



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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September 28, 2017

To

Mr Srinivasa Kammath

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

***Sub: HRD Alert - India – Urgent Appeal for Action – Chhattisgarh -
Illegal and arbitrary arrests of farmer leaders & human rights
defenders by confining them not to assemble & protest using
prohibitory orders in Chhattisgarh – 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 now writing to express our grave concern regarding the illegal and arbitrary mass arrest of human rights defenders and farmer leaders thereby restricting them to protest peacefully in Chhattisgarh.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- The Coordinator of HRDA for the East of India
- Media sources
- Human rights defenders from Chhattisgarh

The Perpetrators:

1. A. N. Upadhyay Director General of Police, Chhattisgarh
2. Shri Rajnesh Singh, Superintendent of Police, Dhamtari
3. Station House Officer, Rudri Police station, Dhamtari
4. Prashant Agarwal, Superintendent of Police, Rajnandgaon

Date of Incident:

September 18, 2017 onwards

Place of Incident:

Rajnandgaon, Dhamtari and other districts in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Background of the incident:

On September 13, 2017, a meeting was organised by Chhattisgarh Kisaan Mazdoor Sangh, at Aarang to discuss the worsening conditions of farmers due to the consistent drought situation in Chhattisgarh for last three years. Since past three months, the farmers union are demanding the government to implement the promises made during election, which was included in their election manifesto including bonus for the farmers, free electricity, loans at zero percent interest, implementation of the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee and Rs. 2100 as support cash among others.

With the intent to remind the government of their promises, and to hold them accountable, it was decided in several meetings held all over the state that the farmers will peacefully gather at the residence of the Chief Minister in Raipur in huge numbers on September 21, 2017 and the rally (Sanklap Yatra) will begin from Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh on September 19, 2017.

Incident detail:

The farmers from Chhattisgarh had decided to make a peaceful demonstration throughout the state with demands of crop loan waiver, bonus payment for the last three years, implementation of recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, free electricity and crop insurance payment.

The protest march known as 'sankalp yatra' was supposed to start from the Rajnandgaon district on September 19 2017. But the local district police had arrested the trade union leaders and farmer leaders illegally on the morning of September 19, 2017 in order to prevent them from undergoing the peaceful rally. Several other activists were arrested while they are on the way to Rajnandgaon, and the district administration imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) and extended it to the neighbouring Dhamtari district also.

Mr. Janak Lal Sahu, a trade union leader was arrested from his house by the police on the midnight of September 20, 2017 and completely violated the Supreme Court guidelines regarding arrest of a person.

Many members of Dhamtari Kisaan Mazdoor Mahasangh were arrested when they went to meet the Collector to submit a memorandum protesting against the imposition of Section 144 in Dhamtari district .

The list of the arrested persons are listed below:

From Rajnandgaon district:

- Sudes Ekam
- Ramakant Banjare
- Chandu Sahu

- Chhani Sahu
- Sanjitmadan Sahu

From Dhamtari district:

- Satrughan singh Sahu
- Sourav Sahu
- Srikant Sonmani
- Purusottam Chandrakar
- Srikant Chandrakar
- Chainsingh Sahu
- Tajendra Todekar

From other places the police arbitrarily arrested the following activists;

- Ms. Durga Jha, WHRD
- Uttam Jaiswal, Farmer leader
- Arvind Netam, Adivasi leader
- Alok Sukla, Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan
- Sanket Thakur, Kisan Maha Sabha , Secretary
- Lakhan singh, President of State PUCL
- Anand Misra, Kissan Leader
- Sanjay Parathey and many others.

Appeal :

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of arrest of farmer leaders and HRDs by the police;

- Based on the independent investigation, ensure strict actions are taken against the administration and police for denying farmers their constitutional right to peacefully assemble;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity and protection of the arrested farmers who are also HRDs;
- Take immediate action on the perpetrators for intimidation on the human rights defender by the local police using all provisions of law to ensure that the defenders are not harassed or attacked in future;
- Put an end to all acts of attack and harassment of human rights defenders in the State of Chhattisgarh to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as defenders of human rights without any hindrances;
- More generally, ensures in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Henri Tiphagne

National Working Secretary