

“Freedom of The Press”: Mass Raids and Arrest of Indian Journalists.

There has been an outpouring of solidarity following the raid and arrest of journalists in India, who have been targeted as a result of baseless accusations published in the New York Times

By [Peoples Dispatch](#)

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In the hours following the [raids](#) of over 100 journalists affiliated with Indian leftist outlet [NewsClick](#), international outlet [Peoples Dispatch](#), and [Tricontinental Research Services](#), and the detention of around 50, leading academics and journalists from across the world have expressed solidarity and outrage.

The coordinated repressive action was carried out as part of an investigation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, a draconian law which has been widely criticized by human rights organizations in India and internationally as it undermines civil liberties and rights. [NewsClick](#) editor-in-chief Prabir Purkayastha and administrator Amit Chakraborty were arrested during the raid under the draconian anti-terror law and remain in police custody.

On October 3, after news broke about the raids, the Press Club of India [held an emergency meeting](#) in New Delhi, wherein journalists and media activists resolved to continue fighting for media freedom in India.

On October 4, journalists and writers, including novelist Arundhati Roy, [staged a protest](#) at the Press Club of India, while hundreds of young activists gathered at Jantar Mantar area in Delhi to reject the attacks on press freedom.

Several journalist bodies, students', youth and civil society organisations held protests at Press Club of India and Jantar Mantar on October 4th against recent witch hunt of employees of [#NewsClick](#), and especially the arrest of [#PrabirPurkayastha](#) and [#AmitChakravarty](#) pic.twitter.com/Qjtd7OHzwt

— CPI (M) (@cpimspeak) [October 4, 2023](#)

Roy spoke to the BBC, denouncing the charges against the journalists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. “They have confiscated the phones, the computers, they have charged them under this anti-terrorism act, collapsing the difference between terrorists and journalists,” she said.

Media persons turned up in large number at the Press Club of India to protest against multiple raids on a number of journalists associated with [#NewsClick](#) [#FreeThePress](#) pic.twitter.com/8KFrTB8tYO

— Press Club of India (@PCITweets) [October 4, 2023](#)

[#NewsClick](#) Delhi citizens came out in hundreds to mark the protest against attack on freedom of press and expression. While Jantar Mantar saw over 500 young students and activists Press Club of India was jam packed with journalists .

First three photos from Jantar Mantar ,... pic.twitter.com/z3K2OiyWz9

— Shabnam Hashmi (@ShabnamHashmi) [October 4, 2023](#)

In New York City, activists and journalists picketed on October 3 outside of the *New York Times* building in Midtown Manhattan. Much of the blame for the latest unjust targeting of these Indian journalists lies at the hands of the New York Times. The Indian government has been viciously targeting *NewsClick* for many years, following their first raid of the outlet in 2021 following *NewsClick*'s faithful reporting of the farmers' protests in the country. A recent article by the *New York Times*, claiming that *NewsClick*-affiliated journalists are part of a Chinese propaganda network, was used by Modi's government to justify further repression.

“A Government that has not been able to substantiate any charges against *NewsClick* despite being in possession of all its information, documentation and communications, needed a motivated and bogus article published in the *New York Times* to invoke the draconian UAPA and attempt to shut down and stifle independent and fearless voices that portray the story of the real India,” said *NewsClick* in a recent [statement](#). “Of peasants, of laborers, of farmers, and other oft-ignored sections of society.

The *New York Times*' recent article is merely a part of the West's Cold War against China, activists claimed. Ben Becker, editor-in-chief of *BreakThrough News*, said at the picket that the piece is a way to accuse “anyone who opposes US foreign policy of being an agent of China.”

“What this article did is to lay the groundwork for an attack on the anti-war movement or anyone who's critical of US foreign policy against China,” he said.

It is *NewsClick*'s steadfast reporting of working class struggles in India that has landed them in hot water with the Modi government, said Zoe Alexandra, co-editor of *Peoples Dispatch*, outside of the 52-story *New York Times* building.

“[NewsClick] dared to cover the incredibly powerful and courageous uprising of farmers in India. They were talking to farmers when they were committing suicide in the dozens and in the hundreds,” said Alexandra. “It’s NewsClick that covered the largest strike in human history. A [quarter billion people](#) on the streets.”

Hands off NewsClick!

A recent New York Times hit piece smeared leading Indian progressive outlet [@newsclickin](#) as part of a "Chinese propaganda network". This week the Modi gov't cited this pretext for mass raids & arrest of journalists — we protested outside the NYT in response! pic.twitter.com/BsOyWJzagj

— Party for Socialism and Liberation (@pslnational) [October 4, 2023](#)

A coalition of 18 media organizations in India have penned a [letter](#), published on October 14, to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Y V Chandrachud, expressing concern over the state’s repression. “The invocation of UAPA is especially chilling. Journalism cannot be prosecuted as ‘terrorism’. Enough instances in history abound to tell us where that eventually goes,” reads the letter. Signatories include Digipub News India Foundation, the Indian Women’s Press Corps, the Press Club of India, and the Foundation for Media Professionals.

In Taliparamba municipality in Kerala, India, dozens in the Democratic Youth Federation of India marched in solidarity with *NewsClick*.

The International People’s’ Assembly (IPA), a platform of over 200 trade unions, people’s movements, and left parties, [declared in a statement](#) on October 3 following the raids: “Today’s raids constitute a dangerous attack on press freedom in India and concerns all the democratic and progressive people around the world. The International Peoples’ Assembly (IPA) demands an end to persecution and press suppression in India.”

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Featured image: Protests in New Delhi and New York City decrying the raid and detention of journalists in India. (Licensed under PD)

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