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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Community Human Rights and Advocacy Centre (CHRAC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The right to freedom of opinion and expression

My organization would like to draw the attention of the council that “since 2014, there has not been a single conviction in attacks on journalists in India who have been targeted for their investigative work”. More than 200 serious attacks on journalists in India between 2014 to 2019. There were 40 killings of journalists between 2014-19. The perpetrator for the killing of journalists and the attacks on them have got away with their attacks, aided by poor or indifferent police investigation. Often, law enforcers disbelieve the claim of the journalist, families or colleagues of killed journalists that the reason for the attack was some personal dispute or corrupt practice on the part of the journalist.

In India attack on women journalists in the filed have increased over a period of time. And the targeted attacks on women journalists covering the Sabarimala temple entry were sustained and vicious. As many as 19 women journalists were attacked during the period from 2014-19.

My organization has grave concerns on increasing polarization within the media, with clear biases and stances taken by media houses owned by or close to political parties, has also played a role in the attacks on journalists in India. The tussle between newsmakers to take control of news coverage and oppose the coverage of television channels perceived to have a bias is not new. A part from the killing of editors Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru and Shujaat Bukhari in Srinagar and the death of Doordarshan cameraperson Achyuntanda Sahu in an attack in Chhattisgarh. All other cases of killings of journalists pertain to those working as staffers or stringers for regional language publications, reporting on crime and corruption in the Indian hinterland. At least seven cases pertaining to journalists pursuing investigative work on illegal activities, including reports on sand mining, illicit liquor trade, land grabbing and water mafia etc.

Latest attacks on journalists in the wake of anti-CAA and NRC protests. 14 journalists have been attacked, intimidated and harassed by the police across the country between December 11 to December 21 2020. Notably, a large number of them belong to the Muslim community.

Therefore, we request your august office to take-up the issue of retributive violence against journalists in India and ensure the basic human right of freedom of expression.

We look forward to a positive response from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteurs (SR) on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Special Rapporteur (SR) on freedom of religion or belief, Special Rapporteur (SR) on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Special Rapporteur (SR) on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Special Rapporteur (SR) on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Special Rapporteur (SR) on minority issues and Special Rapporteur (SR) on the situation of human rights defenders.
