



Action Paper: Narendra Nayak

Updated: 30 March 2023

Humanists International calls on the Karnataka authorities to immediately reinstate the 24 hour protection detail of prominent Indian rationalist, Narendra Nayak. Nayak has lived under police protection since 2016 owing to persistent threats to his life as a result of a career spent challenging superstition in the country. A retired teacher, Nayak received notification from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in Mangalore on 4 March 2023 that he would be required to pay for his protection detail from there on in. Nayak contested the request on the basis that he was unable to cover such a cost from his pension, and based on the fact that he continues to face credible threats to his life. On 30 March, Nayak's protection detail was withdrawn. Humanists International believes that Narendra Nayak is targeted for his peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression, and urges the Karnataka authorities to reinstate his protection detail immediately, removing any requirement that he personally assumes the costs associated.

Three ways to take action

1) Send appeals to the Indian authorities

Write to the Indian authorities urging them to:

- Immediately and unconditionally reinstate the protection detail of Indian rationalist Narendra Nayak.
- Reminding the authorities that they have a duty to protect the life of all citizens under Article 21 of the Constitution of India;
- Seeking the removal of any requirement that Mr Nayak cover the cost himself.

Addresses:



Home Office

Additional Chief Secretary,
Dr. Rajneesh Goel, IAS
Room No.222,
II Floor,
Vidhana Soudha,
Bengaluru- 560001
080-22258830,22033456
Fax : 22250225
prs-home@karnataka.gov.in

Karnataka Director General & Inspector General of Police

Praveen Sood
Email: dgigp@ksp.gov.in

Commissioner for Police, Mangalore

Sri Kuldeep Kumar R Jain IPS
Commissioner of Police, Mangalore,
575001
India
Email: compolmgc@ksp.gov.in

Deputy Police Commissioner, Mangalore

Sri Anshu Kumar IPS
DCP of Police, Law and Order
Mangalore-575001
India

Send copies to the Embassy of India in your own country. Embassy addresses may be found here: <https://eoi.gov.in/>.

Please reach out to your Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic representatives in India, calling on them to raise Narendra Nayak's case in bilateral fora.



2) Lobby your governments to intervene on behalf of Narendra Nayak

3) Publicise Narendra Nayak's case in your local media

Please keep us informed of any actions you take and any responses that you receive.

As this is a developing case, please ensure you check back with us regularly for updates.

Background

Nayak, a biochemist by training, is the President of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations who has for decades campaigned within his community against superstition, exposing so-called 'God men' as fraudsters and advocating for the upholding of secularism in a country that has witnessed a sharp rise in Hindu nationalist rhetoric over the last decade.

As a result of his fearless campaigning and his respected position within the rationalist community, Nayak has been identified as a **target for assassination** – his name appearing on numerous 'hit lists'. As a result, he has received the protection of police bodyguards since 2016.

The threat against Indian rationalists and activists is real and deeply concerning. Since 2013, at least **three prominent Indian rationalists have been murdered** in retaliation for their work challenging superstition. Others have been the subject of smear campaigns. Many critics of the government are **often labelled** as 'anti-national', 'unpatriotic', 'naxalites', 'maoist-sympathisers' or 'communists'.



According to