

TEHSEEN POONAWALLA

A-46 SOUTH EXTENSION-II, NEW DELHI - 110049

Date: 27/03/2020

To,
National Human Rights Commission
GPO Complex, Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
C block, INA, New Delhi, Delhi 110023

Dear Sir,

RE: Humanitarian treatment to migrant workers

During this 21 day lockdown period declared by the Central and all State Government in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19; all shops, commercial establishments, factories, workshops, offices, markets and intra as well as interstate transport services are suspended.

This letter is to bring to your attention the autocracy brought in by the administrative authorities across the country. Police officers are physically striking people by using rattan canes to beat people into forceful compliance of the lockdown. While I appreciate the effort and sacrifice of the Police officers across the country in this difficult period, it is important to note that the sudden declaration of lockdown within a 4 hour period has left many migrant workers stranded, who come into cities from across the country with an intend to earn their livelihood. It included people from the marginal sections of the society like labours, daily wages earners, street vendors etc; those who have no place to live in the cities during the lockdown and hence are trying to reach back home to their families. It is further important to note that some Police office are also seen hitting people who come under the category of "people rendering essential services" and are seen physically striking them.

An unfortunate incident happened on 25/03/2020 a man named Lal Swami who was about 32 years old a resident of Howrah district, in West Bengal was brutally beaten by the police and then taken to hospital and declared dead on arrival. Later upon inquiry his family informed that Lal Swamy had left the house to buy milk. The alleged fatal beating is the most serious in a string of attacks by the police force, many of them documented on camera, against people discovered out in public since the declaration of 21 days lockdown and these videos are available on social media. In reference to the allegations made above, if need be the undersigned is willing to bring all the video graphic evidences and documents as and when required.

The National Human Rights Commission must take suo moto cognizance of the situation and direct the police officers not to physically harm any citizen. The officers must first inquire the reason why the person is out during the lockdown and accordingly take action stipulated under the law. The Union and all the State governments may also be directed to arrange for transport, water and food for the poor migrants trying to reach reach home and not subject them to brutality.

Regards

Tehseen Poonawalla