



Human Rights Defenders Alert – India

National Coordination Office

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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

Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: *HRD Alert - India - Appeal for Action – Maharashtra: Case of acid attack on anti-liquor activists Ms.Sangita and Mr.Namdeo Wadhai in Nagpur District of Maharashtra – 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 writing to express our grave concern regarding the acid attack on anti-liquor activists Ms.Sangita and her husband Mr.Namdeo Wadhai in Nagpur District of Maharashtra.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- Reports from Media

Status of the Human Rights Defender:

Ms. Sangita and her husband NamdeoWadhai are anti-liquor activists residing in Awarpur village in Korparna tehsil in Nagpur district. Sangita and her husband have done commendable work in the village and around to curb illegal liquor sale in the area. She was also awarded with KrantiKanya award recently.

The Perpetrators:

Unknown

Date of Incident:

May 13, 2016

Incident detail:

According to sources, on May 13, 2016 illegal liquor traders allegedly threw acid on anti-liquor activists Ms. Sangita and her husband NamdeoWadhai while they were asleep at their home in Awarpur village in Korparnateshil. Sangita sustained burns on her face and acid has burned Namdeo's back. Both were rushed to the Gadchandur hospital by the neighbours and later were shifted to Chandrapur civil hospital. It is learnt that, Sangita had helped the police in nabbing two illegal liquor traders and also seizure of 62 bottles of liquor on April 7, 2016. Police suspect that the acid attack was to avenge the police action in which Sangita helped the police. According to sources, police arrested one accused Mr. SanketSidam.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the Commissioner of Police, the District Collector and District Magistrate of Nagpur district:-

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of acid attack on anti-liquor activists and human rights defenders Ms.Sangita and Mr.NamdeoWadhai;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Sangita and Mr.NamdeoWadhai from further reprisals from the perpetrators and using all provisions of law to ensure that the human rights defender are not harassed or intimidated in future;
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the human rights defenders for the psychological sufferings they are undergoing because of acid attack and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment of all human rights defenders like Ms.Sangita and Mr.NamdeoWadhai in the State of Maharashtra and 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 Maharashtra 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 NHRC to convene a meeting of all state human rights institutions in the state [the SHRC, the SCW, the SCPCR, the SCM, the SIC, State Commissioner for PWDs..etc] to ensure that a coordinated strategy is developed within the State of Maharashtra for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the State Government of Maharashtra in collaboration with the NHRC Focal Point on HRDs and the SHRC Maharashtra 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 State Government of Maharashtra in collaboration with the SHRC, Maharashtra 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 Maharashtra.

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 underneath it.

(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary