



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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April 9th, 2017

To,

Mr. Srinivasa Kammath

National Focal Point – Human Rights Defenders and Deputy Registrar

National Human Rights Commission

Manav Adhikar Bhawan

Block C, GPO Complex, INA

New Delhi 110023

Sub: HRD Alert – India – Urgent Appeal for Action – Assam – Online death and rape threats issued to women human rights defender Ms. Bondita Acharya, Bajrang Dal issued press statement threatening to file criminal charges, Jorhat, Assam - 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 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 threats issued to women human rights defender Ms. Bondita Acharya in Jorhat, Assam.

Status of human rights defender:

Ms. Bondita Acharya is the coordinator of North-East region for Human Rights Defenders Alert – India. She is also associated with Women in Governance (WING and Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS).

Source of information of the incident:

Communication with Ms. Bondita Acharya

Place of the incident:

Jorhat, Assam

Details of Perpetrators:

Please refer to the annexure for the list of all Facebook comments

Members of Bajrang Dal – threats through press release

Details of the incident:

On April 5, 2017, three persons including a minor, belonging to Muslim community, were arrested from outskirts of Jorhat town in Assam for possessing beef. The local police stated that these persons were arrested for hurting religious sentiments, based on a complaint sent by Mr. Mridu Pawan Bora, a supporter of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The three persons were arrested under the Cattle Preservation Act of Assam, 1950. However, it is pertinent to mention that the said act does not criminalise possession or consumption of beef.

Reacting to this arrest, targeted towards a specific community, based on a false and baseless complaint, Ms. Bondita Acharya had commented against it on her personal Facebook page. She wrote *"I from Jorhat, I eat beef. Then all of us should be put into Jail. Not only Rahman, Alam eat beef, Acharya, Sharma also eat beef."*

Ms. Bondita Acharya started receiving threats online immediately after posting the above mentioned. She is receiving death, rape threats, vulgar, sexual and derogatory messages and threatened with acid attack. Members of Bajrang Dal have also threatened her through a press release, carried by some newspapers, and demanded publicly apology for the Facebook post she had written. She has been threatened with criminal complaint if she doesn't publicly apologise.

Appeal:


We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate of Jorhat:

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of targeting Ms. Bondita Acharya;
- Take immediate legal action on the perpetrators for posting abusive comments and issuing threats publicly to Ms. Bondita Acharya and using all provisions of law to ensure that Ms. Bondita Acharya's safety is ensured;

- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Bondita Acharya as she continues to be under risk of further attacks by the perpetrators and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently. NHRC should also record Ms. Bondita Acharya's statement and order for her security, and;
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the defender for the psychological sufferings she has undergone because of the threats and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs such as Ms. Bondita Acharya.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary

ATTACHED – Copy of Facebook Comments and Messages Threatening Ms. Bondita Acharya