

Human Rights cannot be an excuse for defying the law of the land

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The stand taken and the statements made by Amnesty International are unfortunate, exaggerated and far from the truth.

The facts of the matter are as follows:

Amnesty International had received permission under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) only once and that too twenty years ago (19.12.2000). Since then Amnesty International, despite its repeated applications, has been denied FCRA approval by successive governments since as per law it is not eligible to get such an approval.

However, in order to circumvent the FCRA regulations, Amnesty UK remitted large amounts of money to four entities registered in India, by classifying it as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). A significant amount of foreign money was also remitted to Amnesty (India) without MHA's approval under FCRA. This mala fide rerouting of money was in contravention of extant legal provisions.

Owing to these illegal practices of Amnesty, the previous government had also rejected the repeated applications of Amnesty to receive funds from overseas. This had led Amnesty to suspend its India operations once during that period as well. This bipartisan and purely legal approach towards Amnesty, under different governments, makes it clear that the entire fault lies in the dubious processes adopted by Amnesty to secure funds for its operations.

All the glossy statements about humanitarian work and speaking truth to power are nothing but a ploy to divert attention from their activities which were in clear contravention of laid down Indian laws. Such statements are also an attempt to extraneously influence the course of investigations by multiple agencies into the irregularities and illegalities carried out over the last few years.

Amnesty is free to continue humanitarian work in India, as is being done by many other organizations. However, India, by settled law, does not allow interference in domestic political debates by entities funded by foreign donations. This law applies equally to all and it shall apply to Amnesty International as well.

India has a rich and pluralistic democratic culture with a free press, independent judiciary and tradition of vibrant domestic debate. The people of India have placed unprecedented trust in the current government. Amnesty's failure to comply with local regulations does not entitle them to make comments on the democratic and plural character of India.
