

Statement of Solidarity with Farmers of India

The farmers' agitation for the repeal of the pro-corporate farm laws has become the largest and longest sustained non-violent movement in Indian history, surpassing Mahatma Gandhi's historic Dandi March against the abhorrent Salt Law of the British colonial regime.

The Modi regime rammed the farm laws stealthily through Parliament in September 2020, using its brute majority in the Lok Sabha, resorting to the questionable maneuver of a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha where it did not have a majority, and counting on the pandemic to muffle opposition outside Parliament. These laws were drafted without any consultation with farmers or their representatives, the farmers' unions. The farmers have consistently opposed these laws, which go against the promises and commitments made to farmers by different governments over several decades. This is especially ironic given that Prime Minister Modi's BJP campaigned on a pro-farmer platform, including making a minimum support price (MSP) mandatory and implementing the Swaminathan Report that is critical to saving India's agriculture and farmers. The laws blatantly advance the interests of Modi's crony corporate capitalists, such as Ambani and Adani, against those of the vast majority of the agricultural sector, effectively throwing farmers to the corporate sharks.

The government and its propaganda machines, acting in the interests of a narrower and more exclusively corporate elite than any government has in independent India's history, have concentrated not on finding solutions but on delegitimizing the protests and all who support them as representing special interests (large and rich farmers) in prosperous states. Nothing can be further from the truth. This movement goes back to at least to 2017 and the unions associated with it represent a wide cross section of the farming community from across the country - from agricultural labour to marginal, small and medium peasantry. The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSSC) represents 250 organizations from 20 states, a unique broad coalition, from Dalit agricultural laborers to small and middle peasants. In fact it is the AIKSSC which through a private members bill (supported by 21 political parties other than the BJP) introduced in 2018 a reform agenda towards making farming debt-free and sustainable.

For several months the hundreds of thousands of farmers protesting peacefully on the borders of the national capital have faced and withstood brutal repressive policing including water cannons, tear gas and barricades in the near freezing conditions of a Delhi winter. 220 farmers have died as a result of the harsh conditions, a few unfortunately by their own hands as despair overcame them. The full participation of women in the protests, whether as tractor drivers or marchers, is another notable feature of the farmers' agitation. Denying and defying the patriarchal stereotypes of rural north India through their participation in the protests, the women have demonstrated their full status as farmers on par with men. Another feature is the participation of older farmers, some in their 80s, providing evidence of the determination of the entire farm community to defy the diktats of a repressive regime.

After the attempt of the regime to subvert the non-violent peaceful protest demonstrations on January 26, the farmers' agitation has now entered a new phase. First, the already growing support for it from farmers across India is now even stronger, with vast gatherings or mahapanchayats of farmers held in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Second, with the state's vilification and criminalization of the farmers and those who have come out in support of them, including youth, journalists and human rights defenders, the movement has now acquired the character of a broad-based attempt to defend the very democratic rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution, most importantly, the freedom of speech and assembly and the right of peaceful dissent from and opposition to the actions and policies of the government. Third, the recent declarations of support for the farm laws by the IMF and the US government indicate the range of forces backing them, adding an anti-imperialist dimension to the struggle against them.

As organizations that work to extend and defend democratic rights, we recognize that an attack on such rights anywhere is an attack on them everywhere. The farmers are literally sacrificing their well-being and putting their lives on the line to uphold these constitutional guarantees on behalf of all the people of India and are setting a glorious example to the entire world. Their heroism and their sacrifice deserve our strong support and our undying gratitude.

We salute the heroism of the farmers and pay homage to the departed souls who sacrificed their all to the larger cause. We demand that the Government of India stop vilifying the movement and criminalising the human and democratic rights defenders and others who are part of the widespread support for it from diverse sections of Indian people.

