



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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November 6, 2017

To,

Mr. 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 – Tamil Nadu:
Arrest of cartoonist Mr. Bala for a caricature depicting inaction by
Governemnt of Tamil Nadu on the suicide of a family due to
harassment of money lenders in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu***

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 arrest of cartoonist Mr. Bala for an cartoon depicting inaction by Government of Tamil Nadu on the death of a family due to harassment of money lenders in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

About the HRD:

Mr. Bala is a journalist and cartoonist and depicts the state of politics and governance through his sketches.

Source of Information on the Incident:

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

Date of Incident:

- November 5, 2017

Place of Incident:

- Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

The Perpetrators:

- Mr. Sandeep Nanduri, District Collector, Tirunelveli
- Tirunelveli District Police

Details of the incident:

On October 23, 2017, Mr. Esakimuthu a daily wage labourer committed suicide along with his wife and two children inside the Office of the District Collector in Tirunelveli due to continuous harassment of money lenders and inaction by police and district administration regarding the harassment. It is reported that six petitions were handed over by Esakimuthu at the District Collector's weekly grievance redressal meetings which were then handed off to the Superintendent of Police, who in turn gave it to the local police station where no action was taken.

Mr. Bala, had depicted the inaction by the Government of Tamil Nadu and its officials through a caricature. Mr. Sandeep Nanduri made a complaint to the Superintendent of Police that *"This highly demeaning cartoon shows the government officers in poor light and also casts aspersions*

about their integrity. The cartoon also shows/depicts the Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in a highly derogatory and belittling way". Based on his complaint, Mr. Bala was arrested on charges under Sections 501 of the Indian Penal Code (Printing or engraving matter known to be defamatory) and Section 67 of Information Technology Act (Punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form). Mr. Bala was arrested by the Crime Branch of Tirunelveli Police on November 5, 2017 at his residence. He was produced before a court today and was granted bail.

Appeal:

We therefore urge the Commission to:

- Order for an immediate enquire into this incident of arrest of human rights defender Mr. Bala

Looking forward for immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne

National Working Secretary

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Chairperson, Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission
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Hon'ble Governor,

Government of Tamilnadu

Governor's Secretariate,
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Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,

Chief Minister's Office

Secretariat,

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Dr. Girija Vaidyanathan,

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Mr. T.K. Rajendran

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