

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

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 -
Union Territory Puducherry/ Kuyavarpalayam: Brutal attack on a social
activist and a journalist working for a social cause-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 verbal abuse, threats and brutal attack faced by Mr. Raja Raman, a journalist, and Mr. Muruganantham, social activist working for the rights of people in Kuyavarpalayam in the Union Territory Puducherry.

Name of the perpetrators: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Mr. Om Shakthi Sekar along with his group of men, Puducherry

Date and time of incident: September 22nd, 2012; 7: 30pm

Place of incident: Lenin Street, Kuyavanpalayam, Union Territory Puducherry.

About the activists:

Mr. Raja Raman is a retired Police Inspector and is presently the author of a weekly magazine named "Pudhuvai Pulanaaivu" (a weekly magazine which

was started 4 weeks ago) where he writes a number of news articles related to the human rights of the people in Puducherry area and thereby engaged in the activity of promoting human rights of the people.

Mr. Muruganantham, S/o Mr. Rajendran is a social activist and owner of a grocery shop, through which he runs his livelihood. He is a friend of Mr. Raja Raman and works along with him in activities to protect the welfare and the rights of the people.

For the past five years he has been working as the District Secretary in the Human Rights and Consumer Protection Society (HRCPS). This forum has more than 600 members and Mr. Raja Raman is one of the members of the Human Rights and Consumer Protection Society. This forum works for the betterment of the people and have convened many awareness programmes on various topics like human rights violations, consumer welfare and protection and on the governmental schemes. It has also conducted many fact finding on human rights violation issues and has intervened, rendered support to the affected people.

Both Mr. Raja Raman and Mr. Muruganantham have filed a number of RTI petitions to the concerned governmental authorities asking for the details related to the rights of the people and have published the RTI responses in their weekly magazine as well as in the electronic media.

Incident:

According to the information received, the Human Rights and Consumer Protection Society (HRCPS) and Tholkappiyam Corruption Eradication Movement along with other civil societies staged a number of demonstrations supporting the Prohibition of giant hoardings, Polythene Eradication and to remove all the banners and cut outs across the State of Puducherry in order to promote and protect the social lives of the people. Though many protests and demonstrations were staged, the members of political parties as well as the ruling party continued to display banners and cut outs on the roadsides for the birthday and wedding ceremonies of their leaders and cadres.

In the meantime a marriage ceremony took place at the house of Om Shakthi Sekar, a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Puducherry. So the party men displayed a number of hoardings, banners and cut outs across the State of Puducherry. On 17.06.2012 (Sunday) the Member of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Om Shakthi Sekar along with his 10 goons went to the Muruganantham's grocery shop and warned him not to stage demonstrations and protests thereafter. They also brutally attacked Mr. Muruganantham, and left the place. A false case was filed in the Urulayanpettai Police Station under the Crime No:177/12. Later a peace meeting was conducted by Mr. Ramarajan, Superintendent of Police and the problems between Muruganantham and Member of the Legislative Assembly Om Shakthi Sekar were negotiated, but the false case which had been registered against Mr. Muruganantham is still pending.

On 21.09.2012, news of Member of the Legislative Assembly Om Shakthi Sekar was published in the Pudhuvai Pulanaaivu the weekly magazine which was run by Mr. Raja Raman, retired Police Inspector. The Member of the Legislative Assembly Om Shakthi Sekar was irritated by the published news and on 22.09.2012 at 7: 30 PM, in the evening Om Shakthi Sekar went to the Mr. Muruganantham's shop in Lenin Street and had brutally attacked and verbally abused Mr. Raja Raman and Mr. Muruganantham (Both Mr. Muruganantham and Mr. Raja Raman were at the grocery shop at 7: 30 pm, in the evening). Immediately after the attack they both were taken to the hospital and were admitted in the Intensive Care Unit of the Indira Gandhi Government General Hospital and Post Graduate Institute, Puducherry. At present both Mr. Muruganantham and Mr. Raja Raman has been discharged from the hospital and are undergoing treatment as outpatients.

In addition to this the party men of Om Shakthi Sekar, have also attacked and damaged the grocery shop and the vehicles which were standing outside of the shop (About 2-3 lakhs worth grocery things were damaged during the attack). The Urulayanpettai Police have also filed false cases on both of them (Cr. No: 272/12) and no action has been taken by the police.

Appeal:

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

1. To ensure both physical and psychological safety and integrity to the affected social activist Mr. Muruganantham and to the journalist, Mr. Raja Raman;
2. To provide proper and adequate medical treatment to the affected social activist Mr. Muruganantham and to the journalist, Mr. Raja Raman;
3. To conduct an immediate, transparent and impartial investigation into the brutal attack and book the perpetrator MLA Om Shakthi Sekar and his team men under the appropriate provisions of law;
4. To withdraw all the false and baseless cases implicated against Mr. Muruganantham and Mr. Raja Raman;
5. To take all necessary steps to guarantee the professional and personal freedom of social activist Mr. Muruganantham and to the journalist, Mr. Raja Raman;
6. 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.
7. 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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