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Greenpeace crying censorship? Please...

29 SEPTEMBER 2014

A censorship row has erupted between Greenpeace and the Indian government after Ben Hargreaves, a Greenpeace representative, was turned away by immigration officials at Delhi airport and sent back the UK despite having a valid visa.

Hargreaves' deportation follows the Indian government's ban in June on donations from Greenpeace International being transferred to Greenpeace India. This, in turn, came after a leaked Indian intelligence report earmarked Greenpeace as 'a threat to national economic security', arguing that the campaign group's protests against nuclear and coal plants were causing an annual reduction in India's GDP of as much as three per cent.

Greenpeace officials are furious at what they are calling a 'systematic clampdown' on their activities in India. Samit Aich, executive director of Greenpeace India, told the *Guardian*: 'We have seen for the past couple of months a definite move to scuttle Greenpeace's work in India by various ways and means.'

While a government clamping down on groups they disagree with should be of concern of anyone who values free speech, Greenpeace hardly has a great track record in that regard. It has long been known for its allergy to debate and its preference for silencing and discrediting its own critics rather than engaging with them. In February 2014, Greenpeace launched a petition calling on UK prime minister David Cameron to oust his then environment minister Owen Paterson, because he happened to query some climate-change claims. In July, Greenpeace was one of eight NGOs who called on president-elect of the European commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to scrap the role of chief scientific adviser to the president of the commission because the incumbent, Anne Glover, was a supporter of GM crops.

It's hard not to have some sympathy for the Indian government's position on Greenpeace. Not only does the NGO work to stymie the sort of industrial progress that is helping lift India out of poverty, but it also remains an unelected institution that still holds a fair amount of influence in world affairs. Nevertheless, censorship is never the answer to political problems. And this is a lesson Greenpeace, as well as the Indian government, should learn.

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