



**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](mailto:hrda.india@gmail.com)

**19 February, 2016**

**Shri A. K. Parashar,**

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders,

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 - Immediate Appeal for Action – Chhattisgarh: Seeking Hon'ble National Human Rights Commission's immediate intervention in respect to continuous intimidation and harassment of women human rights defender and tribal activist Ms. Soni Sori and women human rights defender Bela Bhatia 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 endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

HRDA has been informed on 19 February that members of the Nagar Panchayat from Geedam, Dantewada in Chhattisgarh went to the house of social, tribal right activist and women human rights defender Ms. Soni Sori and told her the house where she presently resides has been built on encroached land and therefore indirectly gave a veiled a threat that she does not hold the title for the house. Ms. Soni Sori had told them that the government has not issued *patta* for this land and other houses in this region also do hold titles.

Another women human rights defender, Ms. Bela Bhatia is also harassed by the local police from Kotwali *thana* in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh. Police is intimidating her landlord. And therefore HRDA anticipates that Ms. Soni Sori and Ms. Bela Bhatia are also made the target of recent attempts by Chhattisgarh Police and its supported groups that have threatened other women human rights defender and journalist Ms Malini Subramaniam with dire consequences if she continues to do her legitimate work while living in Chhattisgarh. In this similar manner, Chhattisgarh Police have been adopting intimidating tactics by threatening the landlords of the houses where two lawyers and women human rights defender Ms. Shalini Gera and Ms. Isha Khandelwal have been staying. They have formed group named Jagdalpur Legal Aid (JagLAG) in July 2013, which is the only legal aid group in tribal Bastar region which is providing legal aid to the adivasis in that area who are trapped in middle of a vicious armed conflict between the security forces and the Naxalites.

In this regard, we also would like to bring to the kind notice of the Hon'ble Commission our previous urgent appeal for action on an anonymous letter threatening Ms. Soni Sori to burn her alive and parade her naked sent on February 9, 2016.


**Appeal:**

- We also request that the Hon'ble Commission to immediately and urgently send the NHRC Investigation Team to conduct an impartial and transparent investigation on these matters especially targeting women human rights defenders in the state of Chhattisgarh;
- We also humbly urge the Hon'ble Commission to look into the case and thereafter undertake urgent efforts to ensure that Ms. Soni Sori and Ms. Bela Bhatia are protected and assured of their places of residence and no illegal or forceful eviction takes places;
- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incidents involving threats issued to tribal rights activists and women human rights defenders Ms. Soni Sori and Ms. Bela Bhatia;

- Along with local district officials guarantees in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Sori, Ms. Bela Bhatia and their family members as they continue to be under risk of further harassment from the perpetrators and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently, especially because the growing trend of arbitrary and unwarranted restrictions on the basic freedoms supplemented with the impunity of the security forces threatens the very foundations of democracy;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment against all human rights defenders like Ms. Soni Sori and Ms. Bela Bhatia 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.

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 drawn underneath it.

*(Henri Tiphagne)*

Honorary National Working Secretary