

NAPM Yuva Samvad
(Towards Deepening Dialogues, Diversity and Democratic Values)
<https://napmyuvasamvad.wordpress.com/>

Summary of the Month-Long Campaign by

Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance: July 2021

In solidarity with all comrades facing political persecution and remembering human rights defender Stan Swamy with pain and pride

31st July, 2021: Brought together by comrades who are part of, or in solidarity with, various socio-political people's movements, Yuva Samvad is a focused online platform where Yuva Saathis from diverse social locations, working on the ground, can share their views, interact and strengthen each other's struggles and understandings. NAPM Yuva Samvad highlights the crucial role youth play in social transformative processes and spaces. It aims to create more sustained and regular interaction, cross-learning and solidarity between movements and issues that matter to us.

While acknowledging the immense value of direct on-ground work, on issues and with communities, we feel that sustained engagement in virtual spaces is also essential to know each other, strengthen bonds, learn from interactions, extend solidarities, amplify issues and build networks for long-term change. In today's times, both on-ground and on-line political work can be complementary to and strengthen each other. Read more about the process history, concept, objectives of Yuva Samvad [here](#).

The emergence of right-wing regimes all over the world has intensified state repression through criminalization, surveillance, incarceration and custodial violence. Young people resisting the political and ideological charge of the Modis, the Trumps, the Erdogans, among others, have been at the receiving end of relentless political persecution. 'Young India' – as Modi likes to call them – drawn in by the Prime Minister's promises of a wealthy and glorious "New India", had played a key role in catapulting the BJP to power.

The ruling regime views dissent within this section with suspicion and disdain, especially when the dissent arises from muslim, dalit-bahujan, adivasi and other marginalized youth – people who were never meant to be equal participants in the creation of the 'New India' of the BJP's dreams unless they kowtowed to its Brahminical agenda. Politically articulate and active women and students seem to be on the 'hit list' of this regime.

Over the last few years, young muslims, dalits and adivasis demanding their place in India on their terms have been imprisoned in scores. Youth from de-notified tribes, transgender youth, and youth in 'conflict zones' be it Kashmir, "Naxalite belt" or some of the north-eastern states have been randomly picked up and incarcerated, at times even 'encountered' on a regular basis. Some of these regions have a longer history of state and structural violence.

Young people providing leadership in struggles against the BJP's Hindutva agendas (e.g., CAA/NRC), its unabashedly pro-corporate policies (e.g., farm laws, labour law reforms, EIA dilutions), its genocidal covid mismanagement and so on, have been virulently targeted. Savarna youth, especially women who have chosen to side with the marginalized and the oppressed have not been spared either.

Not all persecuted young leaders have been at the forefront of immediate political challenges to the government. Many of them have been organizing around questions of labour rights, displacement, land acquisition, gender, caste, indigenous rights and environment – politics that present long-term ideological challenges to the Hindutva/Corporate regime. While some of these questions are national (e.g., farm and labor laws), if not trans-national (e.g., migration to Bengal and Assam), others are deeply local (e.g., land grab). Some of these issues have emerged during the Modi regime (e.g., CAA/NRC), while others have their roots in the long-term struggles for equality, annihilation of caste, challenge to

patriarchy and the substantive realization of India’s constitutional promises. Notwithstanding such diversity, all such organizing for which young people are being targeted, share an orientation towards forging an alternative to the Hindutva and Corporate rule.

The persecution of young people, and their public recounting of legal and carceral experiences have in turn strengthened criticisms of brutal, unjust, and deeply discriminatory legal and carceral systems. The invocation and “misuse” of draconian laws like UAPA has drawn attention to unjust and inhumane nature of the law itself, and that of its predecessors such as TADA and POTA or AFSPA as well as that of laws concerning sedition. The imprisonment of young political prisoners during the pandemic has made people take note of pathetic prison conditions while the long delays in trials have drawn attention to the plight of undertrials many of whom belong to Dalit, Muslim, adivasi, NT-DNT, women and gender non-conforming communities and often lack skill or resource to navigate the legal system to access even basic prisoners’ rights.

