

ANNUAL REPORT 2002

ANNUAL REPORT OF LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL-2002

Lawyers for Human Rights International continued with its efforts to promote and protect the human rights of the victims. As usual, it was seen that in the year 2002 most of the violators of human rights were from the police force. LHR I kept a close watch on all the developments in the state as well as in the country and monitored the events with utmost prudence.

The LFHRI published a book titled, "PUNJAB AT WAR WITH HUMAN RIGHTS" which contained a comprehensive study of human rights situation in Punjab during 2001. The book was released by its President, Amar Singh Chahal in January, 2002 at Chandigarh and distributed among different human rights organisations, judges and heads of police department and administrative officers of the State of Punjab. The book also contained many photographs of police atrocities in Punjab during the year-2001.

A delegation of Lawyers For Human Rights International consisting of Amar Singh Chahal, President, Navkiran Singh, General Secretary, Arunjeev Singh Walia, Press Secretary and Tejinder Singh Sudan, Chandigarh Unit President, visited United Kingdom in January 2002 on the invitation of London based human rights organisation, Amnesty International and submitted detailed documents proving that the violation of human rights still continue in Punjab and the state government has left no stone unturned to protect the violators of human rights of the people. On the basis of material supplied by our organisation, Amnesty International has come out with a special report on Punjab situation which was released in 2003.

The LFHRI felt deeply hurt at the diabolical degradation of political scenario during the year 2002. The Gujarat carnage in March 2002 after the Godhra train tragedy in February which claimed more than twenty thousand people killed and more than fifty thousand members of minority community homeless, caused extreme grief and sorrow among the members of the organisation. In order to express anguish at the role of politicians in aggravating the situation and to show solidarity with the victims of the carnage, LFHRI organised a Candle Light March in Sector 17, Chandigarh in which all the human rights organisations of Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana and women social activists joined and it succeeded in sending the right message to the perpetrators and propagators of communal violence in Gujarat. The LFHRI also sent a detailed representation to the President of India to immediately intervene in the matter and protect the fundamental right to life of the victims of communal violence in the State of Gujarat.

LFHRI filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Punjab & Haryana High Court seeking a status report on all custodial deaths that occurred in Punjab during the year 1997-2001 and for preventive measures so as to avoid further loss of human life. The Petition is pending for final arguments in the High Court.

LFHRI received some feedback from the prisons in Punjab to the effect that there is a lot of discrimination among prisoners in the jails and those prisoners who are rich or influential ones are allowed to stay out of jail after conviction and sentence. LFHRI thereafter, filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Punjab and Haryana High Court in May 2002 bringing to light a fake medical certificate scam in which many police officers after being sentenced from law courts managed to remain outside the jail by producing fake medical certificates of their kin. The Petition is pending in the High Court for final arguments.

LFHRI through its Bathinda unit conducted an investigation into the suspicious death of Babli a sweeper in Civil Hospital, Barnala in April, 2002. The organisation held after a detailed investigation that the poor sweeper had been raped in Police custody in Police Station Kotwali, Barnala and she later committed suicide and died. But no action was taken against the erring police officials.

A team of LFHRI participated in the regional conference on special security legislations in Lucknow in May, 2002.

LFHRI through its Patiala unit conducted an investigation into the beating of three inmates of Maximum security jail, Nabha, District Patiala in May, 2002. The organisation held that the jail officials had beaten the inmates but no action was taken against the delinquent officials of the jail.

LFHRI also attended the national conference on special security legislations held in New Delhi in July, 2002. The meeting was called by Amnesty International.

LFHRI through its Chandigarh unit conducted an investigation into an alleged "Rape" of a shimla girl in Chandigarh on August 15, 2002. It was found by our organisation that the girl had cooked up the story of the rape and the involvement of some policemen of Chandigarh Police was also established. Later on the organisation released its investigation report and the Chandigarh Police worked on the same line and succeeded in breaking the whole conspiracy and at present seven persons are behind the bars for the conspiracy to implicate a local business man in the rape case.

LFHRI also conducted an investigation into the incident in which an 8 year old child died due to electrocution in a primary school in village Makhan Majra, U.T.Chandigarh on September 1, 2002. The organisation provided free legal aid to the poor father of the deceased child and filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Punjab & Haryana High Court and the High Court directed the Chandigarh Administration to pay an ex-gratia compensaiton to the tune of Rs.1 lac and take steps to prevent the re-occurrence of such incidents in government schools.

LFHRI through its Chandigarh unit then conducted another investigation into the custodial torture of two boys and death of one as a result of police beating in October, 2002. The organisation released its investigation report holding the Chandigarh Police responsible for illegally detaining and subjecting torture upon two boys who were accused of a theft in a shop. But no action was taken against any policeman by the Chandigarh Police.

LFHRI unanimously decided to make sincere efforts to bring reforms in the Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana. Navkiran Singh, General Secretary of the organisation was fielded as the candidate of the organisation in the elections of Bar Council which were held in November, 2002. Although our candidate could not come with flying colors but our organisation made its presence felt among the lawyer fraternity in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. Navkiran Singh lost by a narrow margin, but gained good appreciation for his work in the field of human rights protection.

LFHRI published its second book in the year titled, “ INVESTIGATION REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS VOLUME-1(1999-2002)” in November, 2002. The book contained fifteen reports of investigations conducted by our organisation and also have tips for an effective investigation. The book was distributed free of cost among human rights lawyers, judges, social activists and general public to create awareness about human rights.