



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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**Ref No: HRDA/Central/CHA/01/08/2020**

**August 05, 2020**

To,  
Mr. Debindra Kundra,  
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](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

Dear Sir,

**Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Chhattisgarh- Threat to life and restriction of movement of human rights activist Ms. Soni Sori.**

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 regarding the threat to life, harassment, and disturbance caused by the police to human rights defender Ms. Soni Sori for her active involvement in human rights related activities.

**Source of Information:**

- Communication with the HRDs in the region
- Media reports
- Communication with the HRDA Regional Coordinator
- Communication with the HRD

**Date of Incident:**

June 28 and 29, 2020

**Place of Incident:**

Dantewada, Chhattisgarh

**The Perpetrators:**

The police personnel of Dantewada Station, Chhattisgarh

**About the Human Rights Defender:**

Ms. Soni Sori aged 45, is an internationally known HRD, Adivasi schoolteacher and is a vocal tribal rights activist. She has been previously brutally tortured by the police. She has also received the Front Line Defenders Award in 2018 and has been given a Y degree security by the Chhattisgarh government in view of past threats to her life.

**Details of the incident:**

On June 29, 2020, around 10:30 am, Ms. Soni Sori while she was traveling realized that she has been followed by few men in the car. Initially she was followed by some people riding on a motorcycle and later a white Tata Sumo Car without number plates. This car had almost hit her car also. She decided to stop her car and talk to them in front of Dantewada Collector - SP's house.

This incident has led her to fear for her life and she feels that, she is being targeted by the state police who followed her and are monitoring her activities to restrict her movement. Ms. Sori has repeatedly mentioned that while she gives all her activities in writing with 24 hours advance notice to her security as directed by the police, the police are misusing that knowledge to stop her from going about her activities as an HRD to help the Adivasis. She says that from many months she's been facing mental harassment in the form of notices from police restricting her movements. After the acid attack on her in 2016, Ms. Soni Sori was given Y-category security, but she feels the authorities are trying to misuse her security to restrict her work as an HRD.

On June 28, 2020, she was stopped from going to Sarkeguda where a huge memorial has been planned to commemorate the tribal movement of Chhattisgarh. This had been planned many weeks in advance and Ms. Sori had given advance notice to the police of attending the event along with taking various other permissions. However, the police told her a day before that she cannot attend the event, after she asked them for a written refusal, she was given their refusal in writing. Upon getting official refusal

she cancelled her plan to attend the ceremony at the last-minute leading to much confusion and change in the planned event.

The very next day, on June 29, 2020 she was again refused permission by the police to go to a rally for the tribal women, in which her attendance was necessary. Ms. Sori was further stopped from going to meet her own father who was shot by the Naxalites in the leg a few years back and is seriously sick. Ms. Sori further said that a few days before June 29, a car had been following her around without any official notification and also troubling her on the road. She says that when she stopped her car to ask them the reason, they ran away without talking to her. When asked about the car the SP told her that it was a patrol car which was there for her safety. But this gives rise to a valid question that why would a police patrol car for her security run away instead of explaining the reason for their presence to her?

Ms. Sori says that such intimidation tactics make her feel that her life may be in danger from assault from such vehicles. She further says that while the excuse given by the police to restrict her movement is that 'the naxal movement is going on', no such restriction is placed on the activities of any other politician or leader, except her.

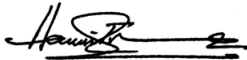
HRDA feels that this clear case of misuse of power. Ms. Sori's work as an HRD, working for the betterment of the tribals, is being restricted and stopped by the police under the guise of her security. Security is meant to protect the person, not to monitor or restrict their movements in any way. This is violation of her Constitutional right to freedom of movement under article 21. The right to freedom of movement includes the right to move freely within a country for those who are lawfully within the country. Ms. Sori has been a victim of police brutality in the past and this constant monitoring and restriction of her movements is affecting her mentally and physically. Furthermore, the constant following by an unmarked 'patrol car' which has stopped her way has led her to fear that her life is in danger by the abovementioned people.

**Appeal:**

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to intervene in this matter of the police misusing law to threaten Ms. Soni Sori and restricting her fundamental rights to privacy, dignity, liberty and free movement. We therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps and:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident involving the officers who are following Ms. Soni Sori on her daily activities and creating panic and threat to her life.
- Direct the DGP of Chhattisgarh to immediately stop restricting Ms. Soni Sori's free movement.
- Direct the DGP of Chhattisgarh to ensure that unmarked cars to follow Ms. Soni Sori without her permission and consent are not sent and to inform her in writing in advance if such a patrol car is sent after her.
- Direct the Chief Secretary of Chhattisgarh to take necessary steps for providing congenial atmosphere to the human rights defenders like Ms. Soni Sori for their smooth working in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary