



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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May 31, 2017

To,

Shri Srinivasa Kammath

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Deputy Registrar
National Human Rights Commission
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,
New Delhi – 110 023
Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Sub: HRD Alert – India – Urgent Appeal for Action – West Bengal: Brutal assault of journalists who were covering political demonstration, where more than a dozen media persons are attacked and injured in Kolkata, West Bengal – Regarding

Dear Sir,

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 now writing to express our grave concern regarding the brutal assault on journalists by Kolkata police while they were covering a political demonstration on May 22, 2017.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- The Coordinator of HRDA for the East of India
- Media Sources

The Perpetrators:

1. Shri. Rajeev Kumar, Chief police commissioner, Kolkata.
2. Shri Vineet Kumar Goyal, Additional Commissioner of Police (I)
3. Shri Supratim Sarkar, Additional Commissioner of Police (III)
4. Shri Muralidhar Sharma, Deputy Commissioner of Police, STF
5. Shri Vishal Garg, Additional Commissioner of Police (V)

Date of Incident:

May 22, 2017

Place of Incident:

Near Mayo - Dufferin Road crossing, Kolkata.

Incident detail:

On May 22, 2017, the All India Kisan Sabha – the farmers' wing of Communist Party of India (Marxist) – and farmer wings of other Left Parties had organised a protest rally march to the State Government Secretariat (Nabanna) against the anti-farmer policies by the State Government. Journalist from all media houses were covering the political rally. At about 1.45 PM, the Kolkata police suddenly started lathi charge on the protesters and also on the journalists present. The police indiscriminately attacked them without distinguishing between the protestors and the journalists. The police had used tear-gas shells, water cannons against the agitators to break up the rally. Approximately 170 people, including 69 police personnel, were injured in this clash. More than 50 journalists were severely injured and were hospitalised. It is alleged that policemen also tried to misbehave with women journalists and manhandled them.

Several journalists and photo-journalists, belonging to both the local and national media, were beaten up again by police officials near Mayo road in front of the Kolkata Press Club when they tried to protest against the attack on them. On May 23, 2017, journalists organised a rally from Rabindra Sadan to Lalbazar Police Headquarters, to protest against the brutal assault by Kolkata Police.

Journalists Injured:

Two camerapersons of NDTV news channel, namely Mr. Nirmal Sarkar and Mr. Shankar Ghosh Dastidar, who were on the spot and were severely caned by the police. Both sustained ugly welt on their back. Mr. Sarkar's hand was also cut and part of his camera damaged.

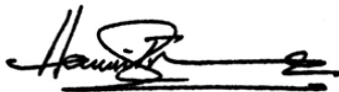
Mr. Sukanta Mukherjee, a reporter from the ETV news channel was assaulted with cane. Mr. Himadri Roy, another cameraman was also caned by the police and his camera was damaged. Mr. Tanmoy Bhaduri a freelance Photographer was also brutally attacked by the police. Mr. Mrityunjoy Biswas, a cameraman with *Rajasthan Patrika*, suffered cuts in the forehead after a police lathicharge. Ms. Indranil Bhaduri, a photojournalist of R-Plus news channel, was beaten up by at least four policemen while filming the police versus protester clash. Mr. Gopal Banik, a reporter with Onkar TV and Ms. Sharmin Begum also had sustain injury out of this assault.

Appeal:

Therefore, in the light of above mentioned facts and circumstances, HRDA most respectfully appeals that this Hon'ble Commission to urgently:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of brutal attack on the journalists;
- Order appropriate legal action against policemen involved in brutal lathi-charge on journalists
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity and protection of the journalists;
- Order West Bengal Government, to ensure that the freedom to protest peacefully and freedom of assembly is ensured in the state and put an end to violent police actions on peaceful protestors, including journalists.
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment of human rights defenders especially that of journalists in the State of West Bengal to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances;

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne
National Working Secretary

Copies to:

Justice (Retd.) H L Dattu

Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission
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Ms. Annalisa Ciampi

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