

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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Shri A. K. Parashar

Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders

National Human Rights Commission

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New Delhi-110001

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Dear Sir,

HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Attack on social activist Swami Agnivesh and 2 others in Dantewada - 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 the attack on noted social activist Swami Agnivesh and two Art of Living teachers, Ajay Singh and Rishi Milind, on the 26th of March, last Friday, near Dornapal village in Dantewada in Chattisgarh during a fact-finding mission.

Incident

As per the information received, Swami Agnivesh and his companions were manhandled and abused by a crowd comprising of three hundred women and men from the Dornapal Salwa Judum camp and also from the Erabore village relief camp. (Swami Agnivesh and his companions reached Sukma town, in Dantewada district late on 25th March 2011. In the early hours of 26th March they left for Chintagupha village enroute to Tadmetla, Morpalli and Timapuram villages which had been attacked by Koya commandoes and the infamous COBRA forces of the Chhattisgarh

police force on the 11th and 16th of March, burning down 300 houses, killing five people and raping three women in separate incidents.)

Mob pelted the vehicle of social activist Swami Agnivesh with stones and raised slogans against his advocacy of the Maoist cause. The tyres of Swami Agnivesh's car were deflated, their laptops snatched, the supplies he was carrying for the victims of these villages was taken away. Although Swami Agnivesh tried his best to dialogue with the people who were causing obstruction, they refused to talk. The protesters had grilled Agnivesh and asked him to explain why he rushed to Chhattisgarh on information of houses being allegedly burnt though he hardly ever visited areas that witnessed civilian killings by Maoists. Agnivesh tried to explain that he had also condemned the killings by Maoists but the protesters did not allow him to proceed to Tarmetla and its nearby areas where tribal civilians have accused police of killing and raping a few people besides burning down at least 200 huts. The laptops were handed over later to Swamiji and he returned to Sukma in the morning itself.

Agnivesh termed it "a stage-managed attack as police wanted to hide facts about brutalities on civilians in Tarmetla". Sources said that besides SPOs, the cadres of Salwa Judum - a civil militia movement launched in 2005 to counter leftist insurgency - were brought from various areas to Dornapal to stop Agnivesh reaching the tribal villages hit by the police rampage.

The attack on Swami Agnivesh is a part of the Chhattisgarh Government's design to prevent any information of its operation Green Hunt against the Tribals of that region from coming out into the open. This is a clear example of the impunity that exists for the police and paramilitary forces in that area.

Appeal

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

- ▲ The persons who attacked Swami Agnivesh on the 26th of March 2011 are brought to book
- ▲ Criminal cases are filed police personnel and SPOs who led and carried out the attack against the villagers on 11th and 16th March 2011 are arrested.

- ▲ A CBI enquiry is conducted into the incident of 11th and 16th March 2011 and the complete rehabilitation package for the affected people as ordered by the SC in this regard is announced and carried out
- ▲ 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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