



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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June 13, 2018

To,

Mr. Srinivasa Kammath,

Focal Point-Human Rights Defenders,

National Human Rights Commission,

Manav Adhikar Bhawan Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,

New Delhi-110023,

E-mail –ID: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - Jharkhand: Murder of RTI activist and human rights defender Mr. Suresh Oraon.- Regarding

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 now writing to express our grave concern about the murder of RTI activist and human rights defender Mr. Suresh Oraon on June 7, 2018, in Khelari-Piparwar border, District Chatra, Jharkhand.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- HRDA Regional Coordinator
- Communication with HRD Mr. Stan Swamy and Mr. Gopinath Gosh
- News reports

The Human Rights Defender:

Suresh Oraon, aged 27 years, is a resident of Purnadih, Chatra. He was a RTI activist and used the RTI Act extensively to expose the corruption in the forceful displacement made in mining projects and other social scheme implementation in the area.

Suresh fought fiercely with Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) and the mining mafia while opposing the pollution and displacement caused by coal mining. Three years ago, he was offered a general labourer's job by CCL in exchange of his land. While he was working at CCL, he fought for other people who lost their land, many of whom were not given jobs by the public sector company. Two months ago, he had staged a demonstration for local unemployed youths whose land had been acquired for mining.

When CCL started to dump mine waste into the Damodar river, under the leadership of Suresh, villagers took the CCL management to court and won the case.

Suresh filed a writ petition in Jharkhand HC against CCL in 2012, alleging that the CCL was polluting the Damodar River through its washeries. The court disposed the case in 2013 and ordered CCL to ensure that their mining activities do not cause more pollution.

The Perpetrators:

1. Four unknown assailants who fired on Suresh
2. Akhilesh B. Variar
3. S. P. Chatra

Date of Incident:

June 7, 2018

Place of Incident:

Khelari - Piparwar border, Chatra district of Jharkhand.

Details of the Incident :

As per the sources, on June 7, 2018, at about 10.30 AM, Suresh was at Piparwar, Chatra to participate in a prayer meeting of Sarna Samiti. Four assailants came in two motorcycles. Two of them asked a local man to call Suresh to a desolate spot near the meeting venue. When Suresh reached that spot, one of the unknown assailant fired nine bullets from a close range at him. Suresh fell down and the assailants drove away towards the jungle. Suresh was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead.

It has been alleged by the local people that Suresh might have been killed by the CCL goons or the mining mafia. However, the police has stated that the way in which killing took place it appeared that professionals were involved. The police based on villagers' versions also claim this to be done by the Naxals.

It will be pertinent to mention here that, Suresh fought and won many battles against the CCL (the Damodar pollution case) and several other private companies involved in mining operations thus, earning the displeasure of several people including public officials.

Appeal :

HRDA would like to recall NHRC's commitment to protect human rights in such situations under the Edinburgh Declaration of 2010 on 'the role of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in addressing Business and Human Rights'. Point 11 of the Declaration emphasise the important role NHRIs can play in addressing corporate-related human rights challenges. NHRC should abide by section C of the Decalration titled as 'Complaints Handling' and refer to clause ii 'handling complaints related to corporate human rights abuse using their quasi-judicial powers,....'. Hence, we therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps and:

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of the murder of Mr. Suresh Oraon.
- 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 considering all angles.
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the family of the defender for the psychological sufferings they are undergoing because of the death of Mr. Suresh Oraon.

- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment of human rights defenders in the State of Jharkhand to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances;
- More generally, ensures in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in the state of Jharkhand.

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 drawn underneath it.

(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary