



Human Rights Defenders Alert – India

National Coordination Office

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11th June, 2016

To

Shri Srinivasa Kammath

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Joint 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 – Bihar: Brutal murder of a journalist and human rights defender Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan, Siwan bureau chief of Hindi daily ‘Hindustan’ by unidentified gunmen in the Siwan district of Bihar – Regarding

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 deep concern over journalist and human rights defender Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan, bureau chief of Hindi daily ‘Hindustan’ in the Siwan district of Bihar who was shot dead at Phal Mandi near Siwan station by a group of bike-borne criminals. The journalist was targeted allegedly for his extensive critical writings on local politics, crime and especially for exposing the wrongdoings of former Rashtriya Janta Dal’s Member of Parliament from Siwan district of Bihar who is currently lodged in jail and serving life sentence for involvement in heinous crimes such as abduction and murder in the state.

Source of Information on the Incident:

Media reports

Status of the Human Rights Defender:

Journalist and human rights defender Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan aged 45 years was a postgraduate who also held a law degree. He lived at Mahadev Mission Compound in Siwan city. He started his journalistic career with national Hindi daily 'Hindustan' nearly 16 years ago as a stringer from Siwan. He later became a staff member. He took over as the newspaper's Siwan bureau chief about seven years ago. He was heading a bureau of six people, where the daily has a full-fledged edition. He had covered Siwan politics and crime extensively and had penned several reports on court proceedings against former Siwan MP Mr. Mohammad Shahabuddin. Mr. Ranjan had written against local politicians on several occasions, evoking death threats from many quarters. He was considered to be a brave journalist taking on politicians like Shahabuddin and exposing his misdeeds. Mr. Ranjan had received several threats to life from criminals in the recent past. According to local journalists, "almost a decade back, Mr. Ranjan had been threatened at gunpoint in Siwan city".

The Perpetrators:

Unidentified assailants

Date of Incident:

May 13, 2016

Place of Incident:

In front of fruit market in Siwan city, Bihar

Incident detail:

According to sources on May 13, 2016 journalist Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan was shot dead at Phal Mandi (fruit market) near Siwan station, barely half a kilo meters away from Town police station. The incident took place around 8 pm. Mr. Ranjan was intercepted by two bike-borne assailants, one of whom fired from extremely close range. Two shots were fired at him. One bullet hit his head while the other hit his chest. He was pronounced dead when his body was brought to the local hospital.

According to his colleagues Mr. Ranjan had left his Siwan office in the evening after receiving a call. It was unusual for him to leave the office at peak hour. According to police, five motorcycle-borne criminals were waiting for Mr. Ranjan, who was walking

down the road to his home and shot him twice. Investigators recovered five empty cartridges from the spot which showed that 9 mm pistol was used in the murder.

Family members of journalist has alleged that the Siwan strongman Mr. Shahabuddin was behind his killing. The journalist is said to have warned his wife that his life was at risk, after several articles he had written reportedly angered the gangster. Mr. Rajanis survived by his wife, who is a school teacher and a son and a daughter, both students.

Appeal:

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the Superintendent of Police, the District Collector and District Magistrate of Siwan District:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events of the brutal killing of journalist and human rights defender Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan;
- Take immediate action on the perpetrators for the brutal murder of journalist and human rights defender Mr. Rajdeo Ranjan by arresting all of them and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs;
- Along with local district officials guarantee in all circumstances due compensation to the family of the deceased HRD and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Put an end to all acts of attack, harassment and killing of all writers, journalists and human rights defenders in the state of Bihar to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities as writers, journalists and defenders of human rights without any hindrances;
- Ensure fundamental rights of free speech and association guaranteed by Article 19 and right to life and personal liberty granted by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution;

- Takes steps to conform to the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially:
 - Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels;
 - Article 12.2, which provides that "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”;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the SHRC in Bihar to also take necessary steps to establish a state focal point for HRDs in order to ensure that HRDs have a new protection mechanism in their own state;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the NHRC to convene a meeting of all state human rights institutions in the state [the SHRC, the SCW, the SCPCR, the SCM, the SIC, State Commissioner for PWDs, etc.] to ensure that a coordinated strategy is developed within the State of Bihar for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders;
- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the Bihar SHRC, State Government of Bihar in collaboration with the NHRC Focal Point on HRDs to provide sensitization training to law enforcement and security forces on the role and activities of human rights defenders as a matter of priority, with technical advice and assistance from relevant United Nations entities, NGOs and other partners;

- Recommend urgently and speedily during the pendency of this complaint, the Government of Bihar to publicly acknowledge the importance and legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, i.e. anyone who, “individually and in association with others, ... promote[s] and ... strive[s] for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” (Art.1 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders);
- More generally, ensures 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 the state of Bihar.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

(Henri Tiphagne)

Honorary National Working Secretary