

It is more than a week since Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Gopal Rai and hundreds of other volunteers of India Against Corruption have been on an indefinite fast. It is also the fifth day of Anna Hazare's fast. All of them are demanding major action to root out corruption in the country. Steps like these would have helped restore public confidence and bring back the integrity of democratic institutions that has been sharply eroded following a series of scams that have of late come to light. The ongoing fast represents the voice of conscience, a voice that has resonated across the minds and hearts of ordinary citizens of this country.

Unfortunately, the political establishment has not cared to listen, let alone respond, to this voice. The government has not only stonewalled these demands, it has also demonstrated little political will to bring the guilty of big scams to book. The opposition fares no better on this score. To the citizens it appears that both the government and opposition, indeed the entire political establishment of this country, have let the common citizen of this country down. Even the Parliamentary resolution backed by all the parties in August 2011 was not followed in letter and spirit.

The government may not have responded, but the people of this country cannot remain silent. These brave and selfless volunteers must not sacrifice their health and risk their lives at the altar of an insensitive political establishment. Their presence is needed for fulfilling the dream of swaraj nurtured by our freedom struggle and the values enshrined in our Constitution. Their services are needed for a just India where every citizen can live with dignity, free of fear and hunger, for a secular India where diversity is respected and for a democratic India where the elected representatives and all public servants do not rule, but truly serve the people. Their energies are needed for reforming our political system to make it participatory, responsive and decentralized and forging a new instrument for reinvigorating Indian democracy.

We call upon Shri Anna Hazare and all his associates, who have been on an indefinite fast, to give up on their expectations from this establishment. Instead, we call upon them to focus their energies on creating an alternative political force that is democratic, accountable, ethical and non-violent and capable of leading an electoral revolution to democratize and decentralize power and make the power structures of the country more accountable to the people.

Indian democracy stands at a crossroads. It needs a new wind. We urge the fasting volunteers to give up their fast in order to accept this historic challenge. We also urge all democratic citizens, movements and organizations to join hands with them for creation of such a movement.

Signatories:

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer (Retd. Judge, Supreme Court of India)
Adm Ram Tahiliani (Retd Navy chief and Chairperson Transparency International)
Gen (Rtd) V K Singh (Retd Chief of Army Staff)
Shri J M Lyngdoh (Retd. Chief Election Commissioner)
Justice N Santosh Hegde (Retd judge Supreme Court of India)
Shri Kuldip Nayar (Veteran journalist)
Shri Anupam Kher (Actor)
Shri E A S Sarma (Retd Secy, government of India)
Shri Ramaswamy R. Iyer (Retd Secy, government of India)
Major General V.K.Singh (Retd. Indian Army, Author of Secrets of RAW)
S R Hiremath (Social Activist)
Shri Sandeep Pandey (Social Activist)
Smt Madhu Bhaduri (Retd Ambassador, Government of India)
Prafulla Samantara (Social Activist)
Shri Ravi Chopra (Director, People's Science Institute)
Professor Amit Bhaduri (Professor Emeritus, JNU)
Professor Anand Kumar (JNU)
Professor Ajit Jha (University of Delhi)
Professor Yogendra Yadav(CSDS)
Shri Sharad Chandra Behar (Retd Chief Secy, Govt. of M.P.)
Shri Brahma Dev Sharma (Social Activist and former Chairman SCST Commission)
Shri Kamal Jaswal (Retd Secy GOI and Director, Common Cause)
Shri P.V. Rajgopal (founder, Ekta Parishad)