

Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar (1979)

Court: Supreme Court of India

Citation: AIR 1979 SC 1360; (1979) 3 SCC 532

Dataset Tag: Cases involving right to legal aid under Indian law

Facts:

A PIL revealed thousands of undertrial prisoners languishing in Bihar jails for periods longer than the maximum sentences of the alleged offences, sans legal representation.

Issues:

Whether failure to provide speedy trial and legal aid violates Articles 21 and 39A.

Holding:

The Court ordered immediate release of prisoners where detention exceeded maximum sentence and held that legal aid and speedy trial are fundamental rights implicit in Article 21.

Significance:

Catalysed free legal aid services and set precedent for PILs addressing systemic injustice.