



# Human Rights Defenders Alert – India

National Coordination Office

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February 21, 2016

To

**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](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

Dear Sir,

**Sub: HRD Alert - India – Urgent Appeal – Chhattisgarh: Seeking Hon’ble National Human Rights Commission’s immediate intervention in the case of women human rights defender and tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori who was attacked with chemical by three persons on motor-bike around 10.40 PM on 20 February, 2016 near Jawbanga village under Geedam police station, Bastar district in Chhattisgarh - 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 have been informed that three unidentified men allegedly hurled chemical on tribal activist and woman human rights defender Ms. Soni Sori in Chhattisgarh's Maoist-hit Dantewada district. The incident took place near Jawbanga village under Geedam police station at around 10:40 pm on 20 February, 2016. It is alleged that three youths on a motorcycle stopped them after crossing Bastanar Ghat and asked them to get down from their vehicle. One of them immediately hurled the liquid at her face and fled from the spot. Her associates rushed her to Geedam hospital and informed police. According to the sources, Ms. Sori was then shifted to Jagdalpur

hospital and kept under observation as she complained of burning sensation in her face. Her face was swollen and with her being in pain.

Media reports suggest that the Maharani District Hospital in Jagdalpur was converted into a "cantonment". Apparently, 150 security men were guarding the hospital. For a long time, no one was allowed to meet Soni - even her close AAP party colleagues were kept out.

Earlier in the day, her police statement was not recorded. According to sources, her attackers warned her to "stop complaining against the IG, Bastar and the issue of Mardum encounter and if she does behave as demanded, her daughter would also face the same consequences.

There are a number of incidents which raise serious concerns about her security including her family members like recent indirect threat through a letter thrown into her house and especially her active role in exposing the killing of an innocent tribal villager Mr. Hidma in a fake police encounter under Mardum police station in Bastar district. Ms. Sori had taken the villagers for a press conference in Raipur, and has been trying to register an FIR in this case as well. Soni also attempted to file an FIR against the IG (Bastar) Mr. SRP Kalluri for instigating people to boycott and physically harm her.

The attack on the tribal rights activist Ms. Sori, who has emerged as a face of democratic protest in Bastar, came just after harassments to women lawyers Ms. Shalini Gera and Ms. Isha Khandalwal of Jagdalpur Legal aid group and journalist Ms. Malini Subramaniam, all at the behest of Bastar range police IG (Bastar) Mr. SRP Kalluri on which HRDA has already appealed to the NHRC. In this regard, we also would like to bring to the kind notice of the Hon'ble Commission about our previous urgent appeal for action on Ms. Soni Sori who was threatened by civic officials in Dantewada on 19 February, 2016. Some civic officials from Dantewada had visited her house in Geedam town and informed her that her house has been built on an "encroached land" and therefore could be demolished.

- We therefore humbly urge that the Hon'ble Commission immediately and urgently send the NHRC Investigation Team to conduct an impartial and transparent investigation on the above mentioned incident of attack with chemical on tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori,

- Take immediate legal action on the perpetrators for intimidating and physically assaulting woman human rights defender and tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori and using all provisions of law to ensure that the defender is not harassed, threatened and attacked in future;
- We also urge the Hon'ble Commission to send a high level team led by a Special Rapporteur of the NHRC to Chhattisgarh to meet Ms. Soni Sori and other Human Rights Defenders in the region to look into their case as well as report on the challenges faced by this HRD in the region;
- We urge the Hon'ble Commission to direct the Chhattisgarh administration to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Soni Sori and her family members as they continue to be under risk of being attacked or threatened by the perpetrators and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Chhattisgarh 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;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment against all human rights defenders like Ms. Soni Sori in the State of Chhattisgarh to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including police and administrative harassment;
- 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 Chhattisgarh.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



**(Henri Tiphagne)**

Honorary National Working Secretary