



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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Ref No:- HRDA/North East/Meghalaya/1/11/2018

November 10, 2018

To,

Mr. Khaleel Ahmed

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 - Appeal for Action – Meghalaya: Attack on RTI activist, President of the Civil Society Women's Organisation (CSWO), Ms. Agnes Kharshiing and her colleague, Anita Sangma in Tuber Sohshrieh in East Jaintia Hills district, Meghalaya – 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 writing to express our grave concern over the attack on RTI activist, President of President of the Civil Society Women's Organisation (CSWO), Agnes Kharshiing and her colleague, Amita Sangma in Tuber Sohshrieh in East Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya on 8th November 2018 by suspected coal mafia.

About the Human Rights Defender

Agnes Kharshing is a Right to Information activist and human rights defender. She is the president of Civil Society Women's Organization (CSWO). She is also National Working Committee Member of People's Commission on Shrinking Democratic Space (PCSDS). She has been very vocal against the illegal coal mining activities since the

NGT ban, against rampant corruption in the state of Meghalaya and has been tirelessly fighting to safeguard the environment. In the past, she had exposed rampant illegal mining and transportation of coal despite the ban across the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. There are 14 false cases against her for her work on anti-corruption and illegal mining.

Details of the incident:

On November 8, 2018, Agnes Kharshing and her colleague Amita Sangma had gone to Tuber Sohshrieh in East Jaintia Hills district to follow up a complaint she had filed against coal-laden trucks parked at Mawiong rim in Shillong, which were later seized by the police. According to a source, Agnes and Amita went to Ladrymbai Police Outpost in the morning from Shillong in a car. They had some discussion with the police personnel, later on their way back from Ladrymbai to Shillong, Agnes spotted some trucks loading coal illegally and she took the photographs of those trucks. When they reached Tuber Sohshrieh, she spotted two more trucks loading coal 100 meter away from the National Highway. Agnes and Amita diverted their vehicle from the highway and took the photographs of the loaded truck. When they reached to the National Highway, their car was blocked with some vehicles and around 30-40 people assembled there. Their car key was snatched, and the driver was dragged out and was forced by the mob to leave that place in a different car. The driver then drove till Jowai and informed a traffic police about the incident. Then the police were alerted about the incident and under the directions of Deputy Superintendent of Police Marshillong two teams of police personnel were directed to locate and rescued Agnes and Amita.

According to our sources, Agnes was first dragged from the car by the mob and they kicked her and then dragged her to nearby jungle and she was beaten up with wooden logs. Then Amita was also dragged to the jungle and was kicked and her three fingers broke, then beaten with wooden log. Somehow Amita managed to run away from the place, again she was spotted by the mob and was attacked on her forehead. Since she went unconscious, they left Amita. Then she crawled towards the highway and waved her hands seeking help and it is alleged that none of the vehicles stopped. When the police vehicle came, they stopped and rescued them.

Agnes was later found in the near-by jungle in an unconscious state. Agnes has sustained with severe head injuries. The incident took place around 2.30 PM and they

were immediately taken to the Jowai District Civil Hospital and then to Lalong Hospital. Later they were shifted to North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) since they had sustained grievous head injuries. The present condition of Agnes is that she is stable and in ICU under observation.

Source of Information on the Incident:

The Coordinator of HRDA for the North East of India,
HRDs from Meghalaya

The Perpetrators:

Unidentified miscreants, suspected coal mafia

Date of Incident:

November 8, 2018

Place of Incident:

Tuber Sohshrieh, East Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya

Background of the incident

This is the third such incident in this year where RTI activists, journalist are attacked by unidentified miscreants and suspected coal mafia in Meghalaya. HRDA has earlier sent urgent appeals to NHRC on the incident of murder of RTI activist, President of Jaintia Youth Federation Mr. Pynpoihun Majaw in Meghalaya on March 30, 2018 and attack on journalist Ms. Patricia Mukhim at Meghalaya on April 27, 2018. Both these incidents were related to illegal mining in the Meghalaya. It is also reported that the moments before Agnes was to leave for Tuber, a man visited her at her residence in Laitumkhrah, Shillong and offered her money, asking her to take back the case. However, she refused the offer and decided to go to Tuber.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps and also:

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of brutal attack on Agnes Kharshing and Amita Sangma.

- Take immediate action on the perpetrators and ensure proper protection to Agnes Kharshing and Amita Sangma, their family and also to the eye-witnesses to this incident .
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, proper medical treatment of the defender for the physical, psychological sufferings they are undergoing.
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment and killing against all human rights defenders like Agnes Kharshing, Amita Sangma in the state of Meghalaya and to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Henri Tiphagne

National Working Secretary