



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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HRDA/UA/North/HR/03/02/2024

February 29, 2024

To
Mr. Indrajeet Kumar,
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 – Attack on vehicles, assault and threat to journalist reporting on farmer protests by police officials of Haryana.

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 in to express our deep shock over the vandalization and attack by the police personnel of Haryana on vehicles of journalists and protesting farmers who were invited for discussion by the Deputy Superintendent of Police. The journalist was also threatened of assault in front of the DSP of Narwana, District Jind, Mr. Kaptan Singh, when they complained of the vandalization and said that he had a video of the attack.

About the Human Rights Defender:

Mr. Udayram (27) s/o Hawa Singh is a video journalist from Hisar district in Haryana, who works with Janchowk web portal since the last several years. He often covers issues of farmers and labourers of Haryana's rural areas.

Source of Information:

Communication with the HRDA Regional Co-ordinator

Communication with the HRD

Communication with other HRDs in the region

The Perpetrators:

- Mr. Kaptan Singh, DSP, Narwana, District Jind
- Haryana Police personnel
- Police personnel of Rapid Action Force

Date of Incident:

February 14, 2024

Place of Incident:

Khanauri border, Data Singhwala village, tehsil Narwana, District Jind, Haryana.

Details of the Incident:

Mr. Udayram has been covering the ongoing farmers protest in Haryana for the web portal Jan Chowk. On February 14, 2024, at about 2:30 PM, the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Jind invited the farmer leaders for discussions. Mr. Udayram also went to cover the story, accompanying the farmers who went to meet the SP.

Mr. Udayram was being driven in a farmer leader's car in a 8 car convoy to Khanauri border which had about 30 farmers. The convoy was escorted by a police jeep and taken to the site 300 meters ahead where the DSP was to meet members of the delegation. While the discussions were on, all of sudden police started vandalizing vehicles.

The car in which Mr. Udayram was travelling was attacked by Para military force members, first they broke the glass then used sticks to damage the bodies of the vehicles. They were also carrying drilling machine with which they damaged the tyres of vehicles. When Mr. Udayram tried to stop the policemen vandalising the cars they threatened him that they will make holes in HRD's body too with the drilling machine.

When this delegation returned, they sat in a nearby house and complained about the attack to the DSP. However he denied that this act could be done by the police officials.

Mr. Udayram told DSP that he has a video clip of police officials damaging the vehicles, then the police officials present there threatened him with a beating in front of DSP.

HRDA is shocked at the brutal assault on vehicles of farmers and journalists by police officials for Haryana and the threats to journalist Mr. Udayram. We believe that the Haryana Police has misused the law and their powers, behaved arbitrarily and violated multiple sections of Indian laws and international laws.

Globally, human rights defenders face major risks as a result of their work both from the state and out of state actors. The protection of journalist and human rights defender like Mr. Udayram, and ending impunity for attacks against them, is a global priority for safeguarding freedom of expression.

States are under an obligation to prevent, protect against, and prosecute attacks against human rights defenders. A free expression and active civil society are essential to ensure the public's right to know, so that governments and institutions can be held accountable.

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is an essential right in a democracy and Article 19 (1) (b) of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to peacefully assemble. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution ensures to all its citizen right to life – a life to live without fear, intimidation, harassment or mental torture.

Free media is an extremely important fourth pillar of the Indian democracy. Our Constitution gives journalists the right to exercise freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(a) of the Indian Constitution, which is crucial to the work of HRDs, including journalists. The right to freedom of expression encompasses three different aspects: 1) the right to hold opinions without interference; 2) the right to access information, and 3) the right to impart information and ideas of all kinds. A free press and active civil society are essential to ensure the public's right to know so that governments and institutions can be held accountable.

The protection of journalists and ending impunity for attacks against them is a priority for safeguarding freedom of expression. States are under an obligation to prevent, protect against, and prosecute attacks against journalists.

It shocks us that police adopted brutality towards citizens and a journalist of India and used threats and intimidation against the journalist with the knowledge of a senior police officer. Public servants vandalising the vehicles of farmers and journalists

without any provocation is a shocking misuse of official power and needs strict action against the policemen involved. It is further concerning that the threat to beat up the journalist was made in front of senior official of police, DSP Kaptan Singh who is a public servant deserves strict action against him.

Appeal:

- Direct the Director General of Police of Haryana to initiate a transparent, independent inquiry in the destruction of vehicle, attack threats by Haryana police on Mr. Udayram and submit the report to NHRC within two weeks.
- Given the prima facie evidence against the DSP Kaptan Singh, direct the Director General of police to suspend DSP Kaptan Singh till the completion of the NHRC inquiry, for threats made to a journalist in his presence and submit the report to NHRC within two weeks.
- Based on the inquiry, direct the Director General of Police of Haryana, to take immediate and strict action against all the policemen who were involved in violating the law and submit a report to the NHRC within two weeks.
- Direct the Director General of Police of Haryana to mandatorily conduct trainings on law and duty of the police for all police personnel and report the update on the same to the NHRC within three months.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard.

Yours Sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary