



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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**HRDA/NHRC-SM/WEST/MH/11/01/2024**

January 20, 2024

To

Justice (retd.) Mr. AK Mishra, Chairperson,  
National Human Rights Commission,  
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,  
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,  
New Delhi -110 023  
Email: [chairnhrc@nic.in](mailto:chairnhrc@nic.in)

Respected Justice Mishra,

**Subject: Requesting to initiate Suo Moto Proceedings in the case of suspension of license of a Marathi news channel Lokshahi.**

We are writing to you to bring to your attention that Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has suspended the license of a Marathi news channel 'Lokshahi' for 30 days. The license has been suspended on the basis that the operators of the channel are not the people in whose name the license was issued.

Last year, On July 17, 2023 the channel had received a 72-hour suspension notice from the ministry for reporting on the alleged sex tape of BJP leader Mr. Kirit Somaiya. The channel had appealed against this in the Delhi High Court, the channel had appealed against this in the Delhi High Court, where this order was cancelled.

This incident has been widely reported in the media and a link is shared here for your reference-<https://thewirehindi.com/265672/union-govt-suspends-licence-of-marathi-channel-which-ran-bjp-leader-kirit-somaiya-sex-tape-story/>

We believe this suspension of a news channel by the ministry is an act of reprisal against the freedom of speech and expression. Whereas news channels are known for having outspoken opinions and questions on almost every issue of the country and supporting or opposing any issue in public interest which has made media the fourth pillar of democracy.

The Right to freedom of speech and expression is recognized under several international instruments, including:

- As per the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the right to free speech is recognized under the international human rights law.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 8),
- Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Article 19(2) of the ICCPR stipulates that the right to freedom of expression applies regardless of frontiers and through any media of one's choice

We urgently appeal to you to exercise Section 12 (a) of the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2019, and take *suo moto* cognizance of this matter and initiate an independent inquiry through NHRC's investigation wing.

We hope and expect that the NHRC will intervene in this matter impartially and in a time-bound manner.

Yours Sincerely,

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

(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary