

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

National Coordination Office

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September 11, 2012

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,

Ms. 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

Dear Ma'am,

Sub: *HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - Uttar Pradesh/ Kanpur District/: Arrest of a Cartoonist cum Anti-Corruption Activist under sedition charges - 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 allegations of arrest and baseless sedition charges faced by Mr. Aseem Trivedi, a cartoonist and anti-corruption activist in Kanpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

Date and time of incident: September 08, 2012

Place of incident: Kanpur District, Uttar Pradesh

About the activist:

Mr. Aseem Trivedi (25 years) is a renowned Indian political cartoonist and activist, best known for his anti corruption campaign Cartoons Against Corruption in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. He is a founder member of Save Your Voice, a movement against internet censorship in India. He started his career as a freelance cartoonist and has worked for several

newspapers

and

magazines.

Case Narrative:

According to the information received, Mr. Trivedi, member of the India Against Corruption (IAC) was arrested by the Mumbai police on Saturday (September 08, 2012) based on a private complaint filed by a lawyer in December 2011 that he had put up banners mocking the Indian Constitution during an Anna Hazare rally in Mumbai. He has also been charged for posting seditious and obscene content on his website, which has been blocked. Aseem had drawn cartoons depicting that the three-Lion National Emblem highlighting the state of corruption that prevails in India for which he has been booked under IPC Section 124 (sedition), Section 66 A of Information Technology Act and Section 2 of Prevention of Insults to Nation Honour Act for posting seditious contents on his website. Former judges, lawyers and civil rights activists have criticized and have condemned the police for arresting the cartoonist.

Background Information:

In the year 2011, a nationwide anti-corruption movement India Against Corruption gathered pace under the leadership of Anna Hazare demanding Jan Lokpal Bill. Aseem Trivedi has also joined the crusade and started a cartoon based campaign, Cartoons Against Corruption to support the movement with his art. He had launched a website www.cartoonsagainstcorruption.com consisting of his sharp anti corruption cartoons targeting corrupt system and had also displayed his cartoons during the hunger strike of Anna Hazare.

Appeal:

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

1. To ensure both physical and psychological safety and integrity to the Mr. Aseem Trivedi;
2. To immediately withdraw all the baseless charges of sedition which have been foisted against the cartoonist cum anti corruption activist;

3. To take all necessary steps to guarantee the professional and personal freedom of Aseem Trivedi;
4. To ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by India.
5. To guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment;

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

Henri Tiphagne

Honorary National Working Secretary

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