

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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The Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission
Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg,
New Delhi, PIN 110001
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Dear Ma'am,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Odisha: Journalist attacked by Police while trying to photograph police excess on complainants at a public hearing for grievance redress - 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 assault of Mr. Nirmal Kumar Meher, Reporter, Dharitri (An Odia Daily) by Police while trying to photograph police excess on complainants at a public hearing for grievance redress in Bhden is Bargarh District in Odisha.

Source of Information on the Incident:

The Regional Coordinator of HRDA for the Eastern Region

About the Human Rights Defender under attack:

Mr. Nirmal kumar Meher, aged about 32 years S/o Gourishankar Meher, Chichinda, Bheden, Bargarh Odisha. Mr. Meher is a Block Correspondent for Dharitri, an Odia Daily Newspaper.

The Perpetrators:

1. Mr. Anup Krishna, Superintendent of Police (SP), Bargarh District, Odisha
2. Mr. Bhabagrahi Mishra, District Collector, Bargarh District, Odisha
3. Mr. Promod Mishra, Block Development Officer, Bheden, Bargarh District, Odisha
4. Mr. Bhabesh kumar Nayak, Tahasildar, Bheden, Bargarh District, Odisha.

Date of Incident:

September 03, 2013

Place of Incident:

Venue of the Public Hearing for Grievance Redress, Bheden, Bargarh District, Odisha

Incident

According to the information received, on the 3rd of September 2013, a Block Level Public Hearing for Grievance redress was conducted at Bheden in the presence of the Superintendent of Police, the Collector and other block level officials of Bargarh district. During the Hearing, irate relatives of the deceased in a murder case expressed their angst on the inability of the police to arrest the culprits even after 12 days and also spoke of their loss of trust in the Police. The Superintendent of Police replied, "If you don't have trust on us, get out of this region. Mr. Prashant, the deceased's brother retorted, "We are not Maoists, thieves or anti-nationals to run away leaving out country". Following this Prashant and Pesant, another relative of the deceased in the said murder case were dragged out of the public meeting hall and beaten up by SP's security guards.

While trying to photograph the above said scene, Mr.Nirmala Kumar Meher, the reporter of a local daily newspaper (Dharitri) was attacked by SP and his camera dashed to the ground and broken by the SP. HRDA condemns this high handed act of the Police Officer which is in total disregard for human rights and rights of those who strive to defend human rights.

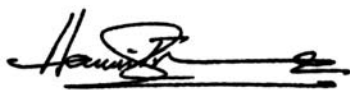
Appeal

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

- The conduct of the police officer, which is contradictory to his obligation to uphold and protect the rights of the citizens, is investigated and departmental action is initiated against him.
- All necessary measures are taken to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Mr. Nirmal Kumar Meher and to compensate the losses he has suffered
- 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 in all circumstances.
- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by India is guaranteed

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne

Honorary Working Secretary

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India