

Indian rights defender for solidarity among common people

Muktadir Rashid | Published at 12:31am on April 10, 2019

Indian human rights defender Henri Tiphagne on Tuesday called for solidarity among common people across the world for the establishment of the dignity of human rights defenders.

The founder and executive director of Madurai-based rights organisation People's Watch made the call in an interview with New Age on the sideline of a workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Bangladesh's review by the Committee Against Torture at a city hotel. Sometimes every fight for rights cannot be limited to a geographical territory, he said.

'There are fights which have to be taken out of Bangladesh and there have to be people, who are in solidarity with you and who have to continue your fight outside Bangladesh. Sometimes, they might be Bangladeshis but not always in Bangladesh,' he said.

'You have your allies and you have your supporters who, I think, have to join with you and that is the greatest thing,' said the rights defender.

'I think time will come when for my rights, you will have to fight. That is the reason why international solidarity we have. Our fights have to be supported by the people from outside. That cannot be a solution but it will work towards a solution,' said Henri, also World Organisation Against Torture executive committee member.

He criticised most of the national human rights agencies in South and South East Asia who performed weak.

Henri strongly believed that the legislation did make matter but it was the person behind the national human rights institution.

He believed that if the people were good but given bad law, they could make it useful.

Henri said that he started campaigning against inequality in his country in the field of economy, status and caste.

In his university years, he started championing for civil liberty.

'The starting point was inequality moving into civil liberty. My university student time was happened to be coincided with the emergency in India. We are all witnesses to lessons of emergency. It is the context of emergency that let us gradually move into civil liberty,' said Henri.

He believed that the protection of human rights was only the monitoring of human rights as only then it made the state answerable.

'That is how we move,' said Henri.

Asked about challenges for human rights defenders in South Asia, Henri replied that for all across the South Asia, 'major problem are that all our rights to associate, assemble peacefully, speak out and express ourselves, express the dissent, criticise and inquire are curbed. And they are curbed violently. This is a South Asian phenomenon,'

He said that it was not only a phenomenon in Bangladesh rather it was the phenomena in India, Sri Lanka and all countries in South Asia.

'Therefore, freedom of assembly and freedom of association have to be restored for the dignity of human rights defenders.'

Henri said, 'One way is to go to and use the domestics and international institutions, but the other is to associate and take to the on the streets that we have given away. The streets used to be the place where we fought and obtained our rights.'

'It is the time to continue our flights but it is very difficult,' said Henri, also secretary of the All India Network of NGOs and Individuals working with National and State Human Rights Institutions and the Human Rights Defenders Alert-India.

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