

Invitation for the 2nd National Convention on the Judiciary and the Poor, on 23-24 February, 2008 at the Indian Society for International Law, 9 Bhagwan Dass Road , New Delhi.

Dear Friends,

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reform was kicked off with the 1st National Convention, held on the 10th & 11th of March, 2007. The last year has seen several important developments on this front which have squarely brought the issue of judicial accountability into focus and into the consciousness of the citizens and the media.

Our campaign, which highlighted the misconduct of the former Chief Justice of India, Shri Y.K. Sabharwal and the acting Chief Justice of the Chhattisgarh High Court, Shri Jagdish Bhalla has been picked up by the media and has received wide public support. It is another matter that we have not yet been able to take these things to fruition in terms of getting Justice Sabharwal officially investigated and prosecuted, and Justice Bhalla removed from office and prosecuted. However the campaign has forced the Government and the Judiciary to acknowledge the need for another institutional mechanism for the investigation of judicial misconduct and for bringing judges to account. The Government has been forced to bring out a Bill for setting up a new Judicial Council, though that is highly unsatisfactory and cannot be accepted in its present form.

Our campaign has also succeeded in making the media bolder in writing about Judicial Misconduct and speaking about the problems of the judiciary. They have begun to shed the fear of contempt, which is critical for placing Judicial reforms on the agenda of the authorities and the people.

In the past year we have also set up a website, [judicialreforms.org](http://judicialreforms.org), which contains a lot of useful material for campaigners across the country. We have also catalysed and encouraged the holding of conventions on judicial accountability in various parts of the country including Hyderabad, Pune, Bombay, Jaipur, etc. These conventions have also helped in raising awareness about the various serious problems with the present judicial system in the country.

However the goal of a people friendly, efficient and accountable judiciary is still very far off. We will need a much wider and stronger public campaign to achieve this. During the past year we have also seen many more anti-people and anti-poor judgements and orders coming out of the courts. The time has come to take stock of the elitist and anti-poor institutional organisation of the judiciary and the attitude of its judges.

To discuss all this including the access of the poor to the judicial system, we are having another National Convention on the theme of "The Judiciary and the poor" on the 23rd and 24th of February, 2008 in New Delhi. The convention will be held in the auditorium of the Indian Society for International Law, Bhagwandass Road (opposite the Supreme Court of India) from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the aforementioned dates. A copy of the background paper is attached.

It is important that this convention is attended by the representatives of all the major people's movements and grassroots organisations, so that we have a correct understanding of why the structure and organisation of the judicial system is so unfriendly to the people and why the response from the higher judiciary today is so anti-poor and anti-people. It is important to understand this to sharpen our broader struggle for social, economic and political justice for the people of this country.

We hope that all of you will attend this important convention. While the campaign is unable to provide travel expenses or expenses for stay, which each organisation will have to bear on its own, we will take care of all logistics and food during the convention.

We therefore cordially invite you to participate in this convention and share your experience in the national convention with respect to the Judiciary.

Warm Regards

Prashant Bhushan, Indu Prakash Singh, Dr. Venkatesh, Diwan Singh, Suchi Pande, Rohit Kumar Singh, Preeti Verma, Devvrat, D.Leena, and Mayank.