

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE JOURNALIST TORTURED IN CUSTODY

A journalist from the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh has been arrested and charged for allegedly sharing a message on Whatsapp criticising the state police. If convicted he could face up to three years of imprisonment.

Journalist **Prabhat Singh** was arrested on 21 March and charged under Sections 67 and 67A of the Information Technology (IT) Act for “publishing and transmitting obscene material in electronic form” after he shared a Whatsapp message criticising the state police. He has also been charged with “extortion and obstructing the police from duty”. The police claim that Prabhat Singh resisted arrest, but he denies this. He has been remanded in judicial custody until 31 March by local court.

According to Prabhat Singh’s lawyer, Xitiz Dubey, “Prabhat was picked up by the police on Monday 21 March and remained in their custody without a first information report (FIR) for one day. Finally, when he appeared in court the next day, Prabhat told the judge that he had been subjected to torture while in custody. His chest and hand had several marks as a result of the torture.”

Torture violates Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a treaty binding on India. This provision is reflected in Article 21 of Indian Constitution. It sets out the non-derogable right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Prabhat Singh, known for his reports denouncing police inaction and excesses, has been under police surveillance for a long time.

Journalists and human rights defenders in Chhattisgarh have been targeted by both security forces and armed Maoist groups during the course of their work.

Please write immediately in Hindi, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Chhattisgarh government to release Prabhat Singh immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling for an independent investigation into allegations of torture of Prabhat Singh while in custody.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 MAY 2016 TO:

Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

Raman Singh

Chief Minister’s Secretariat,

DKS Bhavan, Mantralaya,

Raipur - 492001

Chhattisgarh

India

Fax: +91 771 2221306, +91 771

2331000

Email: mail@cmo.cg.gov.in

Salutation: Dear Sir

Inspector General of Police, Bastar

SRP Kalluri

Inspector General Office

Bastar range

Chhattisgarh – 494001

India

Salutation: Dear Sir

And copies to:

Chairman

K.G. Balakrishnan

National Human Rights Commission

Manav Adhikar Bhawan

Block-C, GPO Complex, INA

New Delhi, India

Fax: +91 11 24651329

Email: sgnhrc@nic.in

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

RELEASE JOURNALIST TORTURED IN CUSTODY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Journalists and human rights defenders in Bastar have been targeted by both security forces and armed Maoist groups during the course of their work.

Local journalists Santosh Yadav and Somaru Nag have been in judicial custody since July and September 2015, respectively. Santosh Yadav, who has faced repeated police harassment in the past, is charged with “rioting, criminal conspiracy, and attempted murder”, as well as “associating with a terrorist organization” and “supporting and aiding terrorist groups” under India’s laws including the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, none of which complies with international human rights law and standards.

Following these arrests, journalists in Chhattisgarh have been protesting against what they say is growing police harassment and a deteriorating work environment, especially in Bastar district. In December 2015, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh met protesting journalists and reportedly acknowledged the challenges they faced. He also proposed to set up a committee to look into issues faced by journalists.

In July 2015, a senior police official allegedly called for the ‘social exclusion’ of Soni Sori and Lingaram Kodopi, both considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience, after they accused the police of carrying out an extrajudicial execution.

In December 2013, journalist Sai Reddy was killed allegedly by Maoist armed groups who suspected him of working with the police. Another journalist, Nemi Chand Jain, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Sukma district in February 2013. In 2011, two other journalists, Umesh Rajput and Sushil Pathak, were also killed in Chhattisgarh.

Name: Prabhat Singh

Gender m/f: m

UA: 69/16 Index: ASA 20/3714/2016 Issue Date: 24 March 2016