

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Shahri Adhikar Manch Outraged over Eviction of Homeless in Delhi**

- Northern Railway, MCD and Delhi Police evict over 400 homeless people in Pul Mithai, Sadar Bazaar, in violation of Delhi High Court order not to evict the homeless in winter on humanitarian grounds;
- One more homeless person succumbs to the cold in Delhi; death toll of homeless now three;
- Despite High Court order to MCD to reconstruct Pusa Road shelter, homeless still waiting out in the cold;
- Shahri Adhikar Manch member arbitrarily arrested.

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**New Delhi, 9 January 2010:** *Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon Ke Liye (Urban Rights Forum: For the Homeless)*, expresses deep anguish and horror over the violent eviction of homeless people at Pul Mithai in Sadar Bazaar this morning. It is of great concern to the *Manch* that instead of meeting its legal obligations to protect Delhi's residents, the government is consistently violating the human rights of the city's poorest and most marginalized. At 11.20 am today, officials of the Northern Railways, Delhi Police and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), used force to evict over 400 homeless people, including men, women and over 100 children at Pul Mithai. The *Manch* is horrified that the police used *lathis* to beat women and children. The evicted are sitting out in the freezing cold with their meagre belongings, with nowhere to go. This action is in violation of the 7 January 2010 order by a bench consisting of the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court – Justice A.P. Shah and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw – prohibiting evictions of the homeless in the winter, on humanitarian grounds.

Yesterday, 8 January 2010, was recorded as Delhi's coldest day in seven years. Instead of taking emergency measures to provide immediate adequate shelter to the homeless who face the worst brunt of the cold, the state is evicting them from the places where they work and sleep. Gerry Pinto of Butterflies and executive committee member of the *Manch* strongly condemned the eviction saying that, "the evicted people are construction workers for the Commonwealth Games. In the absence of any state-provided housing, they were forced to sleep out in the open. Their eviction is a blatant violation of their human rights. Today is a shameful day for democracy in India."

According to Amita Joseph, also an executive committee member of *Shahri Adhikar Manch*, "The people who subsidise our city and its services, are the poorest and homeless. They are, however, denied their fundamental rights, are completely bereft of any social security measures, and not treated as equal citizens. It is tragic that the most vulnerable women, children and men, who are bonafide citizens of this country, are being subjected to state-sponsored violence and that too in the bitter winter cold."

*Shahri Adhikar Manch* further laments the death of the rickshaw puller who succumbed to the cold in Yamuna Bazaar yesterday, and of Rajinder, a sixty-year old man who died of the cold at Hanuman Mandir this morning. Bhima, a 35-year old balloon seller, died at Pusa Road on 31 December 2009. All three homeless deaths this winter were preventable. They are a glaring example of state negligence, and the *Manch* holds the Delhi government responsible.

What is shocking is that despite the recent order by the Delhi High Court demanding immediate restoration of the Pusa Road temporary night shelter, the MCD has still not provided an adequate shelter. Women, children, men, elderly persons and newborn infants continue to shiver out in the bitter cold.

The apparent complicity of the Delhi police in harassing the homeless as well as those advocating on their behalf is evident in the arbitrary arrest and detention today of *Shahri Adhikar Manch* member, Dhananjay Tingal. Even though he was later released, the *Manch* strongly condemns such illegal action. Further, the *Manch* calls for immediate restoration of the Pusa Road shelter with provision of adequate services, the immediate rehabilitation and provision for safe return of those evicted from Pul Mithai with dignity and provision of adequate shelter for them, and the setting up of more night shelters where the homeless are located.

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***Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon ke Liye (Urban Rights Forum: For the Homeless)***

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