

Date 22.3.2016  
New Delhi

To  
Mr Pranab Mukherjee,  
The President of India,  
New Delhi

SUBJECT: URGENT REQUEST OF APPOINTMENT REGARDING POLICE ATROCITIES ON  
ADIVASIS OF BASTAR DIVISION OF THE STATE OF CHATTISGARH

Honourable Sir,

I, Lingaram Kodopi, age 29 years, request your urgent intervention to stop the bodily and legal violence being meted on the adivasis of the Bastar division of Chattisgarh. Since 2009 I have been picked up, mentally and physically tortured as a alleged 'naxal' in 2 false cases. I have since been acquitted in one, and in the pending case, it has been argued that there is no evidence against me and hence it should be discharged.

As human rights defenders, me and my aunt, adivasi social worker and member Aam Aadmi Party, Ms Soni Sori have consistently spoken out about the violation of the fundamental rights of the adivasis of Bastar, the oppressions they are facing, the false encounter deaths and rapes. Despite this, both Ms Sori and her father Mundra Ram Sori have also been called 'naxals' and targeted by the police of Chhattisgarh since 2010.

As you may know on 20 February 2016, when Ms Sori was en route from Jagdalpur to Geedam, she was attacked with some black chemical substance. To enquire into this matter, the Inspector General of Police, Shiv Ram Prasad Kalluri constituted an Special Investigating Team (SIT) comprising 3 IPS officials of the anti-naxal operations: ASP Santosh Singh of Sukhma District, ASP Kalyan Ellesella of the Bijapur District, and CSP Deepmala Kashyap of Jagdalpur Division. I have already testified twice before this team, after which two family members were illegally pick up, detained and tortured for upto 36 hours. When this happened, Ms Sori's father, Mundra Ram Sori and other

family members went to IG Kalluri to seek answers. Instead of responding to their queries, Mr Kalluri called Ms Sori a prostitute, he said she was a 'naked' virtueless woman, and brazenly claimed that many police officials had raped her, and that they had then paraded her naked. At the same time, Mr Kalluri stated his intention to organize an 'encounter' in which I would be killed as a 'naxal'. Or that I would be framed as the guilty in the recent attack on Ms Sori. Not surprisingly, the SIT enquiring into the attack is only questioning (and threatening) Ms Sori's family, including me.

This is not the first time that my family has been targeted this way. On 31 August 2009, I was illegally picked up in Dantewada by SP Amresh Mishra and was physically and mentally tortured at the police station, Dantewada for about a month during which I was also pressurized to become an Special Police Officer (SPO). It was only when my family filed a habeas Corpus (W.P Habeas Corpus No. 5469/ 2009) that I was produced in the High Court in Bilaspur, and released on 3 October 2009. Then on 9/9/2011 Ms Sori and I were accused of being a conduit of money from the company Essar to the naxals, and jailed. In this regard, we both received interim bail from the Supreme Court in December 2013, and final bail on 7 February 2014.

Since then, Ms Sori and I have been working in our area for justice, through Constitutional methods. But the way in which the anti- Naxals operations are being conducted in Bastar Division by the state government is creating an absolute atmosphere of terror for the adivasis of the region. It is in this context that we have been bringing to light many cases of atrocities against the poor, adivasi village population. In fact, on 20.8.2015, Ms Sori have made a comprehensive submission of these police atrocities to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) – Case No. 592/33/3/2015 in which we have pleaded for an enquiry and protection.

I want to state clearly here that the harassment that Ms Sori and I are facing is not out of the ordinary. Everyday the adivasis of Chhattisgarh are facing the harassment, torture and death by the state in the name of countering the Naxals in the area. An independent women's team that investigated into these atrocities have recorded 3 cases of gang rapes: one in October 2015, and two in January 2016 in Sukhma and Bijapur villages by the security forces who also destroyed their grain stocks. A complaint made to the NHRC on this basis is attached as Enclosure 1. In fact, the

atmosphere is such that we cannot even file an FIR with regard to such atrocities even with the Designated AJAK Thana for atrocities on SC/ST. (See Enclosure 3).

In all of Bastar, a reign of terror continues by the state through its police and other security forces. The adivasis of the region, especially the women of our communities are extremely vulnerable to such violence and harassment.

It is in order to stop this immediately, we urgently seek your intervention. Under Schedule 5 of the Constitution of India, you are the chosen representative to secure the rights of the adivasis of this country. Hence we urge you to urgently grant us a meeting as a first step to restoring peace and democracy in Chhattisgarh.

Regards,

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Enclosures:

1. Complaint to the NHRC dated 16.2.2016 by Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression
2. Timeline of recent attacks on other human rights defenders working in Bastar
3. Copy of FIR that Ms Sori tried to file at Designated AJAK Thana for atrocities on SC/ST