



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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October 29, 2020

To
Mr. C S Mawri,
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- Tamil Nadu: Makkal Pathai –
Brutal assault, detention and destruction of property by Tamil Nadu police
against peaceful protestors sitting on a hunger strike**

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a 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.

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding undue force, brutal assault, misbehavior with women, destruction of property and illegal detention against peaceful hunger strikers who were protesting the abolishment of the NEET exam in Tamil Nadu.

Source of Information:

- Communication with the HRDs in the region
- Communication with our Southern Regional Consultant
- Information from social media and newspapers

Date of Incident:

September 20, 2020

Place of Incident:

Chennai, Tamil Nadu

The Perpetrators:

- Mr. A. Sivakumar, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Thirumangalam, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
- Mr. Jayaraman, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

About the Human Rights Defenders:

Makkal Pathai is a social organization working for various social and environment causes; it renders dedicated free service to the public at large particularly to the farmers, weavers, women and physically challenged. It's aims to work for the betterment and development of the people. The people observing the hunger strike were all volunteers of this organization.

Details of the Incident:

The volunteers of Makkal Pathai had been protesting against the permanent abolition of the NEET qualifying exam in Tamil Nadu through a peaceful hunger strike.

On behalf of the Makkal Pathai, six volunteers were on a hunger strike at Makkal Pathai Head Office (Chinmaya Nagar, Chennai) from September 14, 2020, till the early hours of September 20, 2020. This was a peaceful protest without any hindrance to the public. Around 40 more volunteers participated in the hunger strike.

On September 20, 2020, at about 6.30 am more than 150 police officials led by Anna Nagar ACP Mr. Jayaraman arrived without any prior notice, and forcibly pulled 49 people (including women), beat them up, including those on hunger strike, while they were sleeping outside the office. The police charged at the protestors, beat them in the arms and legs, strangled them and tried to stab them in the throat, including women.

One of the activist Mr. Aravin, who had been fasting for 6 days and was extremely weak was hit repeatedly and forced into a government bus, instead of being taken in an ambulance.

After arresting them, including the staff working in the office, the policemen broke 2 doors of the head office and went on a rampage. They trespassed on the second floor

of the office, brutally assaulted two staff and dragged them downstairs. They tore t-shirts of the women volunteers and they took away 4 mobile phones, one DVR, 3 pen drives, 1 memory card and few office files.

Mr. A. Sivakumar, ACP, Thirumangalam pulled the volunteers forcibly and took them into the police custody. More than 40 other volunteers were forcibly taken to a private marriage hall and detained. They were released in the evening without any FIR being filed or any medical treatment given to them.

Appeal:

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to immediately intervene in this matter and take necessary action against the officials who misused the law, and forcibly violated the rights of the citizens peacefully sitting on a hunger strike. This is a violation against the right to dissent, one of the most important rights guaranteed by our Constitution.

We therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to:

- Direct the DGP of Tamil Nadu to order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of assault on peaceful protestors observing hunger strike, arbitrary arrest, man handling, outraging of modesty of women, destruction of property.
- Recommend strict and immediate legal action against all the perpetrators in this case for harassing and threatening the activists and human rights defenders.
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity of human rights defenders who still face the risk of further reprisals and using all provisions of law to ensure that they are not harassed and intimidated.
- Ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in Tamil Nadu.

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary