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Human Rights
Initiative



POLICE REFORMS WATCH

CHRI and PRW question the need for new proposed security legislation Press Statement, 26 August 2016

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and Police Reforms Watch seriously question both the necessity and the justification for another new internal security law as proposed by the Maharashtra government's Protection of Internal Security Bill 2016. We are particularly concerned with the wide scope of the Bill. Created purportedly to deal with multiple security challenges, the State once again bestows more and more sweeping powers on the executive and the police, all without the requisite accountability.

The omnibus Bill tries to deal with challenges of "terrorism, insurgency, communalism, caste violence, etc" all in one legislation and does not differentiate between the nature of the threats from each. Specific laws are already in place to deal with many of these matters. In order to bring every kind of threat under one law, the Bill relies on dangerously vague catch-all definitions, which are totally insufficient to further justify criminalisation or prohibition. It is equally alarming that the Bill gives the state government and police sweeping discretionary powers in the absence of sufficient checks or accountability for abuse of power.

Maja Daruwala, the Director of CHRI, states, *"This Bill is ill-considered both in its intent and content. Every citizen should be alarmed at the sweep of laws like this which are designed for abuse. The greatest security the state can provide all of us is to make sure we have an honest efficient and law upholding police and a court system geared to give us speedy and fair justice. Certainly more and more laws only go to muddying the waters and reducing people's power to face up to oppression"*.

The Bill has been released into the public domain ahead of the next Assembly session. This provides an opportunity for an exhaustive debate to discuss the necessity of any new law as well as the state of policing and security in Maharashtra.

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The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international NGO working for the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth.

Police Reforms Watch is a coalition of concerned citizens and civil society groups who have been working to catalyse the demand for Better Policing in Mumbai/ Maharashtra