



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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August 03, 2019

To

Mr. Khaleel Ahmad

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 – Manipur - Intimidation and threats against women activists by a police officer in Imphal City, Manipur – 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 attempt to intimidate and threaten women human rights defender Sobita Mangsatabam by a police personnel in Imphal City, Manipur. This is not an isolated attack on Sobita, there have been previous attempts to threaten her by the same police officer, while also her husband & daughter were attempted to be shot by unidentified men.

About the Human Rights Defender:

Sobita Mangsatabam is a women human rights defender in Manipur, actively taking up issues of women rights in the state, for nearly two decades. She is also the Secretary of Women's Action for Development (WAD) which assists women and girls from issues of domestic violence and sexual violence. She is also the Convenor of the District Women Committee (DCW) of the United NGOs Mission Manipur (UNMM). She has been strongly advocating against the crimes of violence against women and has raised the issue of bringing about reforms in the criminal justice system, to punish the wrongdoers.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- The Coordinator of HRDA for the North-East of India

The Perpetrator

- Laimayum Bishwanath Sharma who is a serving police officer in Manipur as well as the local security to the right-wing organization- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]

Date and Place of incident:

24 July, 2019

Office of Women's Action for Development (WAD), Imphal City, Manipur

Background of the Incident

Sobita was actively involved in a domestic violence case filed against a serving police officer Laimayum Bishwanath Sharma in Manipur whose wife has levelled allegations of domestic violence as well as death threats to herself and their children. Sobita took up the matter and coordinated with the police officers to get the complaint registered and to ensure protection of the wife. However, when the threats and violence continued, Sobita helped the wife and her children to move out of the house and take up a temporary shelter. It is believed that due to her involvement in a complaint against the police officer, who happens to be closely connected with the RSS, she has been facing several incidents of intimidation and harassment.

Earlier this month, on July 4, 2019 a group of unidentified men traveling in a four-wheeler overtook her husband's car and verbally harassed him. They continued to trail them and suddenly fired open shots at her husband and daughter, though they managed to escape unharmed. Sobita's husband Urikhimbam Nobokishore is also a human right defender, working for the rights of the indigenous tribes of Manipur.

Earlier on July 21, 2019 the same police officer Laimayum Bishwanath Sharma was spotted near the WAD campus where Sobita works, attempting to enter it, though unsuccessful. Therefore, it is clear that the officer was on a look-out for Sobita with intentions to threaten her security.

Details of the Incident:

According to sources on July 24, 2019 when there was a shut-down in the city of Manipur and the office of WAD was closed, the said police officer entered the compound of WAD. He was in civilian clothes and carried a firearm. On the said day,

Sobita and others were not in office, so the police personnel started questioning the caretaker about her whereabouts. With a view to intimidate the caretaker, he pulled out a firearm and held it to the waist of the care-taker. After receiving no information, he stayed in the office-compound for 15 minutes before he left.

The recurring incidents of intimidation and attacks on the women HRD pose a direct threat to her safety and security. It also impinges her fundamental right to freedom of life and liberty, guaranteed under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In order to enable HRDs to pursue their crucial work in the field, it is of utmost importance that their safety be protected.

Appeal:

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the Incident of threats issued to the life of Sobita and her family;
- Take immediate legal action against the perpetrator as mentioned above and ensure that FIR is registered against him for threatening intimidating and threatening woman human rights defender Sobita; and
- Guarantees in all circumstances the physical integrity of the women human rights defender and her family, who still face the risk of further reprisals and using all provisions of law to ensure that the women HRD is not harassed and intimidated in future.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary