

Medico Friend Circle statement of solidarity with labour and human rights advocate Sudha Bharadwaj and condemning the mischievous attack on her by Republic TV

We the undersigned wish to register our condemnation and outrage, at the targeting of labour & human rights advocate Sudha Bharadwaj by Republic TV. Sudha Bharadwaj is the National Secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Vice President of the Indian Association of Progressive Lawyers and Visiting Professor at the National Law University Delhi. She is widely known for her three decades of work as a trade unionist, human rights defender, environmental lawyer and a respected advisor to several state institutions including the state legal aid bodies and the National Human Rights Commission.

Sudha Bharadwaj is also the founder of Janhit (a collective of lawyers who work on legal aid to groups) and is associated with the late Shankar Guha Niyogi's Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, a labour union in Dalli Rajhara town. She works closely with the members of the union of contract workers, striving to overcome divisions in the working class, to listen to the problems faced by these workers and look for a resolution. And every day, without fail, she goes to the courts to fight the cases of the underprivileged—mostly Adivasis, minorities, Dalits and the poor.

Sudha Bharadwaj has been one of the key persons supporting and facilitating the work of Shahid Hospital, built and run for the mine workers of Dalli Rajhara and the surrounding areas. This hospital is a model institution run on a no profit/no loss basis out of support from the community.

She has also been involved in significant work in relation to occupational health of mineworkers and workers in informal industry, both areas known for their abysmal care and lack of concern for the ill.

Sudha Bharadwaj has made an important contribution to the health of the community through her work to ensure that the poor and marginalized get a fair deal in the prevalent inequitable social conditions that provide fertile ground for ill health and disease.

Sudhaji is an inspiration to the young generation and sets an example of how to choose their people and country over personal comforts. Such individuals should be celebrated and not vilified.

By targeting her, based on a series of false and unsubstantiated fragments of "evidence" Republic TV has proven that it is following its by now well-known brief of slandering and defaming those who take public stands in defense of democracy, secularism, human rights, Constitutional propriety and rule of law.

In the current political regime, such slander and defamation can create an atmosphere where physical assault and assassination of the target will be overlooked as political vendetta. In effect, such propaganda will throw the target to the wolves.

This slander and vilification is not only a threat to Sudha Bharadwaj's integrity and honour, but in the present circumstances, might represent a threat to her life.

We call on all responsible people to condemn and expose this attack as the latest attempt by the Government and its embedded propagandists in the media to bypass democratic institutions, undermine the rule of law, stifle all voices of dissent and crush all those who seek to question or challenge their autocratic rule.

We also call on media bodies, professional associations and senior journalists to come out and condemn practitioners of this form of toxic, unethical, fake and malicious “journalism”.

Medico Friend Circle, a 47 year-old association of doctors and health activists belonging to all shades of the political spectrum, express our solidarity to Advocate Sudha Bhardawaj

and stand by her and her work done for the health and wellbeing of the workers, adivasis and women.

Deepa Venkatachalam and Adsa Fatima

Conveners

Medico Friend Circle

Dated 8th July 2018