

A TORCHBEARER OF TRUE SPIRIT OF HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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K. Balagopal was not a civil rights activist of Andhra Pradesh but a crusader against any human rights violation in this part of the globe. His untimely death saddened the whole HR community of this country and abroad. Balagopal died at relatively younger age of 52 due to a cardiac arrest in a hospital in Banjara hills on Thursday night. He is survived by wife and son.

Balagopal was one of the unfaltering civil liberty activist in Andhra Pradesh and a committed human rights advocate of our country, who not even thought twice while breaking away from the organisation, with which he was associated since its inception in 80's; Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), on the issue of violence perpetrated by the erstwhile CPI-ML (Peoples War) and APCLC's reluctance to condemn the violence perpetuated by the so called campaigners of armed struggle.

In this juncture Professor Balagopal felt the need for a committed human rights group and founded the Human Rights Forum (HRF) in A.P. Balagopal unambiguously condemned and protested against any form of terror; the state sponsored killing and terrors, extra judicial killings and tortures, as well as the so called 'red terror' by few political protagonists of armed struggle. Balagopal was an ardent campaigner against 'Capital Punishment'.

He was not only a prolific writer on people's issues and scholar but appeared before the court of law in various sensitive human rights issues as a lawyer.

Professor Balagopal gave up teaching in Kakatiya University and took to practice of law nearly a decade ago and had argued dozens of cases pertaining to encounter killings by the police. In late eighties, 'Praja Bandu', a State sponsored criminal outfit like Salwa Judum of today's Chattisgarh, 'Protirodh Bahini' in West Bengal, abducted him and demanding the release of two policemen from naxalite custody. The 'Praja Bandu', floated by the state police had released him only after the abducted policemen were let off.

This unflinching commitment towards the human rights causes and quality to dare the criticism from colleagues and erstwhile companions made him a torchbearer of true spirit of human rights movement in this country.

MASUM deeply mourn the sudden and untimely death of Professor Balagopal. By his death MASUM not only lost a great friend in difficulties but the country became bereaved with a champion of civil rights, when the movement is facing a great challenge from the State.

In this heartbreaking moment, MASUM reaffirm its commitment toward the human rights causes and feel that will be the best respect to the departed human rights defender