



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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October 15, 2019

To

Mr. Khaleel Ahmed

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

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action –Tamil Nadu - Harassment on activists protesting against forcible land acquisition in Tiruppur District- Regarding

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 over harassment of activists who were protesting against forcible acquisition of agricultural land for high power transmission lines by government in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu.

Source of Information on the Incident:

- Communication with activists in the region
- State Coordinator for HRDA in Tamil Nadu

Perpetrators:

- Ms. Shenbagavalli, Revenue Divisional Officer
- Ms. Kanimozhi, Special Thasildhar
- Ms. Shanthi, Thasildhar
- Mr. Gunasekaran, Additional Deputy Superintendent of Police (ADSP)
- Mr. Arul, the Inspector of Police, Kaamanaayakkanpalayam Police Station
- Other revenue department officials and police personnel

Background of the Incident:

Across the districts of Karur, Erode, Coimbatore and Salem in the state of Tamil Nadu thousands of wind mill towers have been erected in fertile agricultural lands to generate electricity in the recent years. In order to save the generated power, the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation, a public sector undertaking

owned by Government of Tamil Nadu and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited has constructed several transmission lines across 150 acres of agricultural land in Palladam, Tiruppur District.

Since the year 2017, the revenue department officials under the supervision of District Collector of Tiruppur have been keenly executing the process to acquiring the agricultural land from the farmers. Before acquiring the agricultural lands, the government did not hold any consultation meetings with the community and stakeholders seeking the opinion of the public and also no government order nor notices were served to the related land owners. Since a vast number of agricultural lands have been forcibly grabbed with the help of revenue officials and with the force of the police, the farmers in Tiruppur district had organized themselves into Joint Action Committee of Farmer Organisations and have been working against this forcible land acquisition.

In Palladam taluk in Tiruppur district High voltage electric wire have been laid above the agriculture lands in more than 10 villages and have destroyed the crops which were cultivated. Even though the government has announced that Rs 32,400/ would be paid as compensation for each coconut tree, no compensation was announced for other crops and yet no compensation amount has reached any affected farmers.

Details of the Incident:

On 22.08.2019, around 10.30 am, a team of officials from revenue department and police officers including Revenue Divisional Officer Ms. Shenbagavalli, Special Thasildhar Ms. Kanimozhi, Thasildhar Ms. Shanthi, Additional Deputy Superintendent of Police (ADSP) Mr. Gunasekaran, Mr. Arul, the Inspector of Police, Kaamanaayakkanpalayam Police Station, along with nearly 100 police personnel came to forcibly acquire the land with Survey No:204 belonging to Mr. Chenniyappan in Kaliappan Gounden Puthur, Vavipalayam Panchayat, Palladam Taluk, Tiruppur District. The officials came to the land without any prior information and the police personnel started to destroy the crops in the 98 cent land belonging to Mr. Chenniyappan which is the only livelihood for him and his family.

Upon receiving information on this incident, a team from Joint Action Committee of Farmer Organisations headed by former Panchayat President Mr. Parthasarathy and 11 other women members visited the land to see the destroyed agricultural land. One of them Ms. Banumathi questioned the Special Thasildar Ms. Kanimozhi as to why the officials are acquiring the land without any permission for which she replied that "I am the Thasildar and you cannot question me". She also further instigated and

ordered the ADSP Mr. Gunasekaran to arrest them. Suddenly the police personnel rounded up everyone from the Joint Action Committee of Farmer Organisations including women, some of whom were carrying their children and made them stand for nearly 3 hours in the agricultural field itself. Then around 2 PM, only women were taken in a police vehicle and were taken to the surrounding villages for nearly two hours and then they were dropped in a forest area near Karudampudhur leaving them to walk for a long distance to reach their villages. Rest of the members including Mr. Parthasarathy were detained in a private hall in Putharasal village until 9 pm and were not given any food. The police personnel also threatened other people who were coming to join the protest and the ADSP Mr. Gunasekaran pushed Ms. Sivakami from her scooter who was coming to the place of protest and threatened that if she joins the protest, he will file false cases against her.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps and:

- Order an immediate, independent, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of harassment of activists
- Ensure that if any false complaints filed against the HRD to harass and threaten them should be quashed
- Ensure that the freedom of peaceful assembly is not restricted and prevent attacks on activists who are peacefully working against forcible land acquisition in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu
- Ensure necessary action against revenue department officials and police officials who are responsible for the harassment of activists in Tiruppur

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne
Honorary National Working Secretary

Copy to:

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