In the last week of April, I was in Leh to express solidarity with the ongoing movement for Constitutional safeguards (statehood, 6th Schedule) and other demands relating to protecting the environment, culture, livelihoods, and identity of Ladakhis. I visited the protest site, where the 21-day ‘climate fast’ by Sonam Wangchuk and Subedar Stanba has been followed by relay 10-day fasts by youth, women, Buddhist monks, and religious minorities. I interviewed a cross-section of people about why they are in the movement, what are the key issues for them, and what the future of the movement is. Here are short descriptions of, and links to, the interviews; and a clip of multi-religious prayers at the site.

1. Thukjay Dolma & Sonam Spalzes on Ladakh movement / थुकजे डोलमा व सोनम स्पाल्जेस लद्दाख के आंदोलन पर

https://youtu.be/kHy6c1rteU

Thukjay Dolma, singer and activist working at SECMOL, and Sonam Spalzes ('only a housewife', but clearly much more!), speak about why they are in the movement demanding Constitutional safeguards (6th Schedule, statehood) for Ladakh. Why they join as women, why they are doing this for Ladakh's youth. Interview by Ashish Kothari, Leh, 28.4.2024.
2. Kaniz Fatima/Shaziya Bano - youth in Ladakh movement

Students Kaniz Fatima and Shaziya Bano talk about the importance of getting Constitutional safeguards (6th Schedule for tribal areas, and statehood) for Ladakh, to secure the future of youth, who are currently facing huge unemployment and other challenges. Interview by Ashish Kothari in Leh, 28.4.2024.

3. Ashraf Ali Barcha, Shia community, on Ladakh movement

Ashraf Ali Barcha, President of Shia community and Anjuman Imamia - Leh, on why he and his community have been part of the Ladakh movement for Constitutional safeguards (6th Schedule for tribal areas, statehood), the importance of religious unity, and future of the movement. Interview by Ashish Kothari in Leh, 28.4.2024.
4. Chhering Dorjey, Leh Apex Body - Ladakh movement / छेरिंग दोरजे, लेह एपेक्स बॉडी- लद्दाख आंदोलन पर
https://youtu.be/tWbLeegdtZU
Chhering Dorjey Lakruk, member of the Leh Apex Body and a prominent figure in the ongoing movement for granting Ladakh the Constitutional status of Schedule 6 and statehood, talks of the reasons for the movement, its current status, and what lies ahead. Environment, livelihoods, identity, against the threats of external economic and cultural imposition, are at the centre of the motivations for the movement. Interview by Ashish Kothari at protest site in Leh, 24.4.2024

लेह एपेक्स बॉडी के सदस्य और लद्दाख को संवैधानिक दर्जा और राज्य का दर्जा देने के लिए चल रहे आंदोलन में एक प्रमुख व्यक्ति, छेरिंग दोरजे लक्रुक, आंदोलन के कारणों, इसकी वर्तमान स्थिति और आगे क्या है, की बात करते हैं। बाहरी आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक कीमतों के खिलाफ पर्यावरण, आजीविका, पहचान, आंदोलन के लिए प्रेरणा के केंद्र में हैं। लेह में विरोध स्थल पर शीघ्र कोठारी द्वारा साक्षात्कार, 24.4.2024

5. 87-year old Yangchen Dolma - Ladakh democracy movement यान्गचेन डोल्मा लदाख लोकतन्त्र आंदोलन में
https://youtu.be/FRuBXCSnWq4
She has been part of Ladakhi movements since she was 18 - for scheduled tribe status, for union territory status, and now for Constitutional safeguards to protect its culture, identity, environment and livelihoods. 87-year old Yangchen Dolma - known widely as Ama Chocho - speaks to Ashish Kothari about why this recent movement is important, why women are part of it, and how they will continue agitating till their demands are met. She speaks in Ladakhi, translated into Hindi. वह 18 साल की उम्र से ही लद्दाखी आंदोलनों का भाग रही हैं – नृसूचित जनजाति का दर्जा पाने के लिए, केंद्र शासित प्रदेश का दर्जा पाने के लिए, और शीघ्र कोठारी द्वारा साक्षात्कार, 24.4.2024

