

Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (masum)

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03.09.2020 To The Chairman National Human Rights Commission ManavAdhikarBhawan Block-C, GPO Complex, INA New Delhi-110023

Banglar

Respected Sir,

I want to attract your attention towards the illegitimate restrictions imposed on the villagers of Nipujitari village under Sitalkuchi block and police station of Coochbehar district in West Bengal by the Border Security Force personnel attached with Goutam Border Out Post, 'E' Company under 47 Battalion BSF. The villagers are facing perpetual restriction pertainingto the gate timings, which restricts them for cultivating their lands resulting in heavy financial losses. Since 22.03.20 gate number 2 and 3 were completely closed for the villagers to pass into their agricultural fields due to which, all the crops eg. Jute, corn etc. cultivated by them were ruined. The BSF authorities are supposed to station at the zero point and even the barbed fencing should have been constructed at the zero point within 150 yards. Butsuch regulations are not followed as a result of which, the villagers having agricultural lands across the fencing are facing severe illegal restrictions from the BSF. Apart from that the villagers do not have basic amenities in the village. These basic requirements are not met violating Article 21 of the Indian Constitution stating the fundamental right to life and liberty. The Border Area Development Programme (BADP) funds are allocated for the development of the bordering areas but the living conditions of the bordering people are becoming worse with time.

Our fact-finding reveals that the farmers are facing severe restrictions in times of this worldwide pandemic. The farmers were restricted to cultivate their lands, hence incurring grave losses which is more than rupees one lakh. During the 'Aman' crop cultivation, the farmers again requested the BSF to open the gates stating that agriculture is their only occupation and they doesn't have any other livelihood option if agriculture is stopped. The BSF authorities responded to their plea and opened the fencing gates for cultivation but imposed severe restriction on the same. The gates were opened only for three hours a day, from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. Usage of cattle and till or other agricultural equipment were banned. Anyone who was late in coming back from the field was harshly criticized using cuss words and filthy slangs in Hindi by the BSF. This is also revealed from the statement of villagers that, the villagers have to take one permit from the Block development Officer of Sitalkuchi to cultivate their own land. This illegal practice is continuing for ages. Under the circumstances the farmers incurred loss instead of income from their fields. However, they still continued agriculture. Gradually it was seen that the BSF are reducing the gate timings from three hours to two hours. The cattle from Bangladesh side often destroys the crops in their fields but the farmers have nothing to do in order to prevent that from happening as the fencing gates are closed then.

About 50 farmers from Nipujitari village lodged a written complaint to the District Magistrate of Coochbehar district on 23.08.20 via registered postregarding the continuous restrictions imposed on their livelihood and agriculture. It is to be mentioned here that on 15<sup>th</sup>April, 2020 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India issued one order being Memorandum number 40- 3/2020-DM-I(A) where it was clearly stated under point number 6 that all agricultural and horticultural activities to remain fully functional during this critical time of Covid 19 outbreak. But Border Security Force being an authority under the Home Department of the Government of India violated the order of its own department.

Details of the farmers of Nipujitari village under Mahismuri – 1 gram panchayat, who have been restricted by the BSF authority:

- Mr. Khitish Chandra Roy, aged about 68 years; Dagh no. 2706, Khatiyan No. -280
- Mr. Subhash Barman, aged about 36 years; Dagh no. 3368, Khatiyan No 749
- Mr. Harish Chandra Roy, aged about 67 years; Dagh no. 1282/1450; Khatiyan no. 546.
- Mr. Badal Barman, aged about 32 years; Dagh no. –Khatiyan no. 6161.
- Mr. Uttam Roy, aged about 42 years; Dagh no. 1282/1450; Khatiyan no. 546.

This arbitrary restriction imposed by the Border Security Force personnel of Goutam Border Outpost upon the villagers of Nipujitary is not only challenging their life and livelihood but also violating the Article 21 and Article 19 of the Constitution of India which reads as "No person shall be deprived of his life and liberty except according to procedure established by law" and "All citizens shall have the rights to move freely throughout the territory of India" respectively and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the goal number 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which Government of India has taken pledge to adhere with.

I request your urgent intervention in this case by fulfilling these demands of the villagers:

- The Border Security Force should be posted at the zero point instead of in the middle of the village.
- Immediately opening of the fencing gate number 2 and 3 for at least 12 hours by the BSF attached with Goutam Border Out Post.
- BSF should not restrict the life and livelihood of the villagers particularly of the farmers.
- BSF should follow the order of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Memorandum number 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) dated 15.04.2020.
- The villagers should be provided with agricultural support.
- The farmers should be compensated as their crops are destroyed and for financial loss for illegal restriction of the BSF attached with Goutam BOP.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely

DipyamanAdhikary

Assistant Secretary BanglarManabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM)

## **Attached Documents**

Written deputation to District Magistrate by the affected villagers

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Permit from Block Development Officer of Sitalkuchi Block



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P.S. Sitalkuchi Dist. Cooch Behar is a permanent risident of the above address.

Signature of the applicant

Block Dew lopment Officer Sitzfanhi

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This is to Certify that Sri/Smt. KSHITISH CHANDRAFD Son of wife of T. RATANI MONTON Village MAHISH MURIPO, MAHIS Holding, the Land/Mouza MAHAICHMUR Khatian No. 280 Dag No. . in the existing electoral roll part No. 5/ 7 U. SI. No. 2110 Under P.S. Sitalkuchi in the district Coochbehar on the basis of voter identity card ( Applicants / Gurdians ). Land documents issued by the B.L. & L.R.O. Residential certificate by the concerned G.P. Prodhans & School leaving certificate in case of minor.

> R DEVELOPMENT OFFICER STALKUCHI

Adhar Card of the villagers

