



## Human Rights Defenders Alert – India

National Coordination Office

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16<sup>th</sup> June, 2016

To

**Shri Srinivasa Kammath**

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 Urgent Action – Seeking Hon’ble National Human Rights Commission’s immediate intervention in the matter of tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori and other members of a fact finding team who are being forcibly restricted by the Chhattisgarh police from undertaking their mission of investigating into a reported incident of rape and fake encounter killing of a young tribal girl Ms. Madkam Hidme from Gompad village in Konta Tehsil in Sukma district of Bastar region of 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 tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori and her associates are being restricted from undertaking a fact finding in a case of rape and fake encounter killing in village Gompad in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh.

On June 15, 2016, a team lead by Ms. Soni Soritried to visit the village to enquire on the above mentioned incident. But the team was stopped and harassed at four different camps on the way, finally they were stopped and held for almost hours at the Injeram Camp on various excuses, just 10 km short of the village.

Ms. Soni Sori and others returned to Sukma in the evening to meet the collector and superintendent of police. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Sukma, Mr. Santosh Singh met the team and denied further movement without being accompanied by security force personnel. The team asked ASP to send some personnel with them but the ASP refused saying that no one is available and hence the team can't be allowed to visit the village.

In protest against the police move, Ms. Soni Sori and others decided to hold protest at the collectorate itself until they are allowed to undertake their mission. Ms. Soni Sori is on indefinite fast outside Sukma Collectorate at the moment since last night.

### **Background:**

On June 13, 2016, the Sukma police announced a successful encounter where an alleged woman Maoist, Ms. Madkam Hidme, was killed in an encounter close to the village Gompad in Konta Tehsil of Sukma district in Chhattisgarh.

According to the statements from the villagers, Madkam Hidme, the deceased, was thrashing paddy outside her hut when she was picked up by the security forces and taken to the nearby forest area. Villagers listening to her shout and scream, ran in a group towards her. When the security forces saw the villagers, they carried her to deep inside the forest and threatened the villagers to go back.

It is being alleged by the villagers that the security forces have gang raped, killed her and handed over the dead body to the villagers. According to the villagers' statements, the deceased lady was wearing an old saree while she was forcefully picked by the police force, but it is later seen as portrayed in the photographs by the security forces that the lady was wearing a new spotless dress.

### **Appeals:**

Therefore, we most respectfully appeals that this Hon'ble Commission –

- Takes urgent and special notice of the above-mentioned incident and orders an immediate, transparent, effective, independent and impartial investigation by the NHRC's investigation wing into the incident of restricting the movement of the fact finding team being led by the tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori and denying them their right to move freely and to have access to the village

where the reported incident of rape and fake encounter killing has taken place;

- Ensures that the Fact Finding team is allowed to undertake their mission and directs the Chhattisgarh administration to ensure the physical safety of Ms. Soni Sori and her team and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Ensures that if the facts in the case are established, the NHRC guidelines are properly followed in this case of encounter killings of the young tribal girl Ms. Hidme as being reported;
- Orders an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective, independent and impartial investigation by the NHRC's investigation wing into the reported incident of rape and encounter killing of young tribal girl Ms. Hidme;
- Puts an end to all acts of harassment against all human rights defenders like tribal rights activist Ms. Soni Sori and her team in the State of Chhattisgarh to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as human rights defenders without any hindrances;
- Recommends urgently to 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 and they can 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