

## **Human Rights Defenders Alert - India**

National Coordination Office

6, Vallabai Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai 625 002.

Tamil Nadu, INDIA

**Tel:** +91-9994368540 **Email:** [hrda.india@gmail.com](mailto:hrda.india@gmail.com)

**30<sup>th</sup> December 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  
Email: [hrd-nhrc@nic.in](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

Dear Sir,

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Odisha: RTI Activist murdered for exposing nefarious activities by contractors of development projects – 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 the murder of Ganeshchandra Panda, an RTI Activist who had got incriminating information on misappropriation of public money in his Panchayat in Ganjam District, Odisha by contractors of developmental projects, through the RTI Act.

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

- A communication from the Coordinator of HRDA for the East of India.
- Media Sources

### **About the Human Rights Defender under attack:**

Mr. Ganeshchandra Panda, a 52 year old resident of Randha owned a shop at the village, but had recently got interested in RTI activism. He had started applying for information about different developmental works taken up in his panchayat area as

he suspected irregularities and misappropriation of public money in these projects. Some miscreants in their area who were contractors of these developmental projects were irked by RTI applications filed by Mr. Panda in response to which he had received incriminating information against them.

**The Perpetrators:**

Contractors of developmental projects in Randha Panchayat

**Date and time of Incident:**

29 December, 2014 at around 5.30 AM.

**Place of Incident:**

Randha village on the outskirts of Berhampur in Ganjam District of the eastern Indian state of Odisha

**Incident**

According to sources, Ganeshchandra Panda had gone out for his morning walk at round 5.30 a.m. His body was found in a pool of blood at NH-16 near Randha after one hour. A group of miscreants had allegedly attacked Ganesh with weapons such as an axe, sword and knife. The assailants had thrown the blood stained weapons into a nearby pond.

He had applied for information about different developmental works taken up in his panchayat area as he suspected irregularities and misappropriation of public money in these projects. The human rights defender's relatives have alleged that some miscreants in their area who were contractors of these developmental projects were irked by RTI applications filed by Ganeshchandra Panda as he had started getting information on their their nefarious activities through them.

A team from HRDA is going on a fact finding on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December to get more information on this incident. Police investigation is on and no arrests have been made so far

**Appeal:**

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the Superintendent of Police for Ganjam

- Orders an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events and arrest the accused;
- Along with local district officials guarantees in all circumstances due compensation to the family of the deceased and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Along with local district officials puts an end to all acts of harassment against all RTI Activists and 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:
  - 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”
  - 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 in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in the state of Odisha.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



**(Henri Tiphagne)**

Honorary National Working Secretary