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Rights of homosexuals being violated, allege activists

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OVER 160 people belonging to 40 organisations from various parts of the country held a dharna at Jant-- Mantar today to protest the human rights violations against homosexuals.

The protestors included representatives from the lesbian and gay groups, women's and human rights groups, civil liberties groups and non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of HIV/AIDS.

Several lawyers and activists who participated in the dharna also condemned the arrest of workers of the Bharosa Trust and

Naz Foundation International in Lucknow on July 7.

Speaking on the occasion Supreme Court advocate Kirti Singh said, "Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been misused in this case which amounts to violation of human rights and the rights of homosexuals."

He further added that even the Law Commission of India has recommended the deletion of this section and hence the situation should be seriously reconsidered.

Agitating against the police crackdown against the non-government organisations in Uttar Pradesh, the participants said that the recent cases of repression may

have serious implications for any organisation working in the fields of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

They further added that such actions contradicted the government's policy. They also said that the Law Commission has on an earlier occasion called for the repealing of Section 377. Its use against non-government organisations is a setback to HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts throughout the country.

A number of other organisations in Lucknow, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore have launched similar protests against the arrest of NGO workers, spokesperson said.