



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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6 September 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

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India – Urgent Appeal for Action – Karnataka : Senior Journalist and human rights defender Ms. Gauri Lankesh shot dead at her residence in Bengaluru – Regarding

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 killing of senior journalist, social activist and writer Gauri Lankesh who was shot dead point blank by unknown assailants.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- Reports from Media
- The Regional Coordinator of HRDA for South of India

Status of the Human Rights Defenders:

Gauri Lankesh ran the weekly Gauri 'Lankesh Patrike,' a Kannada tabloid, and was seen as a fearless, independent and outspoken journalist. Gauri was the elder daughter of P Lankesh - a man who brought in a new brand

of Kannada Journalism. She followed in his footsteps, speaking her mind and running her own Kannada paper with views that were never careful or circumspect.

She was part of a group that worked for communal harmony. Her views were considered Leftist and anti-Hindutva. She was a fearless and independent journalist who gave voice to many causes and always stood up for justice.

She ran the weekly Gauri 'Lankesh Patrike,' a Kannada tabloid. Like her father, who was a noted Kannada writer, Gauri Lankesh faced opposition and criticism of her journalism. Gauri was known for her fearless and outspoken attitude, besides owning some other publications. The tabloid did not take any advertisements and is run by a group of 50 people. In her works, she had often voiced her opinions against the communal politics as well as the caste system. She was also a staunch critic of right-wing and Hindutva politics as was evident from her works published in different media outlets.

Ms. Lankesh who had been a strong advocate of freedom of press, in an interaction with The Wire had said that 'she was concerned about the state of freedom of expression in the country'. She had also raised apprehensions about how people are targeted because of their ideology.

In her social media posts, hours before she was killed, Ms. Lankesh had in twitter raised the issue of fake news and propaganda and said, "Why do i feel that some of 'us' are fighting between ourselves? we all know our "biggest enemy". can we all please concentrate on that? Ok some of us commit mistakes like sharing fake posts. let us warn each other then and not try to expose each other. peace... comrades."

In November 2016, Gauri had been found guilty of defamation in a case involving a Member of Parliament and Bharatiya Janata Party Mr. Prahlad Joshi and had been sentenced to six months in jail. She was out on bail.

The Perpetrators:

Three Unknown assistants

Date of Incident:

Tuesday, 5th September 2017

Incident detail:

Senior Journalist, activist and writer Gaur Lankesh, 55, was shot dead by unidentified men outside her residence Ideal Homes in Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bengaluru on the night of September 2017.

Preliminary reports say that there were three men on a motor bike who opened at least seven rounds of fire on Gauri when she was unlocking her main door after parking her care at around 8 PM. Three bullets had pierced Gauri's head, neck, and chest, four bullets were sprayed on the walls due to which she died instantly confirmed the police.

According to neighbours, Gauri was returning from her office as she usually would drive back home late night. At around 8 PM today, they heard gun shots and rushed out. For a few minutes, they could not understand what had happened, then realized that Gauri had been shot at and saw her lying in a pool of blood near the door.

This brutalmurder is a reminiscent of the murders of rationalist M.M. Kalburgi's in Dharwad, Karnataka in 2015, Narendra Dabholkar in Pune in 2013 and social Activist Govind Pansare in Kolhapur. All three were shot at close range.

HRDA is apprehending that this death of Gauri Lankesh would also be facing similar fate as that of Kalburgi, Dabolkar's and Pansare's where the killers are not apprehended and are still at large.

We want to highlight to the Commission the status of earlier complaints sent on the killings of other rational voices like Kalburgi, Dabholkar and Pansare by HRDA.

1.)Mr. M M Kalburgi

Date of incident: 30 August 2015

Present status: Response from concerned authority awaited

Case number: 1019/10/10/2015

2.)Mr. Govind Pansare

Date of incident: 16 February 2015

Present status: Case closed stating that one arrest was made in the case and Writ Petition is pending in Bombay High Court

Case Number: 602/13/14/2015

3.) Mr. Narendra Dabholkar

Date of incident: 20 August 2013

Present Status: Case is close stating "The law will take its own course"

Case number: 2393/13/23/2013

Hence, we urge the Commission to urgently intervene into the incident by conducting an independent investigation into the incident of Ms. Gauri Lankesh and also expand the scope of the investigation taking into account of the same modus-operandi in the past killings of Kalburgi, Dabholkar and Pansare used also in the killing of Ms. Gauri Lankesh.

Appeal:

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

- Order an immediate, **independent**, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of brutal murder of Gauri Lankesh.
- Take immediate action on the perpetrators, in this case they are unknown, who should be searched for with a nationwide alert issued and investigation done transparently and from all angles.
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of the family members of Gauri Lankesh of further reprisals from the perpetrators, using all provisions of law, to ensure that the witnesses are not harassed in future.
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the family of the defender for the psychological sufferings they are undergoing because of the death of Gauri Lankesh.
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment and killing against all human rights defenders like Gauri Lankesh in the city of Bangalore and State of Karnataka and to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henri Tiphagne", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary