



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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July 10, 2021

To,  
Mr Bimbadhar Pradhan IAS,  
Secretary General,  
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 – Urgent Appeal for Action – Madhya Pradesh: Forest officials abduct Human Rights Defender Nitin Verghese, along with eight others, associated with the Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan.**

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert!

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 and shock at the abduction of Mr. Nitin Verghese, along with eight others, associated with the Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (JADS).

We would also like to state here that the HRDA sent a WhatsApp message to the HRD Focal Point Mr. C.S Mawri on WhatsApp and called him via phone regarding the urgent intervention needed at 2:15 pm and 2:59 pm on July 10, 2021, and received no response from him on either phone or WhatsApp.

**Source of Information:**

- Information from HRDA West Regional Consultant
- Information from HRD's in the region

**Date of Incident:**

July 10, 2021

**Place of Incident:**

Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh

**Perpetrators:**

Mr. Charan Singh, Deputy Forest Officer

**About the Human Rights Defender:**

Mr. Nitin Verghese is a human right defender associated with the Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (JADS), a tribal and Dalit Rights Collective which has been working for fourteen years in Madhya Pradesh.

**Details of the Incident:**

On July 10, 2021, Mr. Nitin Verghese, along with eight other activists, visited the site where houses and fields of adivasis were being demolished.

Upon reaching the spot, they saw four members of the affected families. Some of them were Budia wife of Lalu (40), her twelve-year-old daughter Pooja and son Ramlal along with Sheka son of Harsing. They were forcibly picked up and taken away by forest officials. When Mr. Verghese and others complained about this to the Deputy Forest Officer (DFO) Mr. Charan Singh, who was at the spot, they were also picked up and their phones snatched.

The actions of the DFO are consistent with abduction, absolute disregard to the laws and rules to be followed in case of arrests. There is no official information confirming the place of detention, condition of detention, calls to relatives or colleagues of the HRDs and any communication with the legal services authorities.

Even if Mr. Verghese and the other HRDs are to be placed under arrest, none of the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court with regards to the arrest have been followed. These guidelines are also a part of 'The Wildlife Crime Investigation Handbook' of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, which are applicable to forest officials.

The Wildlife Crime Investigation Handbook states that the proceedings of the arrest should be recorded on an Arrest cum Personal Search Memo and the reasons for the arrest should be mentioned in the Memo. All pages of the Arrest cum Personal Search Memo should be signed by the accused, the independent witnesses and the investigating officer or the officer making the arrest. Left hand thumb impression of the accused is also to be obtained on the last page of the Arrest cum Personal Search Memo. Copy of the same should be supplied to the accused under acknowledgment.

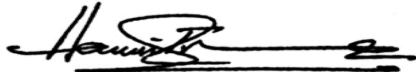
It states that preferably the arrests should be made *"in the presence of a relative or well-wisher of the accused or in the presence of two independent witnesses."* Furthermore, it states that intimation of arrest should be given immediately to a family member/relative/well-wisher of the accused, which has been suggested by the accused and also to the jurisdictional police station. If the intimation is given telephonically, the same should be confirmed in writing at the earliest.

**Appeal:**

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to take cognisance of the above case and urgently:

- Direct the Superintendent of Police and District Collector of Khandwa to immediately report to the Hon'ble Commission on the whereabouts and detention condition of HRD Mr. Nitin Verghese and eight others.
- Direct the Focal Point on HRDs at the Hon'ble Commission to telephonically record the statements of HRD Mr. Nitin Verghese and eight others.
- Direct the Superintendent of Police of Khandwa to ensure an independent medical check-up of HRD Mr. Nitin Verghese and eight others and to immediately submit all relevant details to the Hon'ble Commission.
- Direct the District Collector of Khandwa to initiate an independent inquiry into the actions of the forest department and DFO Mr. Charan Singh.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', written over a horizontal line.

**Henri Tiphagne**  
National Working Secretary