

Editorial

Imphal, Saturday, January 16, 2016

Apolitical views on Political Prisoners How free is our freedom

"Until they become conscious, they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled, they cannot become conscious." — George Orwell

Political prisoner is a deviant, few observe. A political prisoner is jailed for "freely expressing" any disagreement, no matter how tranquilly. She/he is also jailed for disobeying the mainstream definition of acceptable "social behavior" as constituted by the government. She/he can also be "legally" arrested for belonging to an organization, race, or social group unapproved by the "democratic" government.

It will be wrong to uphold "violent" political prisoners because they are naturally violating the axioms of self-ownership that are the basis for freedom and peace. The non-aggression principle (NAP) is such a maxim, and it is the idea that each person has the right to make his or her own choices in life so long as they do not involve aggression (defined as the initiation of force or fraud against others). The principle asserts that aggression includes any encroachment on another person's life, liberty, or justly acquired property, or an attempt to obtain from another via deceit what could not be consensually obtained, and so is always illegitimate.

In the current scenario, the kind can be assessed to "direct violence" and "indirect violence" daily. Direct violence is an offensive crime committed by the political prisoners and is unjustified. However, the State cunningly tags it as a defensive measure when committing direct violence in conflict like the "war on terror" or "war on drugs" or "war on naxals" or the kind of war being carried out against the insurgence of NE states particularly in the state of Manipur. Anyone who constructs a logical refutation of the government's stupidity or attempts to identify the said distinction is charged under a sedition act, patriot act, defamation act, etc. In the eyes of the State, exposing so-called "defensive measures" as direct violence is the most offensive act a person can commit to deserve becoming a "political prisoner."

At present in Manipur prison, a total of 25 persons are being detained under NSA. Altogether 623 prisoners are detained in the Manipur Central jail among which only 42 are convicted (as on Nov. 2015). This means trials for the remaining prisoners are still underway and the police is still yet to file any charge sheet. This prisoners may have some excessive activities most of them are detain just because they fight with an ideology.

The central government and various state governments of India are so worried about their activities that it is unthinkable that they can remain free and making them rot in jail for year after year has become a mainstay of state policy. The general public mostly remains ignorant about these people, and the government's efforts are constantly directed towards maintaining that ignorance. Sometimes, some news appears about them, hidden in the inside pages of newspapers and soon fading out of public memory. The only people concerned about these prisoners are a few human rights organizations and activists, some political organizations, and their hapless relatives who hope that, one day, their near and dear ones will again breathe in free air. It is unprecedented, in recent history, for such a large number of people accused of political offences to be imprisoned for such prolonged periods of time by a State which claims to be democratic and which is (officially) not at war.

The central government and various state governments of India constantly try to obscure the difference between political offences and criminal offences, so that the usual public sympathy towards political prisoners can be suppressed and it becomes easier to harshen the conditions and sentences of the political prisoners. For this reason the Indian State promulgates a series of laws which, although nominally supposed to control or prevent organized crime or terrorism, practically become the main weapons in the hands of governments to suppress the slightest political dissent.

By all these standards, We the Imphal Times can be charged under 124 (a) of Sedition Act in India for boldly expressing our views in defense of liberty and nonviolent political prisoners. So, how free is our freedom?

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National & International News

NCSN-K Attends Myanmar Peace Conference

Dimapur, Jan. 16: NCSN (K) is reportedly attending the five-day Union Peace Conference (UPC), which got underway on January 12 in Myanmar's capital city of Nay Pyi Taw, amidst earlier reports that ethnic armed groups including NCSN (K), which did not sign nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), would not participate. The five-day gathering would end on January 16 after the presentation of reports and conclusions ("not decisions," according to another Shan participant) from each thematic group. The newly elected Myanmar government of National League for Democracy (NLD) invited non-ceasefire signatory groups to first UPC including NCSN (K), KIO, SSPP, NMSP, KNPP, UWSA and NDAA, but to serve as observers

to audit the event. Ethnic armed groups yet to sign an agreement with the government include UNFC members, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Shan State Army-North (SSPP), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and non-UNFC members the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), United Wa State Army (UWSA), and National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NCSN-K), among others. NCA non-signatories, who have been designated as 'special invitees,' will be permitted to address the first Union Peace Conference (UPC) which started on January 12 last, the BNI quoted sources from Nanyidaw as saying.

The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), a 48-member group made up of 16 members from three key stakeholders blocs: the government, parliament and the military; ethnic armed organizations (EAOs); and political parties selected the following issues to discuss: Politics (Basic principles for a federal democracy, social resettlement and reconstruction for internally displaced people (IDPs), Economy (tax and revenue sharing), security (basic principles for union security and defence and land and natural resources (management and distribution) Concerns have been raised by critics, many of whom had experienced decisions predetermined by the then ruling military junta at the 14-year-long National Convention (NC), better

known as the Nyaung Hnabin (Two Banyan Trees) Convention, held to draw up the basic principles for what became the 2008 constitution. Sai Nyunt Lwin, General Secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) said: "We don't want more Nyaung Hnabins. "His party will be represented by some of its younger members at the UPC, he added. The first UPC is expected to be followed by state/regional level political dialogues where proposals for each five key topics will be further developed. A total of 1,136 participants and observers including representatives from foreign embassies, UN agencies, INGOs, government recognized organizations and CSOs have been invited. (Courtesy NeLive)

20 killed as Al Qaeda Storms Hotel in Burkina Faso, 63 Hostages Freed

Agency Burkina Faso, Jan. 16: Sixty-three hostages, including 33 women, were evacuated in the early hours of Saturday from a Burkina Faso hotel besieged by al Qaeda-linked gunmen, communication minister Remis Dandjinou told Agence France-Press. "There are some dead but we don't have the numbers. The assault is ongoing with the Burkinabe forces supported by French special forces," Dandjinou said, adding that amongst those

rescued was labour minister Clement Sawadogo. The breakthrough in the ongoing siege came after security forces launched an assault in the early hours of Saturday to rescue hostages held by the Al Qaeda linked gunman in a Burkina Faso hotel where at least 20 people have been killed. A fire raged at the main entrance and screams could be heard from inside Ouagadougou's four-star Splendid hotel, which often has UN staff among its guests and has security checks at its entrances.

The attack comes less than two months after a jihadist hostage siege at the luxury Radisson Blu hotel in the Malian capital Bamako in which 20 people died including 14 foreigners — an attack claimed by the same Al-Qaeda affiliate as the unfolding Ouagadougou assault. The French ambassador to Ouagadougou Gilles Thibault announced the beginning of the assault on Twitter. "The assault has started, the various components of the armed forces and security forces have begun their missions," Thibault said. Officials had earlier said French forces could join a counter-attack on the hotel, but Thibault did not clarify if they had joined the initial rescue mission.

The French embassy said on its website that a "terrorist attack" was underway and urged people to avoid the area. An Air France flight from Paris to Ouagadougou was diverted to neighbouring Niger. The Burkinabe army meanwhile said an armed group had also carried out an attack earlier in the day near the border with Mali, killing two people. "In the afternoon around 2:00 pm (1400 GMT), around 20 heavily-armed unidentified individuals carried out an attack against gendarmes in the village of Tin Abao," the army said in a statement, adding that an officer and a civilian had been killed and two people were wounded. Several attacks have taken place in Burkina Faso in recent months, but no such assaults had hit the capital.

