



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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December 28, 2021

To
Mr. C.S Mawri,
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 – Chhattisgarh: Raids, assault of peaceful protestors and arson in camps by police and paramilitary personnel.

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 concern over the unprovoked raid, assault of peaceful protestors, arson in camps and disproportionate use of force against tribals for peacefully protesting against setting up an illegal police camp by police and paramilitary personnel in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district.

About the Human Rights Defenders:

Since November 2021, residents of 13 tribal villages in Kuakonda block of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh have been opposing the efforts to set up a police camp in Nahadi village, by holding a peaceful sit-in demonstration demanding the camp be withdrawn. Their demonstration is also in support of the ongoing six-month long agitation against a CRPF camp in Silger village in Bijapur district.

Source of Information:

- Communication with HRDA East Regional Consultant
- Communication with other HRDs in the region
- Media reports

The Perpetrators:

- District Reserve Guard personnel, Dantewada.
- Police and administrative officials in Dantewada.

Date of Incident:

December 9, 2021

Place of Incident:

Nahadi village, Kuakonda block, Dantewada district, Chhattisgarh

Background of the incident:

Residents of Nahadi and 12 other villages in Kuakonda block allege that a police camp is being set up in Nahadi without any consultation with locals. Villagers allege that government officials visited Nahadi in early November 2021, and were seen measuring land, giving rise to fears among locals that construction work may commence soon. Locals fear that if the camp came up, they would not be able to travel to other villages or collect produce from the forest. Women also fear sexual harassment and violence from police personnel posted there.

In November 2021, the villagers began a peaceful, sit-in demonstration demanding a rollback of the camp in the Karka neighbourhood of Nahadi village. Hundreds of locals including men, women and children visited the protest site every day and raised slogans peacefully to register their protest against the camp and demand the establishment of a hospital, a school and an anganwadi instead.

Protestors also demanded action against the culprits of the Silger police firing in May 2021, the 2012 killing of 17 Adivasis by the police in Sarkeguda in Bijapur, and the killing of four minors and four adults in Edesmetta of the same Bijapur district in 2013.

Details of the Incident:

On December 9, 2021, personnel of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) including women commandos raided the protest site in Nahadi's Karka area without any warning, assaulted the protestors and ordered them to vacate the premises. They did not try to talk to the unarmed protestors when they reached the protest spot, but began a brutal assault.

They dismantled the boundary around the stage, uprooted the protestors' tent and seized all the material the villagers had used to set up the protest site to prevent them from starting another camp. They assaulted those who protested against this, hitting the protestors with batons and rifle butts. Several people were severely injured. After dismantling the tents and seizing the materials, DRG personnel set fire to the stage. This caused panic among protestors and they fled the spot.

Furthermore, Karka, where the camp is planned, police personnel interrogated residents and threatened to lodge false cases against them whenever they step out of the hamlet. People in the area opposing the camp fear they might be abducted and arrested without due procedure by police or killed in false encounters.

We believe that the raid on peaceful protestors in Nahadi by police and paramilitary personnel was conducted to muzzle peaceful protests by villagers against the police camp and is against the values enshrined in our Constitution.

These actions on the part of police and paramilitary personnel amount to a gross abuse of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty granted by Article 21 of the

Indian Constitution as well as a complete violation of their human rights as guaranteed by national and international laws.

The right to assemble peacefully under Article 19(b) of the Indian Constitution. The Human Rights Council resolution 15/21 adopted in October 2010 reaffirms that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly free of restrictions that is subject only to the limitations permitted by international law, in particular international human rights law.


The Declaration on human rights defenders adopted in 1998 by the UN general Assembly was Clauses 2 and 3 of Article 12 of the declaration state: *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”*

Appeal:

We request the Hon'ble Commission to urgently:

- Direct the Director General of Police of Chhattisgarh to initiate an independent inquiry into the raid and assault of protestors, arson and seizure of materials, and submit a report within two weeks.
- Depending on the result of the inquiry, take stern action against guilty police and paramilitary officials.
- Ensure that the those protesting against illegal police camps are protected from further harassment and/ or arrest by police.
- Direct the removal of all police pickets in Nahadi and surrounding villagers, and ensure villagers' physical security and freedom of movement.
- Direct the Director General of Police of Chhattisgarh to initiate to initiate an independent inquiry into violation of legal provisions and rules in setting up a police camp in Nahadi, and submit a report within two weeks.
- Direct the state government to compensate the protestors for their losses and injuries, including mental trauma due to the raid.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,
Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne
National Working Secretary