



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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January 08, 2020

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

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action- Uttar Pradesh: Case of police torture, arbitrary arrest of social activist Robin Verma by Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow – Regarding

Dear Sir,

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavors to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are writing to express our deep concern over the arbitrary arrest, detention and torture of social activist and human rights defender Robin Verma by Uttar Pradesh police in police custody in Hazratganj police station in the state capital Lucknow.

Status of the Human Rights Defender

Mr. Robin Verma is a social activist and has been teaching at Shia Post Graduate College, Lucknow. He has been helping the human rights group Rihai Manch with its work in the state of Uttar Pradesh. He has been actively involved in the struggle against caste discrimination and communal divides.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- The Coordinator of HRDA for the North of India
- Communications with HRDs in Uttar Pradesh
- Media Reports

The Perpetrators:

Police personnel of Hazratganj police station in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Date and Place of Incident:

20 December, 2019

Hazratganj police station in the state capital Lucknow

Details of the Incident:

According to the sources on 20 December, 2019 Mr. Robin Verma was picked up by the police along with journalist Omar Rashid from a place near Darul-Shafa, Lucknow. According to the information provided by Omar Rashid, both Robin Verma and he were detained by four men in plain clothes on December 20, 2019 when they were having their meal at a eatery located at Lalbagh. They were waiting to get the information about the press conference to be held by the Uttar Pradesh government. Then they both were taken to the Hazratganj police station. According to the information received, the policemen who arrested them did not identify themselves and used abusive language against them. They said that they wanted to inquire about something and took them into their police jeep. The policemen threatened both saying they would book them under Section 120 B of the Indian Penal Code. Within seconds from their arrival at the police station, cops, who were already stationed there, started thrashing Robin with a thick leather belt and slapped him many times. Although Omar Rashid was released after a few hours, but Robin Verma was sent to jail.

According to the police FIR, his arrest has been shown on 21 December 2019 from behind Begum Hazrat Mahal Park in Lucknow. According to the police, Robin Verma along with others violated section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code. He was falsely shown as arrested on several charges, including rioting, attempted murder and assault on public servants, during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Lucknow on December 19, 2019 in Case no 600/2019 under sections 147, 148, 149, 152, 307, 323, 504, 506, 332, 353, 188, 435, 436, 120 B, 427 of Indian Penal Code (IPC), sections 3 and 4 of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. Section 7 of Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was also slapped on him. Bail application of Robin Verma was rejected by Chief Judicial Magistrate, Lucknow on December 23, 2019. Then it was moved to the Sessions Court and he was granted bail by the Sessions

Court on 7 January, 2020. He has spent close to 17 days in jail during harsh weather. HRDA would like to point out that apart from illegal arrest, detention and custodial torture on Robin Verma, he was also suspended from his job as a Professor on contractual basis at Shia Post Graduate College, Lucknow. Illegal arrest and detention of Robin Verma highlights the treatment being meted out to human rights defenders arrested in the aftermath of anti-CAA protests in Uttar Pradesh.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that this Hon'ble Commission to urgently:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the abovementioned incident of illegal detention, degrading inhuman treatment and torture of social activist and human rights defender Mr. Robin Verma by the police personnel of Hazratganj police station in the state capital Lucknow;
- Take necessary steps to ensure that the cases filed against social activist and human rights defender Mr. Robin Verma are withdrawn and defender is not harassed or intimidated or falsely implicated in future and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Recommend strict and immediate legal action on the perpetrators in this case Police personnel of Hazratganj police station in the state capital Lucknow for filing criminal cases, illegal detention and physical torture of social activist and human rights defender Mr. Robin Verma and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity and security of social activist and human rights defender Mr. Robin Verma who is still under risk of further reprisals from the perpetrators 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