

8 November 2016

India: Refusal to renew registration of the Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns

On 7 November 2016, the Delhi High Court held a hearing to review the appeal lodged by the **Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns (CPSC)** regarding the refusal to renew the registration of the CPSC under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA). The refusal of registration under the FCRA means that the organisation cannot receive any foreign funding.

[The Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns \(CPSC\)](#), is a charitable trust established over 35 years ago. The CPSC's program unit, **People's Watch**, is a national human rights organisation based in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. [People's Watch](#) undertakes programs on human rights monitoring, education, campaigns and rehabilitation in the state of Tamil Nadu. In 1998, People's Watch began providing legal assistance on behalf of victims of human rights abuses.

On 29 October 2016, the Ministry of Home Affairs denied the renewal of CPSC's Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) registration which was due to expire on 31 October 2016. The FCRA regulates foreign funding for all non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India, therefore with the denial of renewal the CPSC, and its program unit, People's Watch cannot receive any foreign funding. On 3 November the CPSC filed an appeal to the Delhi High Court regarding the refusal of registration. On 7 November 2016, the Delhi High Court held a hearing to review the appeal, during which the central government standing counsellor told the court that the NGO's registration was not renewed based on inputs from intelligence agencies. The counsellor also claimed that the government was exempted from giving reasons for refusing to renew the FCRA registrations. However, the Delhi High Court has requested that the government respond by 18 November 2016.

This is not the first time that the registration of CPSC has been threatened. In 2012 and 2013, the human rights organisation's FCRA was suspended several times for a total period of 540 days. The case of the CPSC is part of an on-going trend whereby the Ministry of Home Affairs is denying funding to human rights organisations via the FCRA. The Indian government has recently denied FCRA registration to [25 NGOs](#) for being allegedly involved in anti-national activities. On 16 June 2016, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notice to cancel the registration of [Sabrang Trust](#) under the FCRA. On 3 November, the Indian government stated on the Ministry of Home Affairs website that it cancelled the FCRA licenses of over 11,000 organisations for failing to apply for renewal.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the refusal to renew the registration of Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns as it believes it to be an attempt to repress the organisation's legitimate work in the defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:

1. Renew the registration of the Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, as Front Line Defenders believes the organisation has been denied registration solely as a result of its legitimate human rights activities;
2. Ensure that any investigations into The Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns, are grounded on objective evidence and are carried out in a law-abiding manner;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.