



सूचना के जन अधिकार का राष्ट्रीय अभियान

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR PEOPLES' RIGHT TO INFORMATION

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Mr Naveen Patnaik
Chief Minister
Government of Odisha

October 24, 2021

Dear Mr. Patnaik,

Subject- Concern regarding victimization of social activists associated with the Odisha Sookhna Adhikar Abhiyan (OSAA)

We are writing to express our concern about the apparent victimization of social activists associated with the Odisha Sookhna Adhikar Abhiyan (OSAA)- Pradip Pradhan, Srikant Pakal and Jitendra Sahu. As part of the Abhiyan, they have been spearheading various campaigns to expose corruption and wrongdoing through the use of the RTI Act.

Recently, FIRs were filed against these activists of OSAA on the basis of complaints regarding alleged offences under the Indian Penal Code and the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. An independent fact-finding team comprising of human rights activists and dalit rights activists led by Sri Rabi Das, a senior journalist of Odisha visited the villages of the complainants and met with them. As per the report by the team, there appear to be serious doubts about the veracity of the complaints on the basis of which the police registered the FIR. One of the complainants, living in Pubagad village told the fact finding team that she had no information about any FIR or complaint and had never heard of the OSAA or the activists associated with the campaign. She further stated that the signature on the police records was not hers as she did not know how to sign and only used her thumb impression.

From the fact finding report it appears that the cases could be fabricated and aimed at targeting activists involved in exposing corruption and wrongdoing.

We also note with concern that there have been several cases of targeting of whistleblowers and activists in Odisha including through physical attacks. We had written to you in the past about the attacks and alleged murders of Abhimanyu Panda and Ranjan Das, both of whom had used the RTI Act to expose corruption in their local areas.

We are enclosing a copy of the summary version of the report by the fact finding team in English regarding the cases filed against Pradip Pradhan (who is also a Co-Convenor of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information) and other activists of OSAA. We call upon the government to ensure an unbiased and fair inquiry into the matter at the earliest.

Thank you,
Best wishes and regards,
Singed/-

Anjali Bhardwaj, Nikhil Dey, Venkatesh Nayak, Dr. Sheikh, Pankti Jog, Rakesh Dubuddu, Shailesh Gandhi, Bhaskar Prabhu, Rolly Shivhare, Vipul Mudgal, Kathyayini Chamaraj, Amrita Johri, Kavita Srivastava and Ajay Jangid

(On behalf of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information)