

July 24, 2020

To,
Mr. Debindra Kundra,
Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Assistant Registrar,
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,
New Delhi – 110 023
Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: Urgent Appeal – Denial of any information about Varavara Rao's medical condition to his family by the hospital and prison authorities – NHRC Case No. 777/13/20/2020

At the onset, we, the family members of Mr. Varavara Rao, would like to express our gratitude that the NHRC on July 17, 2020, directed that Mr. Rao be provided the best possible treatment in a reputed super speciality hospital by the State Government of Maharashtra at its cost. Following this, he was admitted at the Nanavati Hospital.

Today, we are compelled to write this letter to you, as we are denied any information about his condition or his treatment at the Nanavati Hospital. From the time he was shifted out of Taloja Jail to St George's hospital to Nanavati hospital, the only official information provided to the family was that he had tested positive for the COVID-19. Denial of any information on Mr. Rao's health is a direct violation of NHRC's order dated July 13, 2020, whereby it had specifically directed the prison authorities to provide all the necessary medical care and assistance to Shri Rao with intimation to his family members.

Completely disregarding this NHRC directive, the family was not informed, by either hospital or prison authorities, about a head injury discovered on him upon arrival at the Nanavati hospital. We learnt about it only from friends in media and civil society. Consequently, we receive no official updates from the hospital or the prison authorities and our consent isn't taken for any of the critical treatment that maybe required to administer him. His health becoming the subject of public speculation with no official or transparent information from the hospital authorities is causing extreme anxiety to the entire family.

We believe that the health updates of a person in judicial custody must be shared with his family. Denial of regular health updates to the family of Mr. Rao is not only unconstitutional but it is a cruel and an inhuman act. It is the family's right to get routine updates about the medical status of a patient, any treatment that he is undergoing and the risks involved regarding the same. Keeping us in dark about Mr. Rao's medical status is a flagrant violation of the NHRC directive.

We urge the NHRC to intervene urgently in this matter and to immediately direct the hospital and prison administrations to provide transparent, official updates on Mr. Rao's health status and line of treatment on every six hours to us – his family

members. The NHRC should also consider directing the hospital authorities to provide us with a point-of-contact in the hospital for regular updates and to make medical records accessible to his family. We believe as Mr. Rao's family we should have access to information and patient concerned as it should be according to the law of the land and medical ethics. We also urge the NHRC to direct the concerned authorities to allow a family member to assist/attend him, since he is reportedly not in a position to do anything on his own.

Yours sincerely,

P. Hemalatha (Wife of Varavara Rao)

P. Sahaja

P. Anala

P. Pavana

(Daughters)