

## *Human Rights Defenders Alert - India*

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**Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,**

Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya

c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Palais Wilson

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Dear Ma'am,

**Sub:** *HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - India/Jharkhand-Ranchi - Case of illegal police action against a Human Rights Defender Ms. Dayamani Barla of Ranchi - Reg*

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are now writing to express our grave concern regarding the illegal police action against human rights defender cum indigenous tribal journalist and activist Mrs. Dayamani Barla by Chutiya police and the Senior Superintendent of Police, Ranchi.

**Name of the perpetrators:** Mr. Anil Kumar and police officials from chutiya police station.

**Place of incident:** A tea shop run by Mrs. Barla named "Jharkhand Hotel" in Chutiya

**Date and time of incident:** On the evening of 14th January 2012

**About the Activist:**

**Dayamani Barla** is an indigenous tribal journalist and activist from the Indian state of Jharkhand. She came from very humble backgrounds and worked as a maid to pay her way through the University. She became notable for her activism in opposing Arcelor Mittal's steel plant that tribal activists say would displace forty (40) villages. She has won a number of prestigious awards for journalism.

**Incident:**

According to the information received from Mr. Gladson Dungdung, the General Secretary of JHRM, Ranchi, Mrs. Dayamani Barla, W/O. Mr. Nelson Barla, resident of Club Road, Ranchi comes under Chutiya police station in Ranchi the capital city of Jharkhand, who has been leading a people's movement against the illegal and forcefully land acquisition by the World steel giant Arcelor Mittal Company in Khunti and Gumla district of Jharkhand, has been illegally targeted by the Chutiya police and the Senior Superintendent of Police, Ranchi despite having a clean image in the state.

On 14 January, 2012, in the evening, the Chutiya police in the leadership of officer-in-charge Mr. Anil Kumar rushed to "Jharkhand Hotel" a Tea Shop run by Mrs. Barla and started investigation in her absence. When the Police didn't find Mrs. Barla in the Hotel, they forced her husband Mr. Nelson Barla to reveal the fact that who are the people, who come to meet Dayamani Barla in day to day basis. The Chutiya police also told Mr. Nelson Barla that his wife Mrs. Dayamani Barla has link with the Naxalites and other unsocial elements. The Naxalites come to her hotel in day to day basis and also attend the meetings with Mrs. Barla. According to Mr. Anil Kumar, the police have been investigating against Mrs. Dayamani Barla on the basis of a complaint sent to the Chutiya police by the SSP of Ranchi.

However, when the co-workers of Mrs. Dayamani Barla went to the office of Mr. Saket Kumar, (the Senior Superintendent of Police) told them that Mrs. Dayamani Barla had attended a meeting in Ranchi, (which was organized for the release of a cultural activist Mr. Jitan Marandi, where Mr. Barbara Rao

was the guest, which shows that she has link with the Naxalites. Therefore, the police are taking action against her.

Mrs. Dayamani Barlas has a long history of fighting for the protection of civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, therefore, the Ranchi police under the leadership of Mr. Saket Kumar, the SSP of Ranchi have been victimizing her on the basis of baseless information with the clear intention of defaming, humiliating and breaking down her spirit to fight for the cause of People's rights.

**Background Information:**

Mrs. Dayamani was born in a village in Gumla district of Jharkhand to a landless family, Dayamani's father was forced to give up his house to usurious moneylenders when she was still young. Her mother had to find work as a domestic in Ranchi and Dayamani had to work to supplement the family income from the age of nine. But she also continued to study, and worked to support her family by giving tuitions and typing, at the rate of Rs.1 per hour. Many children under such circumstances would have given up education. But Dayamani persisted and cleared not just high school but even university. She did her Masters in Commerce from Ranchi University and went on to be an award-winning journalist and author. She was clear from the start that she wanted to use her pen to give a voice to those who are otherwise not heard.

She has lead the fight against Arcelor-Mittal's plans to set up a giant steel plant in Jharkhand. She opposed the industry that will create jobs in her State since she believed that the tribals have to pay price when they are displaced from their lands and cannot be compensated through a few jobs or money. She used to state that "Natural resources to us are not merely means of livelihood but our identity, dignity, autonomy and culture have been built on them for generations," She believes that the location of such a huge plant will adversely affect the forests and water sources in the region.

Dayamani honed her skills for such a struggle when she joined the tribal groups opposing the Koel Karo dam in the 1990s. The dam would have

submerged 66,000 acres and displaced 135,000 tribal families from their lands. Because of their determined struggle, the plans to build the dam were finally shelved.

As a journalist, she has used her pen to write about not just the injustices meted out to tribals resisting efforts to displace them, but also to expose the corruption in several government-run schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Through her writing, primarily in the newspaper Prabhat Khabar, Dayamani has set a standard for the kind of relevant journalism that is rare at a time when celebrity and sensation dominate all media.

Harassment of activists on flimsy pretexts and on grounds that they exercised their constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights is a dangerous trend and will be resisted robustly by human rights activists everywhere.

### **Appeal**

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to:

1. Ensure an immediate intervention of the police administration and that necessary legal action is taken and all the perpetrators are brought to book;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the incident with a view to bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security and integrity to the victims' in order to carry out their legitimate human rights work peacefully;
4. Protection and security be provided to the couple Ms. Dayamani Barlas and her husband Mr. Nelson Barla.
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all right to information activists in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

*Henri Tiphagne*

Honorable National Working Secretary

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