

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

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Shri A. K. Parashar

National 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

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Odisha: Human Rights Defender arrested on false charges and detained at Padampur police station - 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 illegal arrest of Sushanta Kumar Pradhan, a journalist and human rights defender at Padampur police station in the Bargarh District of the East Indian state Odisha.

Source of Information on the Incident:

The Coordinator of HRDA for the East of India

The Human Rights Defender:

Mr. Sushanta Kumar Pradhan, aged about 28 years, S/o. Sashibhusan Pradhan, residing at Dhamamunda village that comes under Melchamunda Police Station limits in the Bargarh District of Odisha.

He is a journalist by profession and is the District Correspondent of a weekly named "JAIL JHARKA" (Prison Window) and has been involved in such work since the last

four years. The weekly regularly exposes corruption by government authorities and others. It is published from Bhubaneswar.

The Perpetrators:

1. Salilkumar Pradhan Inspector In Charge Padmapur police station
2. Prakash Patra, Sub Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Padmpur police station
3. Umasankar Dash, IPS (Indian Police Service), Superintendent of Police, Bargarh district

Date of Incident:

January 24, 2015

Place of Incident:

Dhamamunda Village in Melchamunda Police limits in Bargarh District, Odisha

Incident detail:

According to the source, Sushant Kumar Pradhan recently wrote an article on one Mr. Rupesh Pradhan who has been working in IRB (Indian Reserve Battalion) using the name Yosabanta Pradhan and fake certificates for last seven years. When he filed complaint before the District Collector, the matter was investigated and Rupesh was dismissed.

Thereafter Rupesh with the intent of seeking revenge attacked Sushant Kumar Pradhan while he was travelling alone to his maternal uncle's village. Sushant Kumar Pradhan then went to the Padampur police station to lodge complaint regarding the attack but the police refused to register the complaint initially and latter registered it under sections 323, 355, 506 & 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against Rupesh. But police did not take any action as Rupesh is a relative of the local SDPO Mr.Prakash Patra.

Rupesh lodged a false complaint against Sushant Kumar Pradhan on the 9th of January 2015 and without any search warrant the SDPO along with 12 other policemen went to his house and searched his house to intimidate him. During this search the police officials misbehaved with Sushant Kumar Pradhan's family members.

Later he received a threat call from IIC Padmpur asking him not to write against the liquor mafia and police further. When he called the SDPO on his mobile phone, he too threatened Pradhan asking him not to write against the liquor mafia and police too. After this incident the police tried to include him in many other false cases.

Now under the police's instruction one Bisikesan field another complaint against Sushant Kumar Pradhan and the complaint was registered in First Information Report Number 4 of 2015 in the Padampur Police Station u/s 384 & 419 of IPC.

Today, on the 24th of January 2015, in between 9.30 a.m. and 9.50 a.m. Sushant Kumar Pradhan was arrested by the Padampur police and is being detained by them.

Appeal :

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

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events of the targeting of the human rights defender, and release him with immediate effect and bring the erring police to book
- Withdraw all the cases based on false charges against Sushant Kumar Pradhan immediately
- Conduct an inquiry into the corruption exposed by Sushant Kumar Pradhan and take due action on the same
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Sushant Kumar Pradhan as he continues be under risk of further attacks by the perpetrators;
- Provide reparation and compensation to Sushant Kumar Pradhan for the physical and psychological sufferings he underwent because of the arrest
- Put an end to all acts of harassment against all human rights defenders in India 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.

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.

Henri Tiphagne

Honorary National Working Secretary