

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

National Coordination Office

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Shri A. K. Parashar

Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders

National Human Rights Commission

Faridkot House

Copernicus Marg

New Delhi-110001

Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: ***HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Death threats against human rights defender for questioning schools about implementation of RTE - 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 regarding deaths threats issued to Mr. P. Ananda Kumar, a member of the Citizens for Human Rights Movement (CHRM) for having conducted fact finding missions on implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE) in Schools in the Ilayankudi region of Sivagangai District.

About the Human Rights Defender:

P. Anandakumar (37) belongs to the Scheduled Caste community Parayar. He runs a photocopying shop opposite to the Tahsildar's Office in Ilayankudi, Sivagangai District, Tamil Nadu. In the year 2003 he was a victim of a brutal attack at the hands of Caste Hindus, following which he came in touch with CHRM, received human rights trainings, enrolled as a member and started doing fact findings on violations of human rights.

Incident

On the guidance of Mr. Henri Tiphagne, the Special Representative of the National Commission on Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on the implementation of RTE in Tamil Nadu, he embarked on fact finding missions in schools in Kottaiyur, Nenjathur, Thukavur, Karaikulam and Thiruvallur Panchayats of Ilayankudi Panchayat Union. The NCPCR has issued an Order approving these visits of his. The same is attached as Annexure A.

On 18 March 2011, he carried out a fact finding in Nenjathur Middle School and Thukavur, on 20 March 2011 in Kottaiyur RC Middle School and South Kottaiyur Panchayat Union Primary School and on the 21st to the Siruvalai Primary School. There they found that the headmistress of the School often did not report to work at the school. Following the fact finding there, her husband who is a Govt. employee and a Union Officer reported this to one Mr. Muthuramalingam, Director of an NGO named PRESS in Manamadurai.

Following this, on 21 March 2011 at about 8.30 p.m. Muthuramalingam called P. Ananda Kumar on his mobile phone from the number 9994387005. Addressing Ananda Kumar in very abusive terms, he threatened, "So you are a member of a human right organization? Who is your head? Who asked you to visit schools in Ilayankudi region? If you dare to question schoolteachers in Ilayankudi henceforth, I'll hack you to death. Who are you to question them? What is your stature? The next time you step into a school, I'll come there and hack you to death."

At about 10.00 p.m. on 21 March 2011 P. Ananda Kumar filed a complaint with the Ilayankudi Police Station regarding the death threats issued against him. The same is attached as Annexure B.

Appeal

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats issued against P. Ananda Kumar, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with national and international standards;

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that RTE 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

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