

All India Peoples Science Network (AIPSN) Statement
5 Oct 2023

**AIPSN Condemns raids at Newslick:
Call to stop the harassment and denial of democratic rights**

History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce. In Feb 2021 the Enforcement Directorate raided the offices of the web based news and current affairs portal Newslick and the residences of its editors and director. AIPSN, many media houses, civil society and all those working to strengthen critical thinking and scrutiny of government policies in the public, were shocked and raised their voices. Now on 3 Oct 2023, the Special Cell of the Delhi police conducted an early morning raid on the houses of several journalists and technicians and confiscated their electronic gadgets including laptops and mobile phones. The raid started from 6 am at over 100 places in Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram, and Mumbai. Amongst those whose houses and offices were raided by the Delhi Police were the Editor of Newslick, Prabir Purkayastha, the former Managing Editor of NDTV, Aunindyo Chakravorty, senior journalist and researcher, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, and senior journalists including Urmillesh, Abhisar Sharma, Bhasha Singh, Subodh Verma, Anuradha Raman, Aditi Nigam, Pranjal, Sumedha Pal, Mukund Jha and some others. The police also searched and seized the devices of satirist and stand-up comedian Sanjay Rajoura, historian Sohail Hashmi, author Gita Hariharan, D. Raghunandan of Delhi Science Forum and Kiran Chandra of Free Software Movement of India. In addition, the Delhi police raided the office and residence of Teesta Setalvad and Javed Anand of Sabrang India in Mumbai. It also raided the house of Sitaram Yechury, General Secretary of the CPI (M) party and confiscated a device of the son of a staff member. 46 people including 9 women were questioned either at home or taken away to the special cell. Shockingly, the Delhi Police sealed the office of Newslick and arrested Newslick's founder and Editor-in-Chief Prabir Purkayastha, and also Amit Chakravarty of Newslick, a polio survivor and person with disability who uses crutches, under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Over two years the government agencies were unable to find anything substantive; the Enforcement Directorate has not filed a complaint accusing Newslick of money laundering, the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has not been able to file a chargesheet against Newslick for offences under the Indian Penal Code, the Income Tax Department has not been able to defend its actions before the Courts of law. However, the Enforcement Directorate had attached Newslick's assets after starting a probe into its funding. This was done after *The New York Times* alleged in an article without any evidence that the news portal was among Chinese propaganda outlets being funded by American tech mogul Neville Roy Singham.

Now, ahead of the elections, the draconian UAPA has been used with farcical allegations such as “The analysis of the e-mails further shows that Neville Roy Singham, Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty are in direct touch with each other wherein they were found to be discussing how to create a map of India without Kashmir and to show Arunachal Pradesh as disputed area”. None of the people questioned and whose electronic properties were seized were served with any notice. Those ‘taken away’ for questioning were done so without any information of charges against them. Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty were arrested but not given the FIR. A letter by 16 media bodies to the Chief Justice of India points out that the seizure of devices integral to their work, was done without ensuring the integrity of their data—a basic protocol essential to due process. It calls for the courts to frame guidelines for “the interrogation of journalists and for seizures from them, to ensure that these are not undertaken as fishing expeditions with no bearing to an actual offence”; and “finding ways to ensure the accountability of State agencies and individual officers who are found overstepping the law or willfully

misleading courts with vague and open-ended investigations against journalists for their journalistic work.” The raids have been [condemned and called](#) “an egregious assault on the right to privacy, the right to dignity, as well as the freedom of journalists to practice their profession fearlessly,”

Newslick’s coverage of various issues in [science and technology](#) (S&T), [public policies](#) related to S&T, [Covid19](#) pandemic, [farmers protests](#), [Delhi riots](#), [CAA protests](#) have provided an alternative and informed perspective often unabashedly critical of the government. AIPSN is deeply disturbed by these raids on Newslick and harassment of journalists, academics, artists and science activists. Newslick has clearly stated, both [now](#) and [before](#), that all these charges are not true.

At this crucial point in our nation’s history as a secular, democratic society bound by the Constitution of India, AIPSN expresses its solidarity with Newslick, other independent media outlets and journalists and urges the Government to not strangle voices of [dissent so essential for science](#).

[AIPSN](#) deplores this attempt to intimidate and silence journalists, academics, scientists, writers, and artists. [AIPSN](#) strongly condemns this hounding and witch-hunting of people committed to self-reliance, people's centric development, and democracy.

For clarifications contact:

Asha Mishra, General Secretary, AIPSN
gsaipsn@gmail.com, 9425302012, Twitter: @gsaipsn