



Science for Society

Science for Man

Science in Thinking

# **BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY**

**All India Committee**

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**A Voluntary Organization Committed to the Cause of Science, Culture and Scientific Outlook**

18 February 2021

## **Press Statement**

### **BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY EXPRESSES CONCERN AT THE ARREST OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVIST, DISHA RAVI**

21-year old Disha Ravi, a climate change activist, and a part of Fridays for Future India (FFF), was picked up for questioning from her home in Bengaluru, by a team from the Delhi Police on February 13, 2021. She was immediately flown to Delhi, where she was produced before a magistrate on Sunday afternoon and sent to 5-day police custody. She is charged with involvement with an online toolkit linked to young environmentalist Greta Thunberg and the ongoing Indian farmers' protests. Thunberg and some other international celebrities, incidentally, had tweeted support for the farmers' protests, discomfoting the Indian government.

The toolkit is a form of guideline posted online to help anyone unfamiliar with the ongoing farmers' protests in India to better understand the situation and to inform supporters of the farmers' protests how to organise themselves and take decisions on ways to support the movement. It suggests various lawful forms of protest, including social media campaigns. However, the police and the government preferred to see the use and dissemination of the toolkit as a means to foment unrest, create misinformation and disaffection against the lawfully enacted government, and as amounting to an act of sedition.

Incidentally, Disha was part of an FFF online email campaign opposing the March 2020 draft Environmental Impact assessment (EIA 2020) by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. In response, the websites of FFF India and two other groups were blocked in July 2020. The block was later withdrawn.

Leading advocates and jurists have flagged violations of norms and guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Home Affairs and numerous Delhi High Court and Supreme Court judgements in Disha's arrest, and pointed out that she did not have her legal counsel with her. Many Indian academics, artists, activists, jurists, political leaders, personalities, students, youth and women groups have come out against Disha's arrest and demanded her immediate release. A former Supreme Court Justice has opined that he saw nothing in the toolkit with regard to violence or with regard to inciting people, that

he could not see what was seditious about the document. He further said that whether one agreed or disagreed with the protesters was a different matter but to say that anything in the toolkit was sedition was not according to law.

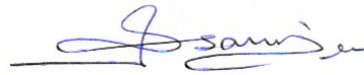
The arrest of Disha Ravi and the issuance of non-bailable warrants for two others linked with the Thunberg toolkit, Mumbai-based advocate, Nikita Jacob and her associate, Shantanu Muluk, is seen as having grave implications for the right to free speech and association. These acts of the government is being seen as a part of an emerging pattern of crackdowns on dissent, with intimidation of activists, journalists and protestors, using colonial era sedition laws, as also a larger decline in internet freedom in India

The Breakthrough Science Society (BSS) expresses its deep concern at the untenable arrest of Disha Ravi. It is alarmed at the atmosphere of intolerance of the government to differences of opinion and views, at its unwillingness to engage in democratic discourse on concerns its policies are creating amongst its citizens, in the fields of education, health, environment, among others, while also doggedly pursuing agendas that fly in the face of science and scientific approach.

The BSS calls for the immediate release of Disha Ravi, dropping of all charges against her, and those charged with her. It also hopes that the government adopts the practice of engaging in democratic discourse and consultation with people on policies affecting the various problems of their lives.



Dhrubajyoti Mukhopadhyay  
President



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General Secretary