

Seminar on “Challenges Before Human Rights Defenders”

A seminar on “Challenges before human rights defenders” was organized by Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI) today at English auditorium, Panjab university here, with an endeavour to highlight the challenges before a human rights activist, the members of LFHRI today honoured Teesta Setalvad at the function.

Daughter of an advocate, Teesta is a graduate in history and a post graduate in mass communication. Married to a journalist, Javed Khan, Teesta is the co-editor of Mumbai based journal “communalism combat”.

The seminar was presided over by Justice J.C Verma (retired). Other key speakers included Amar Singh Chahal, President of LFHRI; Navkiran Singh, General Secretary, LFHRI Mr. Atul Lakhnarpal, President of Punjab and Haryana Bar Association Chandigarh and Anmol Rattan Sidhu, member, Punjab and Haryana Bar Council.

In his welcome address, Navkiran thanked Teesta and others for making it to the occasion. Justice Verma said the country desperately needed women like Teesta who had the guts and intelligence to fight for others` rights.

In his presidential address Chahal brought to notice the atrocities, which are ‘showered’

On the human rights activists. Lakhnarpal maintained that in our society where the elite had scant respect for the system, it is the common man who is at the receiving end. Not losing his usual poetic touch, Anmol Rattan Sidhu said everybody is born and should be treated equally in the community.

In the keynote address, Teesta directed the conversation towards the 1984 riots that had sent shockwaves through the entire Sikh community. Reprimanding the prevailing system she said, “Our system is blown out of proportion, with all the three wings namely Police, Executive and Judiciary in a serious need of reforms. While Police is always an abusive and abused force, it’s the executive class which remains silent for their selfish gains. Moreover, the criminal justice system needs an overhaul so that witness can be protected and justice can be delivered at a quick speed.”

She also said things had come to such a pass that an Indian citizen had lost faith in the country`s system. Unruffled by the allegations leveled against her by Zahira Sheikh, key witness in the Best Bakery case, later convicted for a year by the Supreme Court on charges of perjury, Teesta is fighting another 15 cases on charges of murder, etc.