

7 June 2017

India: Akhand receives death threat after filing a complaint against an army officer

On 2 June 2017, human rights defender and journalist **Akhand** received a threatening call from a man who accused him of being an agent of Pakistan and of terrorism and said he would be killed “soon” for having filed a complaint against an Indian Army officer to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

[Akhand](#) is a human rights defender and an independent grassroots journalist working in Odisha state, in Eastern India. Since 2011, he has been associated with the **Civil Society Forum on Human Rights (CSFHR)**, a human rights defenders platform in Odisha. Akhand has filed a number of complaints before various human rights institutions in India regarding violations of human rights in the state of Odisha. He is involved in campaigns which denounce gross human rights violations by state actors and has been subjected to previous threats and attacks for his human rights work.

On 2 June 2017, at approximately 1.45pm, Akhand received a call on his personal phone from a man identifying himself as Mohit from Mumbai. Talking in Hindi, he told Akhand “*How dare you file a case before the National Human Rights Commission against the army officer who tied a man in front of his jeep in Kashmir, you are the agent of Pakistan, you are the agent of terrorists and you are the agent of Kashmiri separatists. As you filed a case against the Indian Army, you have no right to live in India. You will be killed soon by us. We have people across the country. I read that you are based at Bhubaneswar, you will be killed there soon. We will not let you sleep. Very soon you will be tied in front of the Army vehicle.*” The caller then went on insulting Akhand as well as his family members, who he referred to individually by name, and repeatedly threatened to kill him. On 3 June 2017, the human rights defender reported the incident to the Deputy Commissioner of Police and registered a First Information Report with the Chandrasekarpur Police Station.

On 5 May 2017, Akhand filed a complaint before the National Human Rights Commission regarding the tying of a civilian by Indian army personnel in front of an army jeep on 9 April 2017, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The man was attached to the jeep in order to discourage protesters from attacking or throwing objects at the jeep. A video of the event was shared on social media and created a national controversy. On 1 June 2017, the National Human Rights Commission acknowledged the petition filed by Akhand and issued a notice to the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern at the threats against human rights defender, Akhand, which it believes are solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work for human rights in India.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against **Akhand**, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Akhand as well as of the members of his family;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.