



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

No.32, Besant Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai - 625 002, Tamil Nadu, India.  
P: +91-452-2531874 & 2539520 Fax: +91-452- 2531874 Mobile: 99943-68540  
E.mail: hrda.india@gmail.com Web: www.hrdaindia.org

June 23, 2017

To,  
**Justice (Retd.) H.L. Dattu,**  
Chairperson,  
National Human Rights Commission,  
New Delhi  
Email: [chairnhrc@nic.in](mailto:chairnhrc@nic.in)

***Sub: Defamation and harassment of Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, a well-known environmental activist and human rights defender, by the editor-in-chief and two reporters associated with Republic TV – Regarding***

Respected Justice (Retd.) Dattu,

We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the defamation and harassment meted out to Dr. S.P. Udayakumar by a news channel 'Republic TV'. Dr. Udayakumar is the Convenor of the Peoples Movement against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) and had spearheaded the peaceful and legitimate protests against the installation of Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. Dr. Udayakumar is also a member of the National Coordination Committee of Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP).

On June 20, 2017, a video was telecasted by Republic TV, alleged to be a sting operation on Dr. Udayakumar by the channel's journalists Ms. Shweta Kothari and M. Sanjeevee. According to the channel, in the month of April 2017, these two journalists Dr. Udayakumar. Ms. Kothari introduced herself as a research scholar from a university in the United Kingdom seeking his help for a research work. Later Ms. Kothari shared with Dr. Udayakumar that one of her British professors is an environmentalist is very much interested towards the anti-nuclear struggle and willing to financially contribute to the ongoing protests. Dr. Udayakumar categorically told her that foreign donations cannot be accepted. Ms. Kothari repeatedly insisted Dr. Udayakumar to explore other options for the same. Dr. Udayakumar told her that he or the movement does not have a bank account and hence if required the only legal way out is that she (Ms. Kothari) contributes to the political party he is associated

with and for which a proper acknowledgement and receipt will be given. Dr. Udayakumar repeatedly refused to accept contributions from the imaginative British professor and categorically on several instances stated that '*he can not send it*' as he is of foreign nationality and based outside India. He insisted that contributions if any has to done within India. All the conversation was recorded on a spycam, without Dr. Udayakumar's knowledge.

The channel created a big uproar and hype over the said 'sting operation', deliberate wrongful interpretation of facts, in an attempt to defame and malign Dr. Udayakumar and the anti-nuclear movement in India. Further, Republic TV's rapportage, especially the news-show anchored by its Editor in Chief Mr. Arnab Goswami, was a deliberate attempt to create a public opinion against anti-nuclear protests in India. Mr. Goswami's statements on the news-show conveniently discredited social movements and human rights defenders.

On June 20, 2017, Dr. Udayakumar in a phone interview with Mr. Goswami, live telecasted on the channel, made several attempts to clarify the allegations. Dr. Udayakumar was not allowed to speak, interrupted continuously and harassed by Mr. Goswami. On the same day, it is also learnt that the family members of Dr. Udayakumar were also harassed by a team from Republic TV in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu.

HRDA strongly believes that this is a deliberate attempt to malign, cause disrepute and delegitimise people's movements in India. Dr. Udayakumar didn't mention anything which appeared trespassing Indian laws or contradictory to the principles of anti-nuclear protests in Tamil Nadu. The current legal framework lays down processes and regulations regarding receiving grants from foreign land which were reiterated by Dr. Udayakumar as apparent from the 'sting operation' video. On the contrary, HRDA strongly condemns the malicious and propaganda journalism of Republic TV. HRDA advocated for freedom of speech and expression, including that of the press. However, journalism demonstrated by Republic TV poses severe threats to the ethics of the same.

We urge the Hon'ble Commission, with a mandate to promote and protect human rights in India, to immediately intervene into this incident of insinuating allegations against Dr. Udayakumar. We urge the Hon'ble Commission to –

- Verify the facts of the case and the alleged 'sting operation' through an independent committee of experts solely constituted for this purpose.
- Order an explanation from Republic TV for levelling such vague allegations against Dr. Udayakumar and anti-nuclear movement in Tamil Nadu.
- Based on the recommendations of the independent committee of experts, take appropriate actions. Use Section 12 (b) of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 and move concerned high court or Supreme Court of India to hold Republic TV accountable for its malicious campaign against human rights defenders.

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.

**(Henri Tiphagne)**

National Working Secretary