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National Human Rights Commission

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MESSAGE

Today, on 9th December, the day when the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted in the year, 1998 by the UN General Assembly, the NHRC, India reiterates its resolve to strengthen the Human Rights Defenders as an integral part in its strategy to strengthen the human rights culture in India and across the globe.

HRDs have always been instrumental in fighting for the cause of human rights. However, their efforts were provided impetus through the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which was adopted by UN General Assembly on 9th December, 1998. NHRC, India too, right since inception in 1993, has played a very important role in promoting and protecting the rights of HRDs. Justice Ranganath Mishra, the first Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission always gave due opportunity and voice to the people who fought for promotion and protection of human rights. His work has not only been carried forward by the Commission but there has been substantial expansion in its activities for promotion and protection of rights of HRDs.

The creation of Focal Point for HRDs, inclusion of chapter on HRDs in the Annual Report, publication of cases of HRDs on the NHRC website, are just few of the initiatives made by the Commission. NHRC gives special attention to complaints of alleged harassment of HRDs. These complaints are registered as separate category for proper monitoring and follow up. The Commission takes all possible steps, as per law and based on merits, to provide an effective and substantive relief to the HRDs while dealing with complaints pertaining to them.

The Commission interacts with the Human Rights Defenders at all levels to understand their problems and bottlenecks. The Commission meets the NGOs/HRDs through the Focal Point for HRDs by participating in various programmes/events across the country. Further during the Open Hearings / Camp Sitzings, the Commission organizes special interaction session with the HRDs and representatives of NGOs. The feedback received during these interactions are given due consideration by the Commission and all possible steps are taken to ameliorate the problems being faced by them. To cite an example, keeping in view the

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threats and harassment of the HRDs, the Commission wrote a letter dated 11.12.2013 to Chief Secretaries of all the States about the problems being faced by the Human Rights Defenders / NGOs and requested the State Governments to treat them as partners in bringing out a positive change in human rights environment in the State.

The Commission also came out with the publication titled **“NHRC and Human Rights Defenders : The Growing Synergy”** which was released by the Vice President of India on 10th December, 2013 i.e. the Human Rights Day. The book details the role being played by the National Human Rights Commission in promoting and protecting the rights of HRDs.

The Commission further feels elated that one of the members of its Core Group of NGOs and a renowned Human Rights Defender in the area of child rights, Shri Kailash Satyarthi, has been bestowed upon with the Noble Peace Prize for the year 2014. The Commission will continue to support the endeavours of HRDs who work with similar commitment and zeal towards humanity.

The Commission reiterates that the noble movement which started with the 1998 Declaration on HRDs has now gained momentum. The work of HRDs in partnership with the other state and non state actors will have a far reaching impact in improving and strengthening the human rights situation throughout the country and also globally.

(Justice K.G. Balakrishnan)