

PRESS STATEMENT

July 24, 2015

CJP and Sabrang Trust Rebut Gujarat Police's False Claims in latest Affidavit

To begin with, the aims and objectives of both CJP and Sabrang Trust as contained in their founding documents are wide enough to allow for a wide range of activities. However, since its inception in 2002, CJP's core concern has been to provide legal aid to the victims of mass crimes. Sabrang Trust's main focus has been, one, Khoj (education for a plural India) programme run in schools, and two, conflict resolution and peace building.

In certain emergency situations, both Trusts have engaged in relief and rehabilitation efforts but that never was, or claimed by us to be, their main purpose.

Thus the fund-raising efforts of both Trusts have been to support its core activities.

1. What the Trusts Raised Funds For.

As the Survivors of the carnage in Gulberg Society were unable to sell their individual properties at a fair price, it was collectively decided to try and raise funds to build a memorial at Gulberg Society. Since we, Sabrang Trust (CJP never had anything to do with the Memorial) only managed to raise Rs 4.6 lakhs, we had to inform the Society (members) that the Memorial project was not feasible. No contract was ever signed, no property or deed ever changed hands, no rent was promised nor monies changed hands. The Rs 4.6 lakhs donated by individuals (all Indians, including one NRI) is still unutilised.

2. On Funds Raised and Activities Conducted for Legal Aid.

CJP raised money for providing legal aid to Victims and its record in this respect is unprecedented in India. Witness protection and probity during trial despite hostile regimes have ensured the convictions of 120 persons. It is these gains that the regime in power in Delhi wants to snatch away. In each of these cases, CJP argued against the death penalty as our commitment to lasting human rights jurisprudence. An amendment in the CRPC in 2009 was a recognition of these efforts (Section 24(8)(2)) whereby victims have for the first time been given statutory rights of legal presence during trial. It was and is CJP's perseverance that has rendered meaning to the Supreme Court's monitoring of key trials. Each time there was a breach, it was our legal team that brought serious lapses to the notice of the Supreme Court.

Sabrang Trust raised money for its Khoj programme in schools and for conflict resolution and peace building.

3. On Salaries to Teesta and Javed.

All payments to Teesta or Javed were strictly in accordance with the budgets proposed to and accepted by Ford Foundation, UNVFVT, CRY, etc.

Over a period of 10 years (2004-2014), the monthly payments from all projects put together was Rs 39,000 per month for Teesta and Rs 23,500 per month for Javed.

4. On Siphoning Trust Monies to Sabrang Communications (page 16 of the Affidavit).

Alleged siphoning through Sabrang Communications: On requests from Sabrang Trust and CJP, Sabrang Communications (the oldest entity, a private limited company founded in 1993) agreed to share its office space, office equipment and staff on an expenses sharing basis. No rent was ever paid by ST or CJP to Sabrang Communications. The premises, which are owned by Teesta's parents, were given rent-free to SC. All payments by CJP and ST towards reimbursements for shared expenses were as per resolutions passed from time to time by their respective trustees. Teesta and Javed recused themselves from the decisions taken in all such instances. SC made no profit from this expenses sharing arrangement and Teesta and Javed were not paid even a rupee out of such reimbursements.

5. Allegation that We Can't Buy What We Want from the Remunerations Received by Us (page 19 of the affidavit).

This allegation is too ridiculous to merit comment.

6. Funds Raised through Art Auction by Sabrang Trust (page 21 of the Affidavit).

The funds raised through the Art Auction were intended to support the core activities that have been spelt out at the very beginning. It was never claimed by the Trusts that the funds so raised were for financial help for Victims. India's leading artists gave generously of their works to support these endeavours due to the high regard for our work.

7. No Accounts for Legal Aid work by CJP (page 24 of the Affidavit).

Everyone in India and abroad, except for the Gujarat police, recognises the legal aid work undertaken by CJP, and its outcome. It is evident from the annual audited accounts of CJP submitted to the authorities (Income Tax, Charity Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs-FCRA) that 80-90 per cent of CJP's annual expenses are incurred on legal aid (including expenses on CJP's field office in Gujarat) to coordinate the legal work.

Since its inception, CJP has fought 68 legal cases from trial court to Supreme Court - a historic endeavour.

8. Allegations on Funds Raised for Ambulances (page 26 of Affidavit).

Donations to CJP were meant not only for purchase but the operating costs over the years (running) of two Ambulances. The unspent amount of the funds earmarked for Ambulances at the end of each year is in the balance sheet of CJP.

9. Funds Raised through Art Exhibition (page 27 of the Affidavit).

Funds raised through the Art Exhibition were for the core activity of CJP which is legal aid. Top artists contributed generously of their work to support the cause of justice for the Survivors of mass crimes.

CJP - Trustees:

Anil Dharker, Nandan Maluste, Alyque Padamsee, I.M. Kadri, Cyrus Guzder, Anil Dharker, Ghulam Pesh Imam, Cedric Prakash, Shakuntala Kulkarni, Javed Anand, Teesta Setalvad (Secretary)

Sabrang Trust - Trustees:

Ravi Kulkarni, Nakul Mehta, Amili Setalvad, Javed Anand, Teesta Setalvad