



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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To

**Mr. Debindra Kundra**

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Assistant Registrar  
National Human Rights Commission  
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,  
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,  
New Delhi – 110 023  
Email: [hrd-nhrc@nic.in](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

Dear Sir,

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Arbitrary arrest and foisting of false charges against social activist Mr. Shanmugam in Karur district, Tamil Nadu - 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 arbitrary arrest of social activist Mr. Shanmugam under the instructions of the District Collector in Karur, Tamil Nadu.

## **Status of Human Rights Defender:**

Mr. Shanmugam is a farmer by profession and is also a Right to Information (RTI) activist. He has been actively involved in various social issues in Karur district of Tamil Nadu. He also uses Right to Information (RTI) Act to seek information regarding distribution and usage of government schemes and programs in order to prevent corruption.

## **Source of Information on the Incident:**

- Communication from Mr. Shanmugam
- Communication with other HRDs in the region
- State Coordinator for HRDA in Tamil Nadu

**Perpetrators:**

- Mr. Anbalagan IAS, District Collector, Karur district
- Superintendent of Police, Karur district
- Inspector of Police, Thanthondrimalai Police Station, Karur
- Dr. Umpathy, Personal Assistant (Agriculture) to the District Collector, Karur

**Details of the Incident**

On 31.01.2019, Mr. Shanmugam was present at the District Collectorate in Karur to attend the 'Grievance Day' which is organised every week by the District Collector. Nearly 50 farmers were present for the 'Grievance Day' meeting along with Mr. Shanmugam. As the meeting started, Mr. Shanmugam raised the issue of non-implementation of repair works in 'Rajavaickaal', a canal located in Thirumanilayur in Karur district through which the farmers get irrigation for their agricultural lands. He complained that the repair works has not been carried over for a few years and due to which the farmers are suffering without proper irrigation.

The District Collector Mr. Anbalagan, who presided over the meeting answered to Mr. Shanmugam's complaint that all the repair works have been completed in the above-mentioned canal. To this, Mr. Shanmugam replied to the District Collector that as stated, the repair works have not been completed and he has submitted many written petitions regarding this to the District Collector, and yet no action has been taken. Then the District Collector Mr. Anbalagan told Mr. Shanmugam that whatever he says is the truth and that he should not talk. But Mr. Shanmugam continued to talk about his grievance on the canal repair works. Immediately, the District Collector Mr. Anbalagan ordered to arrest Mr. Shanmugam.

Then Mr. Shanmugam was immediately detained by the police personnel escorting the District Collector in the premises of the District Collectorate where the 'Grievance Day' meeting was being held. Then later, Dr. Umapathy, an officer at the Agriculture Department who is also the Personal Assistant (Agriculture) to the District Collector, submitted a complaint at Thanthondrimalai Police Station in Karur that Mr. Shanmugam spoke harshly against the District Collector. The Inspector of Thanthondrimalai Police Station without any investigation filed a First Information Report against Mr. Shanmugam on the basis of the complaint of Dr. Umapathy under Sections 294 (b), 353, 506 (1) of the Indian Penal Code. Mr. Shanmugam was then remanded in prison.

Mr. Shanmugam has been falsely charged with offences under Indian Penal Code only for raising livelihood issues of farmers in Karur district with the District Collector in 'Grievance Day' meeting.

**Appeal:**

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 arbitrary arrest and foisting of false charges against Mr. Shanmugam;
- Ensure that all the false complaints filed against the HRD to harass and threaten him should be quashed;
- Ensure that strict disciplinary actions are initiated against the perpetrators who have misused their official powers against Mr. Shanmugam for his human rights work;
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the defender for the psychological sufferings she has undergone because of the threats and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



**Henri Tiphagne**  
**National Working Secretary**