

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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Shri A. K. Parashar,
Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders,
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,
New Delhi – 110 023
Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Uttar Pradesh: RTI Activist
shot dead – 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 over

Source of Information on the Incident:

- Media Reports
- Communications dated 21 April 2014 from the National Campaign for People's Right to Information.

About the Human Rights Defender under attack:

Zakir Siddique was a Sharavasti based Right to Information Activist

The Perpetrators:

The Lalbhoji panchayat chief's husband Jagdev Verma and his supporters

Date of Incident:

The night of the 1st of March, 2014

Place of Incident:

Lalbojhi village in Ekauna, Shravasti district, Uttar Pradesh

Incident

According to sources, Zakir Siddique, was shot dead in Uttar Pradesh's Shravasti district on Saturday, the 1st of March this year. The victim's wife Kamanrunnisha has alleged that the husband and supporters of Panchayat (village council) chief of Lalbojhi village were behind the murder. It has been claimed that the panchayat chief's husband Jagdev Verma and his supporters intercepted Zakir near his home and fired him after an argument. He was rushed to the nearby community health centre at Ikauna where the doctors declared him brought dead. The police have taken four people into custody in connection with the murder while the prime accused was absconding.

The wife of the deceased has said that he sought details of development works being undertaken in the village by the panchayat using the power bestowed under the RTI Act. Zakir would visit the district development officer and other officials and complain about the lack of development works or misappropriation of funds by the panchayat office bearers and demand action against them. He also threatened to approach the state information commission when the district officials displayed reluctance to provide the information. Jagdev Verma and his supporters had allegedly threatened Zakir of serious consequences and were pressurising him to withdraw his RTI application.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the concerned authorities

1. Ensure prompt and fast track investigation of this case to apprehend all persons guilty of conspiring and committing the murder of Mr. Siddique and to bring them to book;

2. Inquire into all cases of corruption and mismanagement of public funds exposed by the Late Mr. Siddique and to order a special audit of all developmental works and governmental decision making processes which he targeted through his RTI interventions
3. Provide adequate protection to Mr. Siddique's family.
4. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by India.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', with a horizontal line underneath it.

(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary