

14 April 2017

### **India: Brutal murder of human rights defender Suhas Halkandar**

On 9 April 2017, human rights defender, Suhas Halkandar, was brutally murdered by a dozen men in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, in the State of Maharashtra. He was returning home when the men verbally assaulted him before attacking him with concrete blocks. Suhas Halkandar sustained many injuries and died. Eleven people have been arrested, including a local municipal official.

[Suhas Halkandar](#) is a human rights defender and Right to Information activist. He exposed several deficiencies in the local administration and campaigned against the inefficiency of local officials in the Kharalwadi area of Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, in the State of Maharashtra. These deficiencies gave rise to human rights concerns due to the lack of basic amenities and discriminatory practices, for example, the lack of public toilets for women.

On 9 April 2017, at approximately 10.00pm, Suhas Halkandar was returning home on his motorbike when he was stopped by two men who started to harass him over a billboard that he had erected, highlighting the lack of basic civic amenities in the Kharalwadi area of Pimpri-Chinchwad. The altercation escalated and several men joined the dispute. A group of ten to twelve people started throwing concrete blocks at Suhas Haldankar, who was fatally injured and collapsed on the ground. The activist was then rushed to a local hospital but was declared dead on arrival. One of the eye-witnesses lodged a complaint with the police in Pune and eleven people, including former Congress official, Sadguru Mahadev Kadam, have been arrested in connection with the case. Suhas Haldankar had erected banners ahead of the civic elections in Maharashtra in February 2017, which allegedly angered the aforementioned Congress official arrested in connection with the case.

Human rights defenders in India face a diverse range of attacks and harassment for their work defending the rights of others and exposing human rights abuses, including killings, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, smear campaigns, and judicial harassment. Crimes against human rights defenders usually go unpunished.

Front Line Defenders condemns the killing of Suhas Halkandar, which it believes was solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights in India.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:**

1. Condemn the killing of human rights defender **Suhas Halkandar**;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of human rights defender, Suhas Halkandar, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defenders, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of human rights defenders working in India;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their



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legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.