

Press Release

February 9, 2024

Charge sheet against Government of India for subverting and undermining parliamentary democracy

In a charge sheet titled 'We the People of India v. Government of India', citizens call out the government for the systematic attack on our parliamentary democracy.

The objective of the charge sheet is to highlight the collapse of parliamentary democracy due to the ruling party's deliberate subversions of processes and laws. The charge sheet enlists and shares evidence for eight charges levelled by the people of India against the government.

The charge sheet was released in an online press conference today by many concerned individuals and organisations who endorsed it.

While the parliament itself got housed in a new building, parliamentary democracy has been attacked consistently for the past ten years. The institution of Parliament, a crucial pillar of democracy of representative accountability, has been fundamentally decimated in the last ten years by the government. This chargesheet released today is a chronicle of the ways in which democracy has been decimated and is a call for action to all Indian citizens to hold our MPs and the ruling government to account.

The charge sheet indicates that the government has deliberately violated procedures and constitutional provisions to turn the parliament into an instrument for majoritarian and undemocratic law-making. Such subversion and undermining of parliamentary democracy leads to the collapse of democracy itself.

Curbing space for Debate and Discussion

The last two Lok Sabha terms had the lowest number of sittings ever, indicating an intent to curb space for debate and discussion on the country's policies. Another example is that the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, who is conventionally a nominee of the opposition, was not elected in the entire 17th Lok Sabha term for the first time since India's independence. This is a direct violation of Article 93 of the Constitution. From 71% of all bills being referred to Standing Committees between 2009-2014, since 2019, only 16% of bills have been referred to Standing Committees. What is to be noted is also that only 74 out of 301 i.e. 24.5% of Bills introduced in Parliament were

circulated for consultation between 2014 and 2021.

Avoiding Scrutiny, Evading Accountability

The charge sheet also alleges that the government has deliberately bypassed parliamentary scrutiny either by bringing about significant legislative changes in the form of ordinances or bringing Bills as surprise at the last minute without affording MPs and people any opportunity to properly analyse and scrutinise the Bills before passing them.

The charge sheet also states: *“Between 2016 and 2023, on average, 79% of the budget has been passed without discussion. As per the conventional process, Lok Sabha discusses budgets of some Ministries in detail and votes on them separately... Lesser number of sittings, shorter budget sessions, poorly planned agenda of a government leads to less and less proportion of the Budget being discussed in detail and more and more of it being passed without discussion.”*

A ‘novel’ method of evading accountability has also been to delete questions - something for which there is no provision in law! In 2015, 2020, 2021 and 2023 the government has deleted questions raised by opposition MPs. In December 2023, 250+ questions raised by opposition MPs were deleted!

The charge sheet highlights other such unconstitutional and undemocratic acts of the government, which have completely undermined the process set in place to guarantee fairness, accountability, transparency and democratic decision making.

The chargesheet has been endorsed by the following organizations and individuals

Organisations

1. All India Lawyers Association for Justice(AILAJ)
2. All India People’s Science Network
3. Association for protection of Civil Rights (APCR)
4. Bahutva Karnataka
5. Bargi Bandh Visthapit Evam Prabhaavit Sangh, Madhya pradesh
6. Delhi Science Forum
7. Dynamic Action
8. Financial Accountability Network
9. Forum Against Oppression of Women- Mumbai
10. Gharelu Kamgaar Union
11. Human Rights Defenders Alert ;

12. Hasrat-e-Zindagi Mamuli; Mumbai
13. Indigenous Perspectives
14. Jan Sarokar
15. Maadhyam
16. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan (MKSS)
17. National Alliance for Justice Accountability and Rights(NAJAR)
18. National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM)
19. Naveddu Nilladiddare - Karnataka
20. People's Alliance for Fundamental Right to Education
21. People's Union for Civil Liberties
22. Stree Jagruti Samiti - Karnataka
23. VIKASANA VIDHYABHYASA KENDRAM

Individuals

1. Subodh Lal - Constitutional Conduct Group
2. Swati Narayan
3. Uma Shankari, Farmer, Citizen of india
4. Dr. Suhas Kolhekar, Health Rights, Education and Social Justice Activist
5. Sunder Burra, Retd. Civil Servant
6. Ashish Kothari, Pune
7. Dinesh Abrol
8. Nikhil Dey
9. ND Jayaprakash
10. Steve Rocha
11. Olencio, General Secretary, National Fishworkers Forum
12. Ashok Choudhary, All India Union of Forest Working People
13. Nirmal Gorana, Fight Inequality Alliance India
14. Denzil Fernandes, Social Scientist, Delhi
15. Medha Patkar, Narmada Bachao Andolan, National Alliance for People's Movement
16. Prasad Chacko
17. Ashish Ranjan, NAPM
18. Priya Darshini, Delhi Forum
19. Soumya Dutta, Senior Environmental Activist
20. Koninika Ray, National Federation of Indian Women

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