

## PRESS RELEASE

It is a sad reflection on the State of our democracy that a peaceful "Padayatra" to commemorate the Father of our Nation on "Martyrs Day" (30.01.2020) has been portrayed by the police as an "unauthorized activity" by lawyers and retired judges inside the High Court.

To describe a peaceful Padayatra to honour Gandhiji as an unlawful protest is an insult to the Mahatma.

The Padayatra was most dignified and silent carrying the National Flag and placards of the Preamble of the Constitution. The participants did not go anywhere near the High Court building nor was there any disruption of the functioning of any Court. The Padayatra went around the periphery and outside the Court campus by which the message of peace, harmony and the idea of Gandhi's India was sent across to the public at large.

By repeated promulgation of orders under Section 41 of the City Police Act, the State has prohibited the right to assembly and any democratic expression. For them to paint the participation of retired judges who have every right as citizens to pay homage to the Mahatma and his message as suspicious or undesirable deserves to be deprecated. Yesterday, citizens were prevented from assembling even at Gandhi Mandapam at Chennai and some were detained.

People look to the Courts as the last bastion of defenders of the Constitution. It is highly condemnable for the police now to cast a cloud over a non partisan and solemn padayatra taken to remember the Mahatma and to reiterate his enduring message of peace and harmony. The State today seems to be worried about the Mahatma, the man and his message.

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