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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Integrated Youth Empowerment - Common Initiative Group (I.Y.E. – C.I.G.), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Freedom of expression

Several senior Indian journalists are facing charges of sedition over their reporting and online posts about a protest by farmers. The cases have been filed with police in at least five states against the journalists including Rajdeep Sardesai, a prominent anchor on the India Today television channel, and Vinod Jose, executive editor of the Caravan magazine.

Our organization would like to share that tens of thousands of farmers have camped out on the outskirts of the capital for more than five months, demanding the withdrawal of new agricultural laws that they say benefit private buyers at the expense of growers. The government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi says reform of the agriculture sector will bring opportunities for farmers, however, the direct stake-holder i.e the Panjabi farmers do not agree to the Indian version.

It has been falsely alleged by the complaint filers that the accused tried to provoke the protesters for their political and personal gains by spreading false and misleading information online.

Journalists on the ground heard from a witness and a relative of the dead man that he had been shot. "This is an attack on free and independent reporting. Government wants only its official version to be published.

The Editors Guild of India, the Press Club of India and several other journalist groups also condemned the police complaints and called them an intimidation tactics aimed at stifling the media. Anand Sahay, president of the Press Club of India, said it was not a coincidence that the cases had largely been registered in states that are ruled by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Our organization would also like to mention that India dropped two places to 142nd in the annual World Press Freedom rankings by the group "Reporters Without Borders", which noted "constant press freedom violations, including police violence against journalists" and increased "pressure on the media to toe the Hindu nationalist government's line".

Therefore, we request your august office to take-up the issue of retributive violence against journalists in India and ensure the basic human right of freedom of expression.

We look forward to a positive response from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteurs (SR) on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
