



## PRESS RELEASE

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### While Delhi government turns a blind eye, SAM:BKS (Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon Ke Saath) scales up fight to restore dignified living for CityMakers

Heckled, needled, harassed and questioned at every step by responsible authorities, **Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon Ke Saath** (SAM-BKS) did not let its steeled resolve be diluted because of external pressure. While the nation remains oblivious to the pressing needs of its homeless residents, SAM-BKS remained resolute in its continued fight for better living conditions and more permanent shelters in Delhi. The High Court of Delhi on 20 March 2013, has taken serious objection and issued Contempt Notice to Mr A.K Sharma (Director Night Shelters, Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board – DUSIB) for harassing SAM:BKS, including demanding details of fee paid to pro-bono lawyers fighting the case in the High Court.

At a press conference in Delhi, Mr Miloon Kothari, former UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing stated that, "The Delhi High Court has through its *suo moto* case been monitoring the issue of homelessness in Delhi for over three years now. The High Court has passed numerous interim orders directing the government, at different levels, in Delhi to respect the human rights of the homeless, including through a long-term plan built around permanent shelters. In spite of these clear directions from the High Court, the authorities continue to treat the homeless with hostility and the primary agency responsible for the homeless (DUSIB) lurches from crisis to crisis. Surely Delhi's CityMakers deserve better than a callous, corrupt and uncaring government".

Ms Shivani Chaudhry, Associate Director, Housing and Land Rights Network and member of SAM:BKS, drew attention to the paucity of shelters for women in Delhi. "It is a matter of national shame that in the capital of India, there exists only one permanent shelter for over 10,000 homeless women, and that is run by an NGO (IGSSS) not the government. Homeless women face the worst forms of violence and sexual abuse, on a daily basis. Despite the intensified national discussion on women's safety and security, the vulnerability and plight of homeless women continue to be ignored. Funds like the 'Nirbhaya Fund' should be created specifically for homeless women and should be utilised to create adequate permanent shelters and short stay homes for them as well as for rehabilitation centres for survivors of domestic violence. Shelters for the homeless are but the first step in the continuum of housing rights, with the ultimate aim of realising the right to adequate housing for all, which is a legal obligation of the Government of India," she said.

Indu prakash singh, Head, CityMakers (homeless residents) Programme, Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) and Executive Committee member of SAM: BKS, shared how hard DUSIB tried to break the resolve of SAM:BKS. "They kept harassing us, asking us insulting questions. But for the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi's *suo moto* intervention, the CityMakers (homeless residents) would have died in large numbers, due to deficient shelters. And our ordeal wouldn't have come to a halt, the way it did on 20th March 2013, when the Hon'ble Court took the DUSIB Director, Mr. A K Sharma, to task for needlessly troubling us. The Hon'ble High Court in its order dated 20th March, 2013 has noted: "In our opinion, the above communication per se amounts to interference in the course of administration of justice and would amount to criminal contempt." The High Court order is surely very encouraging for the networks in the country. The networks will get strengthened by this Order."

He brought to notice that groups have been using the tool of RTI for bringing in accountability of the government by asking the right questions with regard to budget allocation for Citymakers (homeless residents). Information garnered through the Right to Information (RTI) Act shows that between 2007 to January 2013, there have been 14,832 deaths (7 deaths per day) in Delhi itself, while total figures in the nation amount to 21,489 deaths. It is indeed shocking to note that none of the human rights commissions are concerned about homeless resident. Barring one state (Jharkhand), no state had any separate budgetary allocation for homeless residents.

To bring out the absolute apathy of the state towards the atrocities against homeless residents, he also pointed out the attack by the Khadims of the Nizamuddin Dargah on the women and children's shelter, in Nizamuddin on 31st March, 2013, besides raising other issues on access to toilets for the CityMakers. A new shelter (on 7th April, 2013) has been constructed in front of Indo- Global Social Service Society by converting the canvas shelter that started from 6 January 2012. The contribution for this is being raised by independent donations from concerned people.

SAM-BKS is battle hardened and more ignited than ever before to advocate for the human rights of CityMakers and to bring in substantial changes towards the cause it espouses. Nothing and no one is stronger than all of us, because voices adjoin to make the right noise for making the city's sleeping authorities wake from their reverie of inertia. This is a wake-up call for all of us.

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#### [About SAM: BKS](#)

*Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon ke Saath (SAM: BKS) is a Delhi-based collective of over 30 organisations and social movements, including homeless residents. SAM: BKS works to promote and protect the rights of the homeless residents, as guaranteed by the Constitution of India and international human rights instruments, and to ultimately secure adequate housing for all homeless residents. For more information, please write to: [shahriadhikarmanch@gmail.com](mailto:shahriadhikarmanch@gmail.com) or call Anil Kumar (9582170401).*