2,159 'terrorists' killed under National Action Plan

ANI Lahore, Jan. 16: Around 2,159 terrorists have been neutralised and 1,724 arrested in Pakistan under the National Action Plan (NAP). According to the Dawn, the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control presented a report about NAP, which stated that 332 persons had been executed so far under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). The report also states that around 98.3 million SIMs had been blocked for dismantling communication networks of terrorists and at least 933 URLs and 10 websites of militant organisations have also been bloc-ked by Ministry of

Information Technology (MoIT). A total of 69,179 criminals, 890 terrorists, 676 proclaimed offenders, 10,426 absconders, 124 kidnappers, 545 extortionists and 1,834 murderers were also apprehended and 16,306 weapons seized during the Karachi operation, the daily reports. The National Action Plan is an action plan that was established by the Government of Pakistan in January 2015 to crack down on terrorism and to supplement the ongoing anti-terrorist offensive in North-Western Pakistan. It is considered as a major coordinated state retaliation following the deadly Peshawar school attack

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the attack saying it was "revenge against France and the disbelieving West", according to US-based monitoring group SITE. The "mujahideen brothers" of AQIM "broke into a restaurant of one of the biggest hotels in the capital of Burkina Faso, and are now entrenched and the clashes are continuing with the enemies of the religion", SITE quoted the group as saying. The attackers were members of the Al-Murabitoun group based in Mali and run by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, SITE said. Barry said Burkina Faso may enlist the support of French special forces, who have a permanent presence in the country, to deal with the unfolding situation, and a US defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Washington could provide drone-based surveillance. An AFP reporter at one point saw three men clad in turbans firing at the scene on Avenue Kwame Nkrumah, one of Ouagadougou's

main thoroughfares. A witness also reported seeing four assailants who were of Arab or white appearance and "wearing turbans". The French embassy said on its website that a "terrorist attack" was underway and urged people to avoid the area. An Air France flight from Paris to Ouagadougou was diverted to neighbouring Niger. The Burkinabe army meanwhile said an armed group had also carried out an attack earlier in the day near the border with Mali, killing two people. "In the afternoon around 2:00 pm (1400 GMT), around 20 heavily-armed unidentified individuals carried out an attack against gendarmes in the village of Tin Abao," the army said in a statement, adding that an officer and a civilian had been killed and two people were wounded. Several attacks have taken place in Burkina Faso in recent months, but no such assaults had hit the capital. In April the Romanian security chief of a mine in northern Tambao was kidnapped in a move also claimed by Belmokhtar's Al-Murabitoun group. Burkina Faso is part of the G5 Sahel grouping that counts the fight against terrorism as part of its remit. It has also offered support to France's Barkhane counter-terror mission, spanning five countries in Africa's restive Sahel region, and French special forces are stationed in Ouagadougou's suburbs. Last month, Burkina Faso swore in Roch Marc Christian Kabore as president, completing the troubled West African state's transition after the overthrow of its longtime ruler Blaise Compaore in 2014 and a failed coup attempt in September.

Police arrest Maoist commander in Gaya, recover arms and ammunition

ANI Gaya (Bihar), Jan.16: Gaya Police have arrested a Maoist commander and recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition from him during a combing operation. Acting on the tip-off, police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel conducted a combing operation in Gaya District. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Gaya, Garima Malik, said, the police had recovered an AK-56 rifle, 102 live cartridges and other items from the arrested Maoist commander. "During the combing operation in the nearby areas we arrested the Maoist Communist Centre

(MMC) zonal commander, Mahinder Bhokta, who was actively associated with the organisation in 2008 and now he supports them and work as an ideological guide," said Malik. Maoists, also known as 'Naxals' in India, seek the violent overthrow of the Indian state and have fought authorities for decades, particularly in rural areas of central and eastern India where they enjoy some support. The Maoists say they are fighting for the rights of peasants and landless labourers. They routinely call strikes, attack government property and target politicians and police.

Barry said Burkina Faso may enlist the support of French special forces, who have a permanent presence in the country, to deal with the unfolding situation, and a US defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Washington could provide drone-based surveillance. An AFP reporter at one point saw three men clad in turbans firing at the scene on Avenue Kwame Nkrumah, one of Ouagadougou's

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Paojenjariaba
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