

Remove regressive provisions from proposed RTI rules

RTI activist Suhas Haldankar was on his way back home when he was beaten to death by 11 people. Suhas's head was smashed with concrete blocks and he collapsed in a pool of blood. Suhas was using the RTI Act to expose civic lapses and raise his voice against the inefficiency of local corporators in Pune area. And if the government has its way, we may see many more information seekers meeting Suhas's fate. The government is trying to weaken the RTI Act by proposing amendments to the rules which will put RTI users' lives in danger. The proposed rules allow for withdrawal of appeals based on a written communication by the appellant and closure of proceedings upon death of the appellant. Given the Indian reality where RTI applicants are often attacked and even killed for seeking information, the proposed rules will make it easier for people with vested interests to pressurise RTI users and threaten them to withdraw their appeals. In just the last few years more than 57 people have been killed for using the RTI Act to seek information. Having a rule like 'closing the proceedings upon death of the appellant' puts the lives of lakhs of people using RTI in danger. The government should be protecting people who seek truth, demand accountability and expose corruption. Instead of implementing the Whistle Blowers Protection Act which was passed by Parliament more than 3 years ago, the government is making information seekers more vulnerable through the proposed RTI rules.

By-

Anjali Bhardwaj, Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Amrita Johri

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