87 वर्षीय यांगचेन डोल्मा – जिन्हें माँ चोचो के नाम से जाना जाता है – शीघ्र कोठारी से बात करते हैं कि यह हालिया आंदोलन क्यों महत्वपूर्ण है, महिलाएं इसका हिस्सा क्यों हैं, और जब तक उनकी मांगें पूरी नहीं हो जातीं, वे आंदोलन केस जारी रखेंगी। वह लद्दाख में बोलती हैं, हिंदी में नुसूचित हैं।
6. Mehdi Shah: why Ladakhi youth are in Ladakh movement /मेहदी शाह, लद्दाख आंदोलन मे युवा क्यों हैं
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGb3EfjO2AM
Conversation of Ashish Kothari with Mehdi Shah, a young resident of Turtuk on the India-Pakistan border, at the site of Ladakhi citizens' movement demanding Constitutional safeguards for the region. Mehdi explains why these demands are being made, and why youth are joining it in large numbers. Leh, 22.4.2024

7. Subedar Stanba on why he fasted for 21 days for Ladakh / सूबेदार स्टानबा लद्दाख आंदोलन मे क्यों जुड़े
https://youtu.be/zoBkTt63-ds
Subedar Stanba of Gya village, joined the Ladakh agitation for Constitutional safeguards within a month of retiring from the army. Having been stationed on the India-China (occupied Tibet), he is well aware of Ladakh's crucial strategic importance. He accompanied Sonam Wangchuk on the 21-day Climate Fast and continues to show his presence at the protest site in Leh. Interview by Ashish Kothari in Leh, 28.4.2024. गया गांव के सूबेदार स्टानबा सेना से सेवानिवृत्त होने के एक महीने के भीतर संवैधानिक सुरक्षा उपायों के लिए लद्दाख आंदोलन में शामिल हो गए। भारत-चीन (अधिकृत तिब्बत) पर तैनात होने के कारण, वह लद्दाख के महत्वपूर्ण रणनीतिक महत्व से जी पर्दा लेकर वाकिफ हैं। वह 21 दिन के क्लाइमेट फास्ट पर सोनम वांगचुक के साथ थे और लेह में विरोध स्थल पर पी घरी उपस्थिति दिखाना जारी रखे हुए हैं। लेह में शीष कोठारी द्वारा साक्षात्कार, 28.4.2024।
8. Akhtar Ali as a youth in Ladakh movement युवा भविष्य के लिये फेदरल लद्दाख के आंदोलन में

https://youtu.be/Mv-xnhy0nLs

Akhtar Ali, youth from Chushot, talks about why he has been participating in Ladakh's movement for Constitutional safeguards (statehood, 6th Schedule for Tribal areas), and why this is crucial for the region's youth. Interview by Ashish Kothari in Leh, 28.4.2024.

9. Karma Sonam—safeguards for Ladakh wildlife कर्मा सोनम—संवैधानिक सुरक्षा लद्दाख वन्यजीव के लिए जरूरी

https://youtu.be/ULqFQXr65G0

Karma Sonam, Rumtse village resident and conservationist at Nature Conservation Foundation, explains why Constitutional safeguards (6th Schedule for tribal areas, and statehood) are important to protect Ladakh's wildlife from over tourism and 'development' project threats. Interview by Ashish Kothari in Leh, 29.4.2024.
10. Tsewang Namgail on why Ladakh movement is important for its unique wildlife

https://youtu.be/l-qf78vo0jg

Tsewang Namgail, Director, Snow Leopard Conservancy - India Trust, on why Ladakh movement is important for its unique wildlife. From butterflies and plants to the Snow leopard, this wildlife is crucial for human survival itself; but also in its own right, as taught by Buddhist ethics. Inappropriate 'development' including unregulated tourism threatens it, and Constitutional safeguards (statehood, 6th Schedule for Tribal areas) could provide a chance to take a more locally appropriate path of well-being.

11. Buddhist & Muslim prayers at Ladakh protest site

https://youtu.be/vtXZZyLj8uc

The Ladakh movement has cut across religions, uniting Kargil and Leh districts, bringing together people of various ages, genders, and faiths. A glimpse of this microcosm of the best of India's 'unity in diversity' at the protest site in Leh, 28.4.2024.