

Media Workshop on Politics of Reporting Terrorism (17th September, 2008)

Hyderabad Forum for Justice, of which Anveshi is a constituent part, conducted a media campaign in the month of September about the biases in local media reporting about arrests of Muslim boys in Hyderabad. Many editors of leading Telugu newspapers such as *Andhra Jyothi*, *Eenadu*, *Surya*, *Saakshi* suggested to the campaigning team that a workshop be conducted to discuss the nature of reporting in Telugu. They informed the team that it is the stringers who usually report such arrests and they operate under several constraints.

Following up the suggestion, the Forum organized this discussion on 'Media Reporting on Terrorism: Political Implications' on 19th October 2008 at Centre for Economic and Social Studies auditorium. The two main speakers were Mr. Ram Puniyani of Ekta and Mr. Ajit Sahi of Tehelka. Mr. Ram Puniyani spoke about the several instances of Hindu right wing organizations getting caught while making bombs and how the media did not pay attention to this issue. Mr. Ajit Sahi spoke about his investigations into the cases filed against SIMI all over India which revealed the lack of any credible evidence, presentable in the courts, whatsoever. He pointed to the post 1990s globalisation period where journalists have become non-accountable to the readership and more accountable to the compulsions of the market. Ms. Uma Sudhir of NDTV responded to the presentations, pointing out that while the structure of media ownership has changed in the post 1990s period, it does not rule out professionalism in reporting. Basic journalistic ethics such as impartiality, giving a hearing to both sides in an issue, accurately reporting what has been said can be pursued even here. Reporters from Eenadu, Munsif, and Siasat pointed to the possibilities such as panel discussions, special programmes that can be used to highlight these issues, even in these times of ascendance of the marketing departments in the media. Some reporters from the Urdu newspapers rued the lack of space for Muslim perspectives in the mainstream Telugu media, print and electronic. The meeting was attended well with nearly thirty reporters and journalists from Urdu, Telugu and English newspapers and electronic media. Academics, human rights activists and students also attended the meeting.