacks against NewsClick is connected to the irresponsible piece of a New York Times article which came out in the month of August. The article insinuated that the Indian publication was part of global operation aimed at promoting the interests of the Chinese government.

The accusations that have come out in the FIR and in the interrogation of dozens of NewsClick journalists are befuddling:

1. The Police questions suggest that it was inappropriate if not anti-national for the journalists to cover the great struggles of the Indian people, particularly the farmers struggle.

2. The Police alleges that Newslick is the recipient of Chinese (government or private) funds and that it is obliged to follow the Chinese (government or private) direction.

On the first score, it is unconstitutional to prevent a journalist from legally covering activities of the public interest in India. On the second score, the lawyer who was party to the decision by Worldwide Media to make an investment into Newslick in 2018 has made a statement to say that there is simply no Chinese money involved in that transaction.

Newslick is caught, therefore, in the middle of a regional contest between India and China and in the broader New Cold War imposed by the United States on Asia.

Both Prabir and Amit have been actively involved in building the IPA and the DoH, both processes benefitting from their wisdom and efforts from the very start. We believe that this arrest is not just an attack on Newslick and on press freedom within India, but it is partly an attack on the attempt to create a platform for the Asian left in general.

We call upon our friends across the world to join us in demanding the immediate release of Prabir and Amit and in demanding the end to the intimidation and harassment of journalists and researchers in India.



Mística during the III International Dilemmas of Humanity Conference. Photo: Rafael Stédile.

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