



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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April 27, 2018

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 – Chennai: Journalist Mr. Shabbir Ahmed abused and complaint filed against him for sharing a cartoon on the recent rape incidents – 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 concerns regarding the complaint filed against Mr. Shabbir Ahmed, the Deputy Editor of the news channel “Times Now”, who merely shared a cartoon on his Twitter profile.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- Communication with Mr. Shabbir Ahmed
- Media Reports
- Regional Coordinator of HRDA for the South of India.

Status of the Human Rights Defenders:

Mr. Shabbir Ahmed, is a journalist based in Chennai and is now the Deputy News Editor and Correspondent of the news channel “Times Now”.

The Perpetrators:

- Unknown persons through Facebook and Twitter
- Advocate Karuna Sagar Kashimshetty, Founder President of Hindu Sanghatan,

Date of Incident:

April 13, 2018

Incident detail:

On April 10, 2018, a journalist and cartoonist Ms. Swathi Vadlamudi from Hyderabad had posted a cartoon on Twitter and Facebook regarding the recent rape incidents in Kathua and Unnao which made a reference to Hindu Gods. Mr. Shabbir Ahmed had just shared the cartoon on his Twitter account after which, the Hindu Sanghatan, through its President Mr. Karuna Sagar Kashimshetty, filed a police complaint against Mr. Shabbir that he has shared cartoons which are “offensive” and are targeting Hindu Gods.

Mr. Karuna Sagar Kashimshetty has also alleged that it was a deliberate attempt to promote enmity besides hurting the sentiments of Hindus and the cartoon was offensive and hurt religious sentiments of Hindus, and sought action against Mr. Shabbir Ahmed. A FIR with Crime No .132/2018 dated April 13, 2018, has been registered at the Saidabad police station, Hyderabad against Mr. Shabbir Ahmed, under Section 295 (a) of the Indian Penal Code (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs).

The Hindu Sanghatan later filed a complaint seeking to add Ms. Swathi Vadlamudi, the journalist and cartoonist after finding out that she had drawn the cartoon, regarding which HRDA has sent an Urgent Appeal to the National Human Rights Commission on April 17, 2018.

Appeal:

In the wake of these repeated incidents where human rights defenders, particularly journalists, are intimidated, threatened and harassed, curbing fundamental rights to freely express, we urge you to immediately –

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of abuse and intimidation faced by journalist and human rights defender, Mr. Shabbir Ahmed;

- Take immediate legal action against the perpetrators and those abusing and threatening Mr. Shabbir Ahmed and by identifying them through their Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- Order that the police immediately drop all charges against Mr. Shabbir Ahmed and Ms. Swathi Vadlamudi and anyone else against whom cases are filed in this context;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Shabbir Ahmed and his family members as they continue to be under risk of further attacks by the perpetrators and give this assurance to the NHRC in writing immediately and urgently. NHRC should also record, Mr. Shabbir Ahmed's statement and order for his security; and
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to, Mr. Shabbir Ahmed and his family for the psychological sufferings they are undergoing because of the constant threats.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne
National Working Secretary

Copies to:

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