



## Human Rights Defenders Alert – India

National Coordination Office

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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

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Dear Sir,

**Sub: HRD Alert - India - Appeal for Action – Madhya Pradesh: Brutal assault with the intention to kill a farmer activist and human rights defender Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi, block president of Kisan Sangarsh Samiti (KSS) (Farmers Struggle Committee) in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh – Regarding**□

### **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 writing to express our grave concern regarding the brutal assault to kill farmer activist and human rights defender Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi, block president of Kisan Sangarsh Samiti (KSS) and his family members in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh by the goons supported by Adani company.

### **Status of Human Rights Defender:**

Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi, 44 years of age, is a resident of Chaunsara village in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. A farmer activist and human rights defender, Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi is the block president of Kisan Sangarsh Samiti (KSS) (*Farmers Struggle Committee*) in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. Kisan Sangarsh Samiti is an organisation of farmers in Madhya Pradesh which has been fighting for the land and water rights of local farmers. Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi has been associated with KSS since 2009. He has been actively participating in farmers protest against the government

attempts to forcibly acquire their agricultural land and water resources for Adani Thermal Power Plant and Pench Water Diversion Project in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh.

**Source of Information on the Incident:**

- Coordinator of HRDA for the North of India
- Communication with the defender Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi
- Media Reports

**Date of incident:**

November 14, 2015

**Place of incident:**

Market Chawk and defender's house at village Chaunsara, police station Chaurai, district Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh

**The Perpetrators:**

Mr. Tulsi Ram Yadav

Mr. Asha Ram Yadav

Mr. Kapial Yadav

Mr. Satish Yadav

Mr. Golu Yadav

Mr. Mahatu Yadav

Mr. Jagdish Yadav

Mr. Sushil Yadav

**Incident detail:**

According to sources, on 14 November 2015, Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi was going to the location of the village fair around 6.30 PM after returning from his field. When he reached the market chawk around 10 people caught hold of him and attacked with lathis and other weapons. He was hit on his head thrice and twice on his body. He was somehow helped by others to escape to reach his house. The assailants again organised themselves and planned to attack him again. So they came to his house with intention to kill him. They

brought pepper powder and other weapons and attacked his family members also. In the attack Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi and his three family members were injured badly. Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi suffered head injuries and fractures in his hand. His ribs were broken. He was taken to Chhindwara hospital where he was given medical treatment for 5 days. The defender has identified 8 people out of the 10 assailants. So far the police have not filed any FIR and no one has been arrested so far.

Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi has been targeted for leading the protest movement under Kisan Sangarsh Samiti (KSS) against the construction of Adani – Pench Power Project in Chaunsara village area for the past many years. Construction of 1,320 megawatt (2 x 665 MW) coal-fired power station in Chaunsara village area has led to forcible land acquisition and water diversion from Pench River endangering the livelihood and common resources of the people. In the past also Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi has been harassed by the police. On September 10, 2015 village mahapanchayat (meeting) at Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi's house was forcibly stopped and the 'pandal' was dismantled. Police clamped section 144 and also picked up the innocent indigenous tent maker to further dampen the spirit of the people who are bravely fighting against the monstrous multi-national companies in their region.

**Appeal:**

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

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident on life threatening assault on farmer activist and human rights defender Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi;
- Ensure complete medical check up of Mr. Sajje Chandravanshi totally at State cost in the best medical facility available in the state to ensure that he is not suffering from any internal medical ailments;
- Take immediate action on the perpetrators by arresting them and using all provisions of law to ensure that the defender is not harassed or attacked in future and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs;

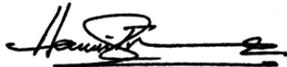
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the human rights defender for the physical and psychological sufferings he has undergone give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment against all human rights defenders in Madhya Pradesh to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights 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”;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Madhya Pradesh to also take necessary steps to establish a state focal point for HRDs in order to ensure that HRDs have a new protection mechanism in their own state;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Madhya Pradesh to convene a meeting 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 Madhya Pradesh for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the State Government of Madhya Pradesh 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 Madhya Pradesh 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 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



**(Henri Tiphagne)**

Honorary National Working Secretary