



Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33
14129 Berlin

ZMO-Colloquium Summer Term 2018

Thursday, 28 June 2018, 5 pm

Academic Freedom in India

Lecture by **Nandini Sundar** (University of Delhi)

This talk looks at the question of academic freedom, which is increasingly under assault from authoritarian governments worldwide, supported by right wing student groups who act as provocateurs and disruptors from within. Yet academic freedom, if it is to be meaningful, has to be more than freedom of speech or extra-mural activity; it must also address the question of academic responsibility (to whom and how?) as well as the institutional conditions under which academic life can flourish, including equality of access. While higher education is seen as a major avenue of mobility in India today, the actual conditions of knowledge production (including infrastructure, secure employment) in most parts of the country outside the metropolises are severely lacking. As a consequence, academic life is unable to offer the space of freedom within knowledge, that makes academic freedom worth defending. On the other hand, Indian universities are also facing direct assaults on academic freedom, through book bans, curbs on seminars, and arrests and assaults on protesting students. Academic freedom, both in its positive sense (in the freedom of students and faculty to grow); and in its negative sense (freedom from external constraint) is a central concern today.

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Nandini Sundar is Professor of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University. Her recent publications include, *The Burning Forest: India's War in Bastar* (Juggernaut Press, 2016); an edited volume, *The Scheduled Tribes and their India* (OUP, 2016); *Civil Wars in South Asia: State, Sovereignty, Development* (co-edited, Sage 2014); and *Inequality and Social Mobility in Post-Reform India, Special Issue of Contemporary South Asia* (co-edited, 2016). She was awarded the Infosys Prize for Social Sciences (Social Anthropology) in 2010, the Ester Boserup Prize for Development Research, 2016 and the Malcolm Adiseshiah Prize for Distinguished Contributions to Development Studies, 2017.