

# Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,  
Ms. Margaret Sekaggya  
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palais Wilson  
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Dear Ma'am,

**Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action –India / Odisha: Lady elected Sarpanch assaulted sexually, physically and psychologically by Samiti Members and harassed by local police- 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 psychological and physical assault of a woman *Sarpanch* (Village Head), Ms Banojini Parida, D/o Sri Balaram, the elected Sarpanch by the *Samiti* (Village Council) members and harassment by the local police.

The Honorary Working Secretary of Human Rights Defenders Alert-India received information regarding this incident from Mr. Pradipta Nayak, State Coordinator, Institute of Human Rights Education, Odisha.

**Name of the alleged perpetrators:** Mr. Narayan Parida, Panchayat Samiti Member of Ghagara Gram Panchayat (Village), S/O – Baishnab Parida, Block – Kendrapara, Police Station – Nikirei, District – Kendrapara, Odisha

**Date and time of incident:** 25.12.12, 8.00 a.m.

**Place of incident:** Swarupnagar Police Station, District: North 24 Parganas

**About the Human Rights Defender:**

Ms Banojini Parida, D/o Sri Balaram Parida elected Sarapanch of Ghagara Gram Panchayat under Kendrapara Block & Nikirei Police Station of Kendrapara district, is a dynamic, young public worker. She has been working for the people in the grass root level since she got elected.

**Background Information:**

According to the received information, Ms. Banojini Parida received a threat from Mr. Narayan Parida (Panchayat Samiti Member of that Gram Panchayat) in the month of October while she was conducting *Pally Sabha & Gram Sabha* (meetings of the village council). Narayan Parida had threatened her with dire consequences to make her resign. She immediately reported to the local police regarding the threats and intimidation from Mr Narayan Parida. The local police, instead of filing a case against Mr. Narayan Parida, filed a fabricated case against Ms Banojini Parida and her father.

**Incident:**

On 25.12.12 at 8.00 a.m. when Ms. Banojini was at her home, Mr Narayana Parida S/o. Baishnab Parida, accompanied by 7 miscreants, entered her room in her house with arms and ammunitions and attempted to rape her after tearing off her dress and brutally attacked her with iron rods. It is said that the villagers came to her rescue and then the miscreants ran away. Both her mother and her aunt sustained severe injury while attempting to rescue her. Ms. Banojini suffered severe head injury and was admitted to Kendrapara district hospital. While she was battling for her life there, the police filed an FIR under sections 452, 354, 323, 325, 294, 506 and 34 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) at 11.54 a.m. After filing of the FIR, the Police did not make any arrests. On the contrary, the police officials threatened Ms. Banojini and her family, asking her to resign from the post of the Sarpanch. A case was also filed against her father who is a farmer.

## **Appeal**

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

1. All charges against the Woman Sarpanch and her father are dropped, as it is believed that these measures have been taken against them solely as a result of their human rights activities;
2. The physical and psychological safety and integrity of Ms. Banojni and her family are ensured.
3. The complaints lodged by Ms. Banojni are taken with due seriousness and FIR is registered.
4. The incident is investigated by an efficient and impartial agency.
5. The perpetrators of the assault are located, arrested and prosecuted soon.
6. All concerned governmental and non-governmental parties guarantee the respect of human rights defender and the fundamental freedoms in accordance with national laws and international human rights standards;
7. All concerned governmental and non-governmental parties ensure that all such human rights defenders can freely conduct legitimate activities promoting and protecting human rights without fear of reprisals, in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



**Henri Tiphagne**

Honorary National Working Secretary  
Human Rights Defenders Alert - India