Notes, letters, and interviews that tell us about prison life are also helping us to re-imagine the prison as a space rich in emotions of longing, desire, sorrow, regret, abandonment, and resolve. A welcome shift away from the traditional masculinized image of the prison as a space of violence/bravery, this has allowed the prison to come closer home and compelled us to rethink. This is significant at a time when globally incarceration is seen as a way out by nation-states that are unable to resolve issues related migration (e.g., Assam NRC), unemployment (imprisonment of Black youth in the America), displacement (e.g., Rohingyas) and so on, within their political and economic frameworks. Prison abolition is a slogan that rings worldwide and in India too the time has arrived for bringing questions related to incarceration, surveillance, and legal and custodial violence into the mainstream of politics.

*National Alliance of Peoples’ Movements (NAPM) believes that the tussle between the Modi-led BJP government and Young India is a key political battle of our times, carrying the potential of deciding India’s future, as are the issues related to law and prisons that have been thrown up in course of this battle. In the month of July, therefore, we had a month-long campaign to hear from young people who have faced persecution as well as from their families and friends. We organized four dedicated sessions under the overarching theme of Young Peoples’ Political Persecution and Resistance, wherein we interacted with young comrades from different social locations facing diverse forms of state repression and resisting the same in multiple ways. **Conversations in July were around the following themes:***

<p>8th July Draconian Laws and Youth <i>(UAPA, Sedition and other 'Special' Laws)</i></p> <p>15th July Prison Conditions and Young People <i>(Safety, Physical and Mental Health, Discrimination & Prison Reforms)</i></p> <p>22nd July Targeted Incarcerations and Persecutions <i>(Marginalized Identities and Persons in 'Conflict' Regions)</i></p> <p>29th July Incarceration and Persecution of Youth in Diverse Movements across India and Our Resistances</p>	 <p>JULY: YOUNG PEOPLE'S POLITICAL PERSECUTION & RESISTANCE <i>Every Thursday, 6 pm</i></p> <p>8th July: Draconian Laws & Youth <i>(UAPA, Sedition & Other 'Special' Laws)</i></p> <p>15th July: Prison Conditions & Young People <i>(Safety, Physical & Mental Health, Prison Reforms)</i></p> <p>22nd July: Targeted Incarcerations & Persecutions <i>(Marginalised Identities & Persons in 'Conflict' Regions)</i></p> <p>29th July: Incarceration & Persecution of Youth in Diverse Movements Across India & Our Resistance</p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 960 4195 9151 Password: 806587</p> <p>@napmindia  LIVE</p>
<p><i>All sessions can be viewed here: https://napmyuvasamvad.wordpress.com/conversations/</i></p>	

1st Session: 8th July: Draconian Laws and Youth (UAPA, Sedition and other 'Special' Laws)

'Special Laws' used by the British government to identify and punish 'criminal tribes', 'social deviants' and political dissenters did not die out with the end of colonial rule. Sedition laws, the infamous Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), and others geared towards criminalizing dissent have been central features of the post-independence legal regime. The rise of the majoritarianism and the security state led to a range of new laws in the form of TADA, POTA and later the UAPA, which are essentially flexible enough to persecute a range of "internal others" - Dalits, Muslims, adivasis, especially if they are dissenters - and human rights defenders and political opponents in general. Most states also have their own set of laws that are draconian in nature. In this session we listened to the experiences of recent persecution under some of these laws, focusing on a range of injustices perpetrated under them, and also their implications for the lives of the accused, their friends and their families, and the challenges of launching a powerful movement for their repeal.

DISCUSSANTS:

Siraj Datta, Social Activist, Jharkhand

in conversation with

Maaysha, Student, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh (also daughter of trade unionist Sudha Bharadwaj, falsely implicated in the Bhima Koregaon case and jailed under UAPA for almost 3 yrs)

Nihalsing B Rathod, Defence lawyer for Bhima Koregaon arrestees, Nagpur.

Natasha Narwal, Anti-CAA-NRC Activist, Pinjra Tod, New Delhi, falsely implicated in the 'Delhi riots' case and jailed under UAPA.

The poster is for a Zoom meeting titled "Draconian Laws & Youth (UAPA, Sedition & Other 'Special' Laws)". It is part of a 4-part series in July of "Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance". The event is on Thursday, 8 July, at 6 pm. The poster features a yellow background with a red silhouette of a person's head. It lists four speakers: Maaysha (Student, Chhattisgarh), Nihalsing B Rathod (Defence lawyer for Bhima Koregaon arrestees), Natasha Narwal (Activist opposing CAA-NRC), and Siraj Datta (Social Activist, Jharkhand). The poster also includes the Zoom Meeting ID (960 4195 9151), Password (806587), and social media handles (@napmindia, Facebook, and LIVE).

