

India: Harassment against labour rights defender Shiv Kumar

Wednesday 13 May 2026

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Harassment by police/state investigative agencies /

Torture

India

13 May 2026

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in India.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed about the ongoing harassment by the Indian authorities of Mr **Shiv Kumar**, a prominent labour rights defender from the Dalit community and a member of the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan (MAS), an organisation advocating for the rights of contract workers in Haryana State.

On 16 April 2026, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) issued a notice for questioning to Shiv Kumar in connection with the so-called “Lucknow Conspiracy Case” (FIR No.

RC-01/2023/NIA/Lucknow), formally naming him in the proceedings and exposing him to an imminent risk of arrest. At the time of publication of this urgent appeal, Shiv Kumar has not been formally charged.

The “[Lucknow Conspiracy Case](#)” constitutes a criminal investigation initiated by the NIA in September 2023 to investigate alleged attempts to revive Maoist activities in northern India. The case has been opened against a number of human rights defenders, labour rights activists, students and lawyers across several Indian states. The authorities have used this case to investigate alleged offences related to “criminal conspiracy”, under Section 120A of the Indian Penal Code (currently under Sec 61 of the newly promulgated [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#), 2023), and “links with extremist organisations”, under various sections, including Section 10, of the [Unlawful Activities Prevention Act \(UAPA, 1967\)](#). Within the framework of this case, the authorities have carried out [arrests](#), interrogations, and surveillance against individuals engaged in labour rights advocacy and social justice movements, particularly those working with marginalised communities.

The Observatory recalls that on 12 March 2026, police officers of the Special Cell of the Delhi Police arbitrarily arrested Shiv Kumar near Dayal Singh College (University of Delhi) without a warrant, arrest record, or explanation, and detained him for approximately 60 hours in the New Friends Colony police station. During this detention, police officers interrogated him about other activists and human rights defenders in connection with the Lucknow Conspiracy Case and asked him to provide false testimony against them. When he refused, he was subjected to torture, including forced stripping, severe beatings, and ill-treatment. He was then released on the night of 14 to 15 March

2026, following a habeas corpus petition filed by his father before the Delhi High Court.

The Observatory notes with concern that these acts of torture and harassment against Shiv Kumar are part of the repression against him and other human rights defenders in India. On 16 January 2021, during the farmers' protests, a large-scale nationwide movement opposing agricultural reforms adopted in 2020, Haryana police abducted, arbitrarily detained and tortured Shiv Kumar. He notably endured blindfolding, death threats at gunpoint, repeated beatings, forced stripping, binding, beating on the soles of his feet, pressurised water directed at his head, and sleep deprivation, resulting in serious physical injuries. Following a remand obtained on 23 July 2021, multiple criminal charges were brought against him, including under provisions of the Indian Penal Code related to unlawful assembly (Article 149), extortion (Article 384), and criminal intimidation (Article 506), among others. On 19 February 2021, the Punjab and Haryana High Court ordered his immediate medical examination after his father filed a petition challenging his illegal detention and alleging that he had been subjected to torture while in police custody. Subsequent judicial inquiries, including a District and Sessions Judge's report released on 1 July 2022, confirmed that Shiv Kumar had been illegally detained and tortured in police custody.

The Observatory further recalls that arbitrary detention and torture are strictly prohibited under international human rights law, including under Articles 7 and 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which India is a State party, and also recalls that authorities must guarantee that human rights defenders can carry out their activities freely and without fear of reprisals, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

The Observatory strongly condemns the harassment against Shiv Kumar, which appears to aim at silencing his legitimate human rights activities, and urges the Indian authorities to put an end to all acts of harassment against him.

Actions requested:

Please write to the **authorities of India** urging them to:

- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Shiv Kumar and all human rights defenders in India;
- Put an immediate end to all acts of harassment against Shiv Kumar and refrain from arbitrarily arresting him;
- Conduct an immediate, independent, effective, and transparent investigation into the torture Shiv Kumar has been subjected to, and hold all those responsible accountable;
- Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in India can carry out their legitimate activities freely and safely, without fear of reprisals.

Addresses:

- Mr. (Shri) Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Email : appt.pmo@nic.in , Twitter : @PMOIndia / @narendramodi
- Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Email : eam@mea.gov.in, Twitter : @MEAIndia / @DrSJaishankar
- Mr. (Shri) Amit Shah, Union Cabinet Minister of Home Affairs; and Minister of Cooperation, Email : amitshah.mp@mpls.sansad.in, amitshah.bjp@gmail.com, Twitter : @AmitShah
- Mr. (Shri) Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Minister of State of Law and Justice, Email : mljoffice@gov.in , Twitter : @MLJ_GoI
- Mr. (Shri) Raj Nath Singh, Hon'ble Minister of Defence, Email : rmo@mod.nic.in ; Twitter : @DefenceMinIndia

- Mr. Arindam Bagghi, Permanent representative of India to the United Nations in Geneva, Email : india.geneva@mea.gov.in

Please also write to the diplomatic missions or embassies of India in your respective countries.

Paris-Geneva, 13 May 2026

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of [ProtectDefenders.eu](https://www.protectdefenders.eu), the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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