

## *Human Rights Defenders Alert - India*

National Coordination Office

No.6, Vallabhai Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai 625 002, Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Tel: +91-452-2539520 Cell Phone: +91-9994368540 Email: [hrda.india@gmail.com](mailto:hrda.india@gmail.com)

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Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,  
Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya  
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palais Wilson  
United Nations Office at Geneva  
CH 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland  
Email: [urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org)

Dear Ma'am,

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - India / Jharkhand - Killing of  
NREGA Activist Mr. Niyamat Ansari - Reg***

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are now writing to express our grave concern over the killing of Mr. Niyamat Ansari, an NREGA activist who was working for people at the grassroots level in Jharkhand.

**Incident:**

We have been informed through reliable sources that Niyamat Ansari, an NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) activist from the Maoist-hit Latehar District in Jharkhand was kidnapped and brutally beaten up on the evening of March 2, 2011. Subsequently, he died even before doctors had a chance of treating him. The family had to walk 10 kilometers with the fatally injured Niyamat Ansari before reaching the Manika Police Station. From there they took him to the hospital, but he died when he reached the hospital."

Niyamat Ansari had been in the forefront of exposing corruption in the UPA's (United Progressive Alliance, the ruling coalition) ambitious job guarantee programme in Jharkhand - the most recent being just weeks back in the Manika Block. Along with Jean Dreze, a social activist, Niyamat Ansari had together exposed embezzlement of

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme funds in Rankikala 10 days before his murder, following which Rs. 200,000 cash was recovered from former Manika Block Development Officer (BDO) Kailash Sahu.

According to information received, sources in the rural development ministry say they were aware of Niyamat's case and were in touch with the government of Jharkhand just four days back. Many activists are demanding prompt action.

In the First Information Report (FIR) lodged in the case of the murder of Niyamat, six people have been named so far, two are prominent contractors and one, known as a Maoist in the area, is Mr. Sudarshan. Even earlier, there was an attempt on Niyamat's life. Not only did the local authorities failed to prevent the attack, even the ambulance did not reach him on time. Perhaps when the whistle blowers act is finally passed by parliament, it will become impossible for the local authorities to ignore threat perceptions.

### **Appeal**

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the authorities in India

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Niyamat Ansari, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with national and international standards;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that whistle-blowers working in the most inhospitable terrain like the NREGA Activists and all human rights defenders in general in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions.
3. Ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by India.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

**Henri Tiphagne**

National Coordinator

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India