



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 – Rajasthan: regarding criminal Assault in an attempt to kill a Dalit RTI activist and Human Rights Defender Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal, for using Right to Information Act (RTI) to expose corruption-Regarding

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 criminal assault in an attempt to kill a Dalit RTI activist and Human Rights Defender Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal on 11th July, 2015 for using Right to Information Act (RTI) to expose corruption in land allotment under Indira Gandhi Canal Project and other irregular practices and corruption in the administrant of Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan.

Profession of the Defenders:

Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal is a school teacher at the Ranau Middle School in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan which is located in Tanot village close to India-

Pakistan border. He belongs to Meghwal community which is categorised as scheduled caste. Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal has been active in local village development affairs and raising voice against irregularities and corrupt practices in developmental activities in the area.

Status of Human Rights Defender:

Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal is a resident of Ramgarh village in district Jaisalmer. He works as a school teacher at the Ranau Middle School in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan which is close to India-Pakistan border. He started using RTI act initially in 2006. But after 2008 he has been making use of RTI on a large scale. So far he has filed more than 400 RTI applications in various state government departments. His main RTI queries have been filed in the revenue department. He has exposed financial irregularities in the Indira Gandhi Canal Project related to unauthorised allotment of land around the project areas. The Indira Gandhi Canal is one of the biggest canal projects in India. It consists of the Rajasthan feeder canal (with the first 167 km in Punjab and Haryana and the remaining 37 km in Rajasthan) and 445 km of the Rajasthan main canal which is entirely within Rajasthan. Rajasthan government policy provides for 30% of government land around canal areas to be allotted to Dalits and other marginalised communities for agricultural purposes but local land mafia with the help of local feudal groups never allowed Dalits and others to have that facility and used it for their own benefits. On the basis of his RTIs and other complaints, 19 cases of corruption in land allotments have been registered in Ramgarh police station and 6 cases are registered in Jaisalmer police station. In 19 cases fines (challans) have been ordered.

Source of Information:

- Coordinator of HRDA for North of India
- Communication from Pradeep More
- Media Reports

Date of Incident:

11 July, 2015, around 2 PM.

Place of Incident:

Near Ramgarh village under Ramgarh police station, Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan.

The Perpetrators:

- 1- Madan Singh
- 2- Ran Singh
- 3- Khush Singh
- 4- Dhur Singh
- 5- 11 others unidentified persons

Incident detail:

On 11th July 2015 Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal left the school around 1.45 PM on a motorbike. He was going back to his village along with the headmaster of the school. At around 2 PM at a distance of one and half kilometres from his village Ramgarh, they were hit by a Bolero van which had around 12 people. The assailants beat up the headmaster. Most of the assailants were wearing masks to hide their faces. They caught hold of Babu Ram and broke his legs hitting with lathis and iron rods on the spot. Before being thrown into the van Babu Ram could recognise 4 assailants mainly Madan Singh, Ran Singh, Khush Singh and Dhur Singh. Later he could hear other people calling the driver as Diwan Singh. He was bundled into the van and his face was tied with a cloth. His hands and legs were also tied up. Babu Ram remained blindfolded throughout. He was beaten continuously. His hands and legs were broken. The attackers also shaved his head in the vehicle. They took him to an undisclosed location where they were shouting and threatening to kill him and tried throwing his body in the canal. They were about to throw him in the canal but some people arrived there. The abductors took him along from the spot. After around half an hour they dumped him physically in a place which was around 10 kilometres on the western side of Ramgarh.

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 Jaisalmer district:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events of the murderous attack on the life of Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal;

- Take immediate action on the perpetrators for attempting to kill Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal and using all provisions of law to ensure that the defender is not attacked in future;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal who is still under risk of further attacks from the perpetrators;
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the defender for the physical psychological sufferings he underwent and medical expenses he incurred because of the injuries and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs such as Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal;
- Ensure adequate relief and compensation as mentioned in sub-rule (4) of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in cash or kind or both to Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal as a victim of atrocity and suffering incapacitation due to physical injuries;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment against all human rights defenders like Mr. Babu Ram Meghwal in Rajasthan to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances;
- 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”;

- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Rajasthan to take necessary steps to establish a state focal point for HRDs in order that HRDs have a new protection mechanism in their own state;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Rajasthan 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 Rajasthan for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the State Government of Rajasthan in collaboration with the NHRC Focal Point on HRDs to provide sensitization training to law enforcement and security forces on the role and activities of human rights defenders as a matter of priority, with technical advice and assistance from relevant United Nations entities, NGOs and other partners;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the Government of Rajasthan 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 is strictly adhered to in the state of Rajasthan.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)
Honorary National Working Secretary