

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India
National Coordination Office
No.6, Vallabhai Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai 625 002, Tamil Nadu,
INDIA
Tel: +91-452-2539520 Cell Phone: +91-
9994368540 Email:hrda.india@gmail.com

November 22nd, 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 - Bangalore, Karnataka:

Brutal Murder of RTI Activist Mr. Lingaraja-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 brutal murder of Lingaraju, and RTI activist and former editor of the Kannada tabloid Mahaprachanda.

Name of the perpetrators: The identities of the perpetrators are unknown as they covered their faces in handkerchiefs while committing the crime. According to Lingaraju's wife, Uma, the crime was committed by three young men in their early 20s. There is suspicion that this murder is linked to Lingaraju's political rival Govindraju and his wife Gowramma.

Date and time of incident: Tuesday, September 20th, 2012 in the morning hours

Place of incident: Vittal Nagar, Bangalore, Karnataka.

Incident:

According to the information in reports from “The Hindu,” “The New Indian Express,” and “The Deccan Herald” dated on November 21st, 2012, Lingaraju was attacked and killed in front of his house. He was on his way to fetch water from a nearby bore well when three younger men, presumably in their twenties, pounced on him and hacked him to death while his wife, Uma, watched in horror. Uma insists that she has never seen the assailants before.

Just weeks before this attack, Lingaraju had registered a complaint in the Special Lokayukta Court against Gowramma, Azadnagar Corporator, and her husband Govindraju. As a result, Lokayukta police raided Gowramma and Govindaraju’s home on November 9th, 2012 and recovered property worth more than 160 million rupees. According to Police, Lingaraju provided crucial documents during preliminary investigations of the cases involving Gowramma and Govindraju. These documents provided police the grounds to conduct the raids.

According to Uma, Gowramma and Govindraju attempted to bribe Lingaraju a sum of one hundred thousand rupees in order to make him withdraw the case. When he rejected the offer, they threatened him with dire consequences. Uma and her two sons have now lodged a complaint with the Chamarajpet police, alleging that Gowramma and her associates were behind Lingaraju’s murder.

Appeal:

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

1. To ensure both physical and psychological safety and integrity of Lingaraju’s wife and surviving family members;
2. To conduct an immediate, transparent, and impartial investigation into the brutal attack of Lingaraju and book the perpetrators under the appropriate measures of the law;

3. To ensure that said investigation also thoroughly examines the potential role played by Gowramma and Govindaraju into this crime and to see that, if proven guilty, they will receive appropriate punishments under the appropriate measures of the law;
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

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India