



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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HRDA/UA/South/TN/02/06/2025

June 3, 2025

To,

Hon'ble Thiru Justice S. Manikumar
Chairperson
State Human Rights Commission,
143, P.S. Kumarasamy Raja Salai, (Greenways Road),
Raja Annamalai Puram,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu- 600028
Email: shrc@tn.gov.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - Tamil Nadu: Reprisal and arrest of HRD Mr. Muni Kumar for Exposing Public Distribution System Corruption in Manavalanagar, Thiruvallor district.

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a National 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. Under the Regional Action Plan of Asia Pacific Forum 2021 NHRC is obligated to promote gender equality, recognition of Women HRDs, monitor & report the violations against HRDs and strengthen national networks of HRDs. This is an urgent appeal from such a national platform working for HRDs within India

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the harassment, threat and illegal arrest of Mr. Muni Kumar, a social activist and an HRD, who exposed the public Distribution System corruption in Manavalanagar, Thiruvallor District.

Source of Information:

- Communication with the HRD
- Communication with HRDA Southern Regional Consultant

Date of Incident:

February 28, 2025

Place of Incident:

On the way to his SMK studio in Jallimedu, Manavalanagar, Thiruvallor District.

The Perpetrators:

- Mr. Karunan, Sub-Inspector, Manavalanagar Police Station
- Salesman, Fair Price Shop, Panchacharam
- Mr. Inbam from EB office, Reading Assessor
- Mr. Venkatesan, Ward councillor, PMK party

About the Human Rights Defender:

Mr. Muni Kumar is a social activist with over 20 years of experience, he has been advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights particularly in cases involving the marginalised and vulnerable. He operates independently and intervenes whenever he witnesses violations or injustices. He also runs a photography studio, which serves as his source of livelihood, and is presently a final-year law student.

Background of the Incident:

On 12th May 2024, at Fair Price Shop (FPS) No. 4 in Jallimedu, 28 sacks of rice intended for Public Distribution System (PDS) beneficiaries were unlawfully diverted to a privately operated hostel for children with mental disabilities. This hostel reportedly charges ₹1,50,000 annually per child. When a senior citizen, who is a legitimate ration card holder, inquired about her entitled rice allotment. The FPS salesman falsely claimed that there was no stock. Subsequently, the sacks were transported to the hostel premises. Upon receiving the information, the HRD Mr. Muni Kumar along with others tracked the transport vehicle and discovered that the rice was transferred in exchange for money.

Muni Kumar documented the incident on video and lodged a complaint with the local police. However, police has not registered the First Information Report (FIR) and attempted to move the rice sacks to another room to conceal the evidence. Following sustained pressure from the HRD and local residents, the storage room was sealed the on 13.05.2024, and the FPS salesman was placed under suspension.

In another instance, at the Fair Price Shop (FPS) in Kabilar, during the Pongal festival of this year, only 400 out of approximately 1,500 ration card holders received the complete list of government-issued items. The remaining 1,100 beneficiaries did not receive the dhoti that was part of the festival package. Despite this, the FPS salesman compelled all cardholders to sign acknowledgements falsely indicating that they had received the full set of items. He claimed that the dhotis were out of stock and would be distributed later when supplies arrived from the government — a promise that was never fulfilled.

In response to this malpractice, on 26th January 2025, Mr. Munikumar from the Human Rights Department (HRD) organized a door-to-door signature campaign to document the grievance. As a result, a local member of the PMK political party expressed strong displeasure and allegedly began planning retaliatory action against Mr. Munikumar.

Details of the Incident:

A First Information Report (FIR) was registered at Manavalanagar police station against the HRD by an employee of the ration shop Ms. Usha Nandhini. The FIR alleged that the HRD was harassing Ms. Usha Nandhini and he has threatened the Mr. Venkatesan (husband of Ms Usha Nandhini) with an iron rod. The Manavalanagar police registered a FIR (No. 42/2025) based on fabricated charges under sections of the BNSS Section 126(2): *Punishment for wrongful restraint*, Section 132: *Assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of duty*, Section 75: *Sexual harassment including verbal misconduct*, Section 78(2): *Stalking and unwanted surveillance*, Section 351(3): *Criminal intimidation involving grievous harm or threats to property*.

On 28 January 2025, at approximately 8:45 a.m., while he was on his way to his studio, Mr. Kumar was intercepted by the Station Police Officer (SI) and a constable from Manavalanagar Police Station, who compelled him to accompany them without issuing a legal summons. When Mr. Kumar requested to report later due to prior commitments, the police forcibly boarded his bike and ordered him to ride to the police station.

Upon arrival, the HRDs phone was seized, and he was informed that he would be placed under arrest. He was then coerced into signing documents without being allowed to read them and was later presented before a magistrate in the evening. The judicial magistrate remanded the HRD to judicial custody, where he remained imprisoned for 25 days until 25 March 2025, when he was granted conditional bail requiring daily sign-in at the police station at 10:30 a.m. Currently the case is pending before Additional Mahila Court, Tiruvallur.

The HRDA strongly believes that Mr. Muni Kumar is being targeted in retaliation for exposing corruption and rights violations in the FPS. The fabricated FIR and subsequent arrest are the acts of reprisal against the activism of the HRD. HRDA condemns the efforts to silence and criminalize his legitimate human rights work.

Mr. Kumar was exercising his constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution, acting solely in the public interest. Despite being granted bail, Mr. Kumar's safety continues to be at risk from those he exposed.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1999 states the following:

Article 12 (2) and (3) "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

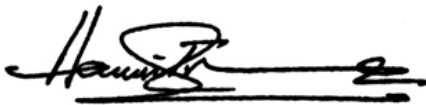
in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Appeal:

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to immediately intervene and to immediately take necessary steps:

- Direct the Inspector General of Police, North Zone, Chennai be directed to initiate a transparent, independent inquiry and submit the report to SHRC within two weeks.
- Direct the Inspector General of Police, North Zone, Chennai to ensure the safety and protection of human rights defenders and activists, allowing him to work without fear of retaliation, harassment or criminalizing them with false cases.
- Based on the report of the Inspector General of Police, North Zone, Chennai recommend to the government to withdraw the fabricated cases filed against Mr. Muni Kumar.
- Direct the Inspector General of Police, North Zone, Chennai to initiate departmental and accountability proceedings against the concerned police officials responsible for the arbitrary arrest, coercion, and abuse of legal authority.
- Order compensation to the HRD concerned for his illegal arrest and remand to be paid by the police officials responsible and complete the process in this case within a time frame that is reasonable

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary

Annexures

1. FIR No 42/2025, Manavalanagar Police Station, Thiruvallur District.