



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

April 2nd 2015

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 – Maharashtra: Death threats issued to Activist-Writer Dr. Bharat Patankar – Reg

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavors 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 death threats issued to Dr. Bharat Patankar by way of letters accusing him of adopting 'a conciliatory attitude' towards Muslims and castigated him for accepting the leadership of the 'Vidrohi Sammelan' – an alternative cultural forum in the State running parallel to the Sahitya Sammelan.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- The Regional Coordinator of HRDA for the South of India
- Media reports

The Human Rights Defender:

Dr. Bharat Patankar is a leading activist (cofounder and President) of the Shramik Mukti Dal and of the peasant movement in Maharashtra. Dr. Bharat Patankar is an activist and rationalist who has worked for nearly 40 years in movements of workers, farmers, dam evictees, agricultural labourers, the drought eradication movement, alternative

cultural movement, women's liberation movement, anti-SEZ and coal-based power plant movement based on alternative energy proposals, rights of farmers on windmills, and radical anti-caste movements. He is married to writer and noted Buddhist and Ambedkar Scholar and activist, Gail Omvedt.

The Perpetrators:

- Unknown persons possibly associated with a Hindu fundamentalist outfit and associated with Sanatan Prabhat, a chauvinist-nationalist periodical, who wrote hate letters postmarked in Kolhapur, Maharashtra

- **Date of Incident:**

16th of March, 2015, Monday

Place of Incident:

Kasegaon, Sangli District, Maharashtra (Place of residence of the HRD)

Kolhapur, Maharashtra (Place from where the hate letters were postmarked)

Incident detail:

According to the sources, addressing the Press in Sangli on the 17th of March 2015, Dr. Bharat Patankar said that a hate letter postmarked Kolhapur, delivered on the 16th of March 2015 was accompanied by an issue of chauvinist-nationalist periodical Sanatan Prabhat carried life threats, and that he had previously received letters warning him not to go the Dabholkar-Pansare way. The recent letters said that after, Dr.Dabholkar and Comrade Pansare, it would be Dr. Patankar's turn.

The letters accused Dr. Patankar of adopting 'a conciliatory attitude' towards Muslims and castigated him for accepting the leadership of the 'Vidrohi Sammelan' – an alternative cultural forum in the State running parallel to the Sahitya Sammelan.

The three page letter contains his alleged crime against religion that he committed by writing rebellious literature and making people aware of their rights. This is apparently the third letter he has received along with the newspaper 'Sanatan Prabhat' in the last six months. This death threats need to be viewed with gravity since it comes in the wake of the murders of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar and Communist leader Govind Pansare. Dr. Patnakar has been vociferous in his demand for justice for the murder of Govind Pansare and freedom of expression and speech.

Appeal :

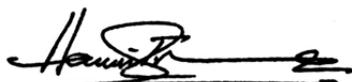
We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the Superintendent of Police and the District Collector and District Magistrate of Sangli and Kolhapur Districts

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events of the targeting of the human rights defender – Dr. Bharat Patankar.
- Take immediate legal action on the perpetrators for issuing death threats ,by arresting them and using all provisions of law to ensure that Dr. Bharat Patankar safety is ensured especially because it comes in the wake of the murders of Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare in Maharashtra.
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Dr. Bharat Patankar and his family who are still under risk of further attacks from the perpetrators at the cost of the state.
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the defender for the physical and psychological sufferings he underwent because of the threats and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs such as Dr. Bharat Patankar;
- Put an end to all acts of harassment against all human rights defenders in the State of Maharashtra to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as writers / activists without any hindrances;
- Ensure fundamental rights of free speech and association guaranteed by Article 19 and right to life and personal liberty granted by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- Takes steps to conform to 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”;
- The SHRC in Maharashtra to recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint and to also take necessary steps to establish a state focal point for HRDs in order that HRDs in the have a new protection mechanism in their own state.
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Maharashtra to convene a meetings of all state human rights institutions in the state [women, minorities, right to information, disability, children etc] to ensure that a co-ordinated strategy is developed within the State of Maharashtra for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders.
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the State Government of Maharashtra in collaboration with the SHRC Maharashtra to publicly acknowledge the importance and legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, i.e. anyone who, “individually and in association with others, ... promote[s] and ... strive[s] for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” (art.1 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders).
- More generally, ensures 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,



(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary