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## **India: Human rights defender Pranab Roy assaulted by the Border Security Force in West Bengal**

On 9 April 2023, human rights defender **Pranab Roy** was physically assaulted by officers of the Border Security Force (BSF) while returning from his agricultural land in North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal. The officers severely beat the defender, threatened to file false criminal cases against him and repeatedly said that he was being targeted due to his human rights work. The following day, 10 April 2023, Pranab Roy filed a complaint against the BSF with the Sutia Police out post. Police recorded his complaint but refused to give him a copy of the First Information Report (FIR) as required by law. To date no action has been taken against those responsible and named in the FIR.

[Pranab Roy](#) is a human rights defender, activist and farmer in the Barnaberia village of North 24 Parganas District in West Bengal. He is the organiser of *Amra Simantabasi* (“We, the border residents”) a community organisation that advocates for socio-political issues faced by people residing close to the India-Bangladesh border. The human rights defender Pranab Roy has been vocal for the rights of the local community and against the arbitrary restrictions imposed on them by the BSF. In 2023, the human rights defender organised a campaign to protest against the illegal land grabbing of approximately 600 acres of land in North 24 Parganas by the BSF.

On 9 April 2023 around 5 PM, Pranab Roy and his father were stopped by BSF officers from the 105 Battalion posted at the Barnaberia Border outpost and two soldiers while returning from their agricultural land. The officers asked Pranab Roy a few questions and without warning started beating and slapping him. They kicked him and hit him with wooden rods and dragged him towards the river. The officers also threatened Pranab Roy with implicating him under false charges of smuggling items across the Bangladesh border or of being an undercover agent for Bangladesh. The BSF officer said that he was punishing Pranab Roy for his human rights work in the village against the interests of the BSF. The BSF is a paramilitary force posted at the India-Bangladesh border and is under the direct control of India’s Ministry of Home Affairs. They have been accused of widespread human rights violations against the local community and reprisals against human rights defenders.

After severely assaulting Pranab Roy, the BSF officer forced him to sign a false confession stating that he was detained by the BSF for returning home late at night and was not tortured in any form. The human rights defender received treatment for his injuries at the local hospital and the doctor who examined him noted “traumatic bruises” on his body.

The following day, on 10 April 2023, Pranab Roy submitted a written complaint at the Sutia Police outpost against the BSF personnel. While the police accepted the written complaint, they did not confirm whether a formal complaint has been lodged in the form of a FIR and did not give the defender a copy of the FIR as required by the Criminal Procedure Code.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the violence inflicted on human rights defender Pranab Roy by BSF personnel as it believes it to be a reprisal against his legitimate and peaceful human rights work. It is also concerned that the police refused to provide a copy of the FIR, in violation of the provisions of India’s legal obligations. Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in India to ensure the safety and security of Pranab Roy and bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with international human rights standards.

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

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1. Immediately ensure the safety and security of the human rights defenders Pranab Roy and his relatives from further physical abuse or legal persecution by the BSF;
2. Immediately register a formal complaint against the accused BSF officers and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice in accordance with India's international human rights obligations;
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—including police and judicial harassment.