



Securing Civil Society - Activists' Arrest

What is the issue?

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- The Pune Police raided rights activists and academicians across the country and arrested five top activists, allegedly for Maoist links.
- The arrests have come as the latest blow inflicted on civil society for arbitrary reasons.

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What are the recent developments?

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- In a democracy, the individual transits from subject to citizen.
- But the modern democratic state is armed with technologies of surveillance and control.
- With this, it had come to possess extraordinary power.
- In effect, rights-bearing citizen of the democratic state has become more vulnerable.
- A democratic state has started to terrorise, kill and drill fear in the mind of the body politic.
- The other dominant institution, the market, is largely amoral.
- It is increasingly becoming indifferent to human suffering.
- It cares little for citizens exploited by the state and by its own need for

resources, labour, and profit.

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How did the civil society evolve?

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- In the aftermath of the Emergency (1975-77), civil liberties movement made a strong appearance.
- The movement eventually developed into a human rights movement.
- It took on a significant task of protecting the fundamental right to life and liberty.
- These two rights lie at the core of other rights which are critical for human beings.
- It incorporates the right not to be tortured or killed, right not to be arrested and imprisoned without due cause, etc.
- Civil society is now a more plural sphere with all manners of associations.
- It ranges from football clubs to reading groups to film fan societies.

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How significant is the civil society?

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- **Society** - Civil liberty and/or human rights activists are lawyers, academics, journalists and public minded citizens of India.
- It is the human concern for the poor and the vulnerable that works as their driving force.
- Civil society activists are instrumental in protecting the overall moral conscience of the society.
- **Rights** - Human rights groups have become the custodian of the Constitution's Fundamental Rights.

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- They have investigated cases of

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- i. arbitrary imprisonment

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- ii. custodial deaths

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- iii. deadly encounters

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- iv. coercion of citizens speaking up against the state or dominant groups

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- These organisations have documented the causes and triggers of communal and caste violence.

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- They have protected the rights of vulnerable sections of people, the Adivasis, Dalits and Muslims.

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- **Check** - A vibrant civil society helps citizens access the centres of power and privilege.

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- It stands between the individual, and the omnipresent and omnipotent state.

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- It has the capacity to challenge the brute power of the state.

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- Petitions, protests, dharnas and ultimately judicial activism are instrumental in achieving their goals.

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Why is civil society crucial now?

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- Over 10 years ago, civil society spoke for the right to food, employment, education, information and land.

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- Today, few organisations demand the right not to be lynched and struggle for

right to life and liberty.

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- Governments are starting to repress civil societies that are in clash with their ideology.

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- Right wing organisations are seeking to dominate the space between the individual, market and state.

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- With these having serious consequences, the civil society's role is more crucial for democracy now than ever before.

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Source: The Hindu

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