

Statement by Prashant Bhushan in response to the sentencing order in the Suo motu contempt case

31st Augsut 2020

The Supreme Court of India has announced its verdict on the contempt case against me. It holds me guilty of contempt of court and has decided to impose a fine of Re 1, and failing that imprisonment of three months and debarring me from practicing for three years. I had already said in my first statement to the Court: "I am here to cheerfully submit to any penalty that can lawfully be inflicted upon me for what the Court has determined to be an offence, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen". Therefore, while I reserve the right to seek a review of the conviction and sentencing, by way of an appropriate legal remedy, I propose to submit myself to this order and will respectfully pay the fine, just as I would have submitted to any other lawful punishment.

I have had the greatest respect for the institution of the Supreme Court. I have always believed it to be the last bastion of hope, particularly for the weak and the oppressed who knock at its door for the protection of their rights, often against a powerful executive. My tweets were not intended in any way to disrespect the Supreme Court or the judiciary as a whole, but were merely meant to express my anguish, at what I felt, was a deviation from its sterling past record. This issue was never about me versus the Hon'ble Judges, much less about me vs the Supreme Court. When the Supreme Court of India wins, every Indian wins. Every Indian wants a strong and independent judiciary. Obviously if the courts get weakened, it weakens the republic and harms every citizen.

I am extremely grateful and humbled by the solidarity and support expressed by countless persons, ex-judges, lawyers, activists and fellow citizens who encouraged me to remain firm and true to my beliefs and conscience. They strengthen my hope that this trial may draw the country's attention to the cause of freedom of speech and judicial accountability and reform. What is very heartening is that this case has become a watershed moment for freedom of speech and seems to have encouraged many people to stand up and speak out against the injustices in our society.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank my legal team, especially senior Advocates Dr Rajeev Dhawan and Shri Dushyant Dave. I am more confident now than ever before that truth shall prevail.

Long live democracy! Satyameva Jayate!
