



NON-VIOLENCE  
परस्परौपद्वे अहिंसा

# JAINA

## Federation of Jain Associations in North America

Founded 1981

A Non-Profit Tax Exempt Religious Organization IRS Code Section 501(c)(3) EI # 54-1280028

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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May 16, 2011

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Honorable **Director, Department of Information & Public Relations,;**

JAINA, the Federation of Jain Associations in North America, strongly condemns and vehemently protests the unconstitutional and illegal arrest on May 13, 2011 of Jain monk, Muni Shri Maitri Prabh Sagarji Maharaj at Baraut in Bagpat District, Uttar Pradesh (UP).

MuniShri was resting at night after completing the 17<sup>th</sup> day of a peaceful fast unto death to non-violently oppose the opening of eight (8) new slaughterhouses in Uttar Pradesh, which is a deplorable development. The UP government illegally interfered with MuniShri and his followers who were peacefully expressing their abhorrence for the torture and slaughter of animals. The arrest and subsequent treatment of MuniShri and his followers was a blatant contravention of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of India, a democratic nation like the USA.

Jains, (like Sikhs) are a small minority community in Uttar Pradesh and many other states, and should be guaranteed the right to practice their religion without any outside interference. These and other inalienable rights such as the Right guaranteeing freedom of speech and the Right guaranteeing freedom of religion should have been upheld by those charged with enforcing the law. Instead, the UP police, sanctioned by the UP government, chose to cause serious violation of the ancient code of conduct for MuniShri Maitri Prabh Sagarji Maharaj, who was merely using his Jain beliefs for the non-violent expression of reverence for all living beings. These Constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms are the basis of non-violent protest which is India's greatest contribution to the world, as exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi. **Since when has peaceful protest become a crime or a reason for persecution of minorities in Independent India?**

JAINA is especially concerned that instead of protecting MuniShri's right to peaceful protest, the UP police have knowingly and disrespectfully violated MuniShri's personal vow and ethical code of conduct for Jain *sadhus* invoked by the act of taking *diksha*; honoring this code means everything to our revered sadhus and sadhvis. In arresting the MuniShri in the middle of the night, and then forcibly transporting him in a vehicle, the UP police have further violated MuniShri's precious lifelong religious vows (of never using any kind of vehicle, animal, human or mechanically driven), causing him and the entire Jain community irreparable harm, including breach of faith in the law and government of UP, which has greatly hurt the sensibilities and beliefs of the entire Jain community world over.

We urgently request you to take immediate action to (1) rescind the approval of the mechanized slaughterhouses; (2) issue an unconditional apology to the Jain community; and (3) take disciplinary action against all associated with harassment of this man of peace.

JAINA is a federation of 72 organizations representing nearly 150,000 Jains in USA and Canada. JAINA's mission is to preserve, evolve and promote Jain values, and the understanding and practices of *Ahimsa* (Non-Violence) through education, charitable, humanitarian and interfaith activities.

Yours Sincerely,

Lata Champsee  
President, JAINA