



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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February 26, 2022

To,  
Mr. Srinivas Kamath  
Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Joint 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 – Uttarakhand: Illegal arrest of journalist Mr. Kishore Ram by Uttarakhand police for reportage on crimes against Dalits.**

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 regarding the illegal arrest of journalist Mr. Kishore Ram based in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand by the Uttarakhand police for interview-based reportage relating to crimes against Dalits in the region, in violation of DK Basu guidelines of arrest and detention.

**Source of Information:**

- Communication with the HRDA North Regional Coordinator
- Communication with other HRDs in the region
- Media Reports

**Date of Incident:**

February 24, 2022

**Place of Incident:**

Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand

**The Perpetrators:**

- Police Personnel of Kotwali Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand

- Mr. Lokeshwar Singh, Superintendent of Police Office, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand
- Mr. Mohan Chand Pandey, In-Charge Inspector, Kotwali Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand

### **About the Human Rights Defender:**

Mr. Kishore Ram (29) is a Dalit journalist, based in Pithoragarh Uttarakhand, working as a reporter for the news portal “Janjwar”. He mainly reports on atrocities against Dalits and is associated with several social and Dalit rights organizations.

### **Background of the Incident:**

On January 18, 2022, a Dalit minor girl was raped, and a Dalit man murdered on February 13, 2022; both in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. Journalist Mr. Kishore Ram did news reports both the incidents based on interviews, and they were put up on the Facebook/YouTube of the news portal.

Links to videos.

<https://youtu.be/TYze2PyUJHo>

<https://fb.watch/bn2O82PQ09/>

### **Details of the incident:**

On February 24, 2022, a press release issued by the Media Cell, Superintendent of Police Office, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand stated that Mr. Kishore Ram tried to disturb social harmony and spread caste animosity between the communities of two particular castes, through his news portal Janjwar, by broadcasting videos on Facebook / YouTube. Thus, a F.I.R (No. 0046/2022) under section-153A (*Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony*) of IPC was registered against Kishore Ram on February 22, 2022.

On February 24, 2022, around 10:00 am police called Mr. Kishore Ram at Pithoragarh Kotwali, Pithoragarh and arrested him and around 06:00 pm he was sent to jail. According to his Editor, no procedure was followed in his arrest, and nor were his family informed. The press release of the police was the only intimation regarding his arrest by the police.

On February 25, 2022, a group of HRDs and journalists met the DM Pithoragarh, stating that the arrest of Mr. Kishore Ram was a violation of journalists right to Freedom of Expression and asked the administration to quash the case against him. They also said that if journalists are arrested for reportage, then no journalist will be willing to do any reporting.

We believe that Mr. Kishore Ram is being harassed for his work as a journalist in exposing news related to Dalits and social justice. His illegal arrest in violation of the multiple DK Basu guidelines is an overreach and abuse of power by the Uttarakhand police and a suppression of his right to unbiased reportage.

A free media is an extremely important fourth pillar of the Indian democracy. Our Constitution gives journalists the right to exercise freedom of speech. We believe that charging a journalist with criminal case and arresting him based on interviews done by

him, clearly violates the article 19 (a) -the right to freedom of speech and expression- enshrined in our Constitution. The right to freedom of speech and expression encompasses three different aspects: 1) the right to hold opinions without interference; 2) the right of access to information; and 3) the right to impart information and ideas of all kind.

On the aforesaid it is stated that Declaration on Human Rights Defenders seeks to protect the monitoring and advocacy functions of defenders by recognizing their right to obtain and disseminate information relevant to the enjoyment of human rights. If journalists are muffled up their reporting on facts when they criticise politicians and public officials, journalists will not dare to take a stand and Indian democracy will be crushed.

Globally, journalists face major risks as a result of their work both from the state and out of state actors. States are under an obligation to prevent, protect against, and prosecute attacks against human rights defenders. A free expression and active civil society are essential to ensure the public's right to know, so that governments and institutions can be held accountable.

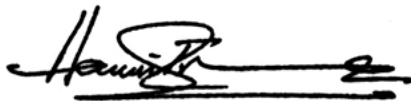
The protection of journalist like Mr. Kishore, and ending attacks against them by the police, is a global priority for safeguarding freedom of expression.

**Appeal:**

The Hon'ble Commission should urgently:

- Direct the Director General of Police of Uttarakhand to initiate an independent inquiry into the illegal arrest violating the DK Basu guidelines and the fabricated case against journalist Mr. Kishore Ram and submit a report to the honorable Commission within 2 weeks.
- Direct the Director General of Police of Uttarakhand to quash false charges against Mr. Kishore Ram and to ensure his immediate release from police custody.

Yours sincerely,



**Henri Tiphagne**  
National Working Secretary