We support the farmers' demands that the Government of India take the following actions:

REPEAL THE UNJUST PRO-CORPORATE FARM LAWS

REPEAL THE ELECTRICITY ACT

REPEAL THE POLLUTION PENALTY ON FARMERS

EXTEND MSP AT SWAMINATHAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDED RATE OF C2+50% TO ALL FARM PRODUCTS

PROVIDE WRITTEN GUARANTEE OF MSP

Signatories:

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)/ Congrès du travail du Canada (CTC)

Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL)

British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL)

British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)/ Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (SCFP)

Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)/ Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes (STTP)

Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain – CSN

Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec-CSN

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL)

National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)

Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

Unifor National

United Steelworkers (USW)/Le Syndicat des Métallos, Canada

Toronto and York Region Labour Council

Vancouver & District Labour Council

Academics and Activists Against Hate, Canada

Alternatives, Montréal

Alternatives International
 Ambedkarite Buddhist Association of Texas (ABAT)
 Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance, UK
 Asian Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA)
 Les Artistes pour la Paix
 Between the Lines Books, Toronto
 Campaign Against Criminalising Communities, UK
 Canadian Foreign Policy Institute
 Canadians Against Oppression and Persecution
 Caring for Social Justice Collective/Collectif Soignons la justice sociale, Québec
 CareMongering International
 Centre de travailleurs et travailleuses immigrant/es/Immigrant Workers' Centre (CTI/IWC), Montreal
 Centre for Study and Research in South Asia (CERAS), Montreal
 Collectif-CEDETIM, France
 The Corner House, UK
 Crescent Hub, The
 Community Food Centres Canada/ Centres communautaires d'alimentation du Canada
 Dalit Solidarity Forum-USA
 Democracy Equality and Secularism in South Asia, Winnipeg
 Disha, Canada
 East India Defence Committee, Vancouver
 ETC Group, Quebec
 Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF), France
 Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)/Québec Women's Federation
 Femmes de diverses origines/Women of Diverse Origins (FDO-WDO), Montreal
 Fernwood Publishing, Halifax and Winnipeg
 Foundation the London Story Netherlands
 Geopolitical Economy Research Group
 Global Justice Ecology Project
 Good Jobs for All Coalition, Toronto
 Gursharan Singh Memorial Lecture Committee, Vancouver
 Himalaya Seniors of Quebec (HSQ)
 Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR)
 India Civil Watch International (ICWI)
 India Civil Watch-Montreal
 India Solidarity, Germany
 Indian Resistance Network, Norway
 Indian Scheduled Caste Welfare Association UK
 Indian Workers' Association GB (COC), UK
 Justice for All
 Justicia for Migrant Workers (J4MW), Canada
 Khanyisa Education and Development Trust, South Africa
 Kurdish People's Assembly, UK
 The Kurdish Women's Initiative in the UK
 Makukhanye Rural Movement, South Africa
 Montreal Serai
 Pakistan Organization of Quebec (POQ)
 Pash Memorial International Trust
 Peace in Kurdistan, UK
 People's Health Movement Canada/Mouvement populaire pour la santé au Canada

Progressive Cultural Association, Calgary
Punjabi Cultural Association (PCA) Edmonton.
Punjabi Literary and Cultural Association, Winnipeg
Qualitative Research Lab-Global South
Quebec Movement for Peace
Respecting Elders Communities against Abuse/Ressources Ethnoculturelles Contre l'Abus envers
les Aîné(e)s(RECAA), Montreal
Rete jin Milano and CISDA (Italian Coordination in Support of Afghan Women)
Ryerson Centre for Studies in Food Security, Toronto
Sarokaran Di Awaaz, Toronto
Secular Peoples' Association, Edmonton
Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha Derby (UK)
Sikh Virsa International, Calgary
SOAS India Society (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK)
The Social Justice Centre, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, B.C.
Socialist Project, Canada
Society for Socialist Studies, Canada
South Asian Dalit and Adivasi Network (SADAN)
South Asian Women's Community Centre (SAWCC)/Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques,
Montreal
Southall Black Sisters, UK
South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD)
South Asian Youth (SAY) Collective/Collectif jeunesse sud-asiatiques (JSA)/, Montreal
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, South Africa
Taraksheel Cultural Society of Canada
Toronto Association for Democracy in China
Teesri Duniya, Montreal
Unitarian Church of Montreal/Église unitarienne de Montréal
Voices Against Fascism in India
West Coast Coalition Against Racism (WCCAR), Vancouver
Women Defend Rojava, UK