2nd Session: 15th July: Prison Conditions and Young People

(Safety, Physical and Mental Health, Discrimination, Prison Reforms)

Indian prisons have long been infamous for holding a large number of undertrials, often in highly congested conditions, at great risk to the physical health of the prisoners. To add to that, the majority of prisoners belong to marginalized backgrounds and lack the basic skills and resources required to access legal aid while inside prison and have little contact with family and friends. The prison system ends up taking a huge toll on their mental health. The recent covid pandemic and the suffering of several political prisoners, the inhumane categorization of prisoners about parole and interim bail, and the sheer helplessness of prisoners in the face of a raging pandemic and an insensitive state, have once again brought forth the brutality of the system.

Even the minimum requirements in the prison manuals are routinely flouted and prisons have largely been inaccessible dens of violence, discrimination and corruption. In this session speakers from marginalized locations who have faced incarceration brought up many of these issues effectively, connecting their experiences with global demands for prison abolition, and discussed the possibilities of raising a powerful demand for prison reforms.

DISCUSSANTS:

Sai Bourouthu, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative & Queer Incarceration Project, New Delhi

in conversation with

Shiv Kumar, Labour Rights Activist, Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan, Haryana jailed and tortured.

Safoora Zargar, M.Phil Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, *falsely implicated in the 'Delhi riots' case and jailed under UAPA.*

Harun Tamsoy, Adivasi Rights Activist, Chaibasa, Jharkhand, *falsely charged and jailed*

Yuva Samvad
National Alliance of People's Movements

#FreeTheYoung
#FreeAllPoliticalPrisoners
Thursday, 15 July, 6 pm

Prison Conditions & Young People
(Safety, Physical & Mental Health, Prison Reforms)

Part 2 of 4-part series in July of:
Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance

Speakers

- Shiv Kumar
Labour Rights Activist, Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan, Haryana
- Safoora Zargar
MPhil Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
- Harin Tamsoy
Adivasi Rights Activist, Chaibasa, Jharkhand

Moderator

- Sai Bourouthu
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative & Queer Incarceration Project, New Delhi

Zoom Meeting ID: 960 4195 9151
Password: 806587

@napmindia

3rd Session: 22nd July: Targeted Incarcerations and Persecutions (Marginalized Identities and Persons in 'Conflict' Regions)

It is not only 'political activists' but also ordinary citizens who have faced immense state persecution and increased social profiling in recent times. Under the pretext of countering "terror", young muslim men have been regularly picked up all over the country, and in the central and east Indian states of adivasi opposition to predatory, pro-corporate development, young adivasis have suffered the same fate. Of particular mention are militarized zones of Kashmir and North-East, where the slightest challenge to state abuse is met with brute force and repressive laws like AFSPA and PSA.

Such attacks have gone beyond imprisonment and resulted in extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, rape, sexual violence and custodial deaths. These incidents point to the Brahminical nature of the ruling dispensation, which makes muslim, dalit-bahujan, adivasi, transgender, NT-DNT and other marginalized communities dispensable in the eyes of the state – waiting to be persecuted for their very existence and available to be treated as cannon fodder for the security state's lopsided experiments in governance. In this session we discussed some such incidents based on experiences of marginalized young people and reflected on forms of organizing and solidarity that can help us counter the same.

DISCUSSANTS:

Evita Das, Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy & Urban Researcher, New Delhi

in conversation with

Rani alias Rajesh, Transgender Person, Mumbai unjustly incarcerated for 1.5 years

Atish Indrekar Chhara, Vimukta Community Activist, Budhan Theatre, Gujarat jailed and charged unjustly.

Thokchom Veewon, Student Activist & Scholar, Manipur, charged under sedition.

