

# Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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**27<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

Shri A. K. Parashar,  
Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Joint Registrar,  
National Human Rights Commission,  
Manav Adhikar Bhawan, Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,  
New Delhi – 110 023  
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Dear Sir,

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Rajasthan: Assault on human rights defender for protesting illegal mining activities - 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 and murderous assault on Shankarlal Meena, a human rights defender for raising voice against illegal mining activities in Toda Village, in the Sikar District of the North Indian state of Rajasthan.

## **Source of Information on the Incident:**

- The Coordinators of HRDA for the East and North of India

## **The Human Rights Defender under attack:**

Shankarlal Meena is a resident of Toda village in Neemka Thana Tehsil of Sikar district of Rajasthan. He belongs to Meena tribe of Rajasthan. Shankarlal Meena has been socially active at the village level in his native village Toda, in Neemka Thana, Sikar, Rajasthan. For the last 3 years he has been actively helping his villagers realize their social and economic rights and has especially been engaged in raising

his voice against the illegal mining by the stone quarry mafia for building material in his region. In this case the land concerned belongs to the village school which is violation of rights to education.

**The Perpetrators:**

A group of 15-18 people associated with the stone quarry mafia in Sikar, Rajasthan. The names of two of them who were identified and in whose names the First Information Report (FIR) has been filed are as follows:

- Jaiprakash
- Rajendra Singh

**Date of Incident:**

The 14<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014, at about 6.00 PM

**Place of Incident:**

Toda Village Market, Neemka Thana Tehsil, Sikar District, Rajasthan

**Incident:**

According to sources, on 14 November 2014 Shankarlal Meena went with a delegation of villagers to meet the District Magistrate of Sikar on behalf of the village Sarpanch (Village Panchayat head) to register their protest against the illegal mining activities in the school ground of their village Toda. Sikar, the district headquarters is 120 kilometers away from Shankarlal Meena's village Toda. When they returned to their village after meeting the District Magistrate, Shankarlal Meena was attacked in his village market at around 6.00 PM by a group of 15 to 18 people closely associated with the stone quarry mafia in the evening. The attackers were armed with swords and sticks. The group was reported to have links with the former MLA Ramesh Khandelwal, currently with the BJP who controls the mining activities along with liquor trade in the region. In this brutal attack on his life, Shankarlal Meena suffered fractures in his hand and leg. He also suffered a head injury. Shankarlal Meena was taken to Sawai Madhopur Hospital, Jaipur where his wounds were sutured to control bleeding. In 2012 too the stone quarry mafia had threatened to kill Shankarlal Meena for his action against the mining activities being carried out by stone quarry mafia in and around the village.

Around 1500 locals from 13 villages of Neemka Thana Tahsil in Sikar district staged a protest in Toda village on 17 November, 2014 demanding justice for the attack on the local activist Mr. Shankarlal Meena by the organised mining mafia of the region. Local sources said that the district administration asked the protesting villagers to end their protest assuring them that they would arrest the culprits and take action.

Neemka Thana Tahsil in Sikar district of Rajasthan falls in the ranges of Aravalli hills, one of the oldest mountain ranges. Mining activities in the areas around Neemka Thana include blasting, stone crushing and extraction of ground water which were being carried out without lease or authorisation. Mining in Aravalli hills are in violation of Supreme Court's guidelines. Villagers of this district have been protesting for the last many years against the encroachment of pasture land by mining mafia, use of stone crushers and mining blasts causing damages to houses and agricultural land.

**Appeal:**

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

- Orders an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events and brings the perpetrators to book
- Ensures provision of adequate compensation to Mr. Meena for the injuries he sustained and harassment that he has had to face over the years
- Along with local district officials guarantees in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Meena and his family as they continues to be under risk of further harassment from the perpetrators and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently.
- Ensure that Mr.Meena is provided the best medical attention totally at state cost, if required even in a private hospital with sufficient arrangements are being made to also look after his attendants and family members who may have to be next to him to attend to him at the hospital;
- That orders are immediately passed directing the State Legal Services Authority of Rajasthan to ensure the services of a senior criminal lawyer in the district is provided to assist the HRD in all criminal cases that are to be undertaken to protect his rights before the courts of law and further directed to report on the efforts being undertaken by him to the NHRC periodically as directed by the NHRC;

- Along with local district officials puts an end to all acts of harassment against all human rights defenders in general to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities without any hindrances;
- Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially:
  - o Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”
  - o Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;
- More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in Rajasthan.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Henri Tiphagne**

Honorary National Working Secretary