



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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September 10, 2021

To,
Mr. C S Mawri,
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

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Karnataka: Murder of RTI activist and negligence of Karnataka police.

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 murder of RTI activist Mr. Venkatesh, who was attacked at his farm land and suffered fatal injuries. He later died at the hospital from his injuries. The family alleges that Mr. Venkatesh was killed because of an RTI he had filed regarding a construction project on government land.

Source of Information:

- The family of HRD
- Media Reports

Date of Incident:

July 15, 2021

Place of Incident:

Bangalore, Karnataka

The Perpetrators:

- 5 men who assaulted the HRD
- Bangalore Police

About the Human Rights Defender:

Mr. Venkatesh was an RTI activist based in Bangalore and had been filing RTI applications seeking information on various departments of the state government. He had also filed many corruption complaints and some projects were even stopped because of his complaints.

Details of the Incident:

On July 15, 2021, at 11:30 am, a group of 5 men came in 3 scooters and kept honking near his farm land at Tavarakere where Mr. Venkatesh had his office. When he came out to see the people who were honking, they got down from the scooters, attacked him and chopped his right hand and right leg. While Mr. Venkatesh was shouting in pain, passer-by from the neighbouring Ashram and his brother heard his cries. The assaulters then ran away.

His brother and others called an ambulance and rushed him to hospital. Doctors operated Venkatesh, and he was declared to be out of danger. On July 15, 2021, the police registered a FIR 233/2021, U/s- 307 and 34 against unknown people.

In the statement given to the police, Mr. Venkatesh stated that this attack was due to the RTI application filed by him against the following land surveys i.e. Yelachaguppe survey No. 116 land encroachment, survey no. 60, Tavaeraekere, Yelachaguppe survey No. 18/1, Yelachaguppe Rampura survey No. 04, Tavaeraekere Gangamma lake, survey no. 60 Yelachaguppe. These RTIs related to developmental activities in the locality. His family also corroborated the same.

On July 18, 2021, Mr. Venkatesh was taken to Hosmat Hospital, Bengaluru where he underwent extensive surgery to reattach his right arm and leg. He was later admitted to the Bangalore Sagar Hospital. However, he died on Sunday, July 18, 2021. After his death the Article 302 IPC was added and 9 people were arrested. On July 19, 2021, the Bangalore police said in its press statement that it could be a revenge attack but didn't mention it was because of his RTI activism.

We believe that the dying statement of the deceased should be treated with the gravity it deserves and the police should start a fresh investigation into whether the murder of Mr. Venkatesh was because of his public interest work as an RTI activist.

Appeal:

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to –

- Direct the Director General of Police of Karnataka for a transparent, effective, and impartial investigation into the death of Mr. Venkatesh and the reason for the police not investigating based on the deceased HRD's statement regarding his murder being due to the RTI applications filed by him.
- Direct the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu to provide Mr. Venkatesh's family compensation and take necessary steps for providing congenial atmosphere to HRDs and RTI activists for smooth working in the state of Karnataka.

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne

National Working Secretary