Young Saathi from Kashmir, Perspectives on young' people's struggles and resistance

Yuva Samvad
National Alliance of People's Movements

#FreeTheYoung
#FreeAllPoliticalPrisoners
Thursday, 22 July, 6 pm

Targeted Incarcerations & Persecutions
(Marginalised Identities & Persons in 'Conflict' Regions)

Part 3 of 4-part series in July of:
Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance

Speakers

- Atish Indrekar Chhara
Vimukta Community Activist, Budhan Theatre, Gujarat
- Thokchom Veewon
Student Activist & Scholar, Manipur
- Rani alias Rajesh
Transgender Person, Mumbai

Moderator

- Evita Das
Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy & Urban Researcher

Zoom Meeting ID: 873 7899 6831
Password: 713246

@napmindia

4th Session: ·29th July: Incarceration and Persecution of Youth in Diverse Movements across India and Our Resistances

In recent times we have seen a specific pattern in the targeting of young people. Youth in diverse movements across India are being imprisoned. The list of such movements includes the anti-CAA/NRC movement, the movement against farm laws, labour law reforms, EIA dilutions, land grab and dispossession from lands, forests and coasts, anti-NEP and student struggles, anti-caste and feminist movements and so on. While all these movements are in their own ways against the Hindutva/corporate ruling nexus, the repression on them is a clear signal to other young people: stay away from 'politics'. Interestingly, it is this state repression that is politicizing more and more younger people. In this session we shall discuss the nature of movements in which youth are being targeted, and our modes of resistance to such repression including legal aid, solidarity work, care work and emotional support.

DISCUSSANTS:

Guneet Kaur, Lawyer & Human Rights Researcher, Punjab, also bringing in experiences of persecution of youth in Punjab

in conversation with

Sikari Rongpi, Farmer & Social Activist, Mikir Bamuni, Assam, jailed for protesting land grab for the Azure Solar Power.

Disha Ravi, Environment and Climate Activist, Bengaluru false implicated under UAPA for her solidarity with farmers movement.

Ravi Azad, State Youth President, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Haryana charged with multiple cases and jailed for his work in the farmers movement.

Yuva Samvad
#FreeTheYoung
#FreeAllPoliticalPrisoners
29 July Thursday, 6 PM
Incarceration & Persecution of Youth in Diverse Movements Across India & Our Resistance
Part 4 of 4-part series in July of: Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance
Speakers: Ravi Azad, Disha Ravi, Sikari Rongpi
Moderator: Guneet Kaur
Zoom Meeting ID: 960 4195 9151
Password: 806587
@napmindia LIVE

Video testimonies from:

Hiteshwari, youngest sister of jailed adivasi, environmental and human rights defender Hidme Markam

Suresh Rathore, MNREGA Mazdoor Union and Purvanchal Kisan Union in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; repeatedly house arrested in the past year by the UP police.

As we deliberated on the challenges of politically organizing as youth, and of dealing with state repression in the process, we also reflected on the kind of support and solidarity that is needed for this purpose: legal, social and emotional support in the long and short run. Across the four sessions and campaign solidarity in between, we tried to have in-depth and multi-layered conversations that gave us more energy and inspiration to challenge undemocratic legal and carceral regimes and states which use them for their ideological ends.

Stay with us as we continue the conversations on Yuva Samvad..



Please follow our updates and Social Media Pages for more details of the weekly sessions.

Watch previous sessions of the Yuva Samvad on: <https://napmyuvasamvad.wordpress.com/>

For queries and feedback, please feel free to write to us at napmyuvasamvad@gmail.com

In Solidarity,
NAPM Yuva Samvad Team

Social Media Campaign: 15th to 31st July:

 <p>Join the social media campaign to:</p> <p>#FREETHETHE YOUNG #FREEALLPOLITICALPRISONERS</p> <p>Use the hashtags above and post photos artwork, poems & solidarity messages on social media and tag us @napmindia</p> <p>Join the weekly Yuva Samvad sessions on: Young People's Political Persecution and Resistance Every Thursday in July, 6 pm on Zoom and Facebook</p> <p>Tag us @napmindia</p>	<p>#FreeTheYoung</p> <p><i>The Yuva Samvad Team also organized a Social Media Campaign as part of the month-long efforts which culminated in a Twitter Storm on the 31st July from 6 to 8 pm.</i></p> <p>#FreeAllPolitical Prisoners</p>	 <p>Join the Twitter Storm to:</p> <p>#FREETHETHE YOUNG #FREEALLPOLITICALPRISONERS</p> <p>in solidarity with our month long campaign on YOUNG PEOPLE'S POLITICAL PERSECUTION & RESISTANCE</p> <p>Saturday 31st July 6 to 8 pm</p> <p>@napmindia</p>
<p><i>Many young people as well as concerned citizens from across the country posted photos, artwork, poems, solidarity messages, images of yourself holding placards, in solidarity with political prisoners, on social media using the above hashtags.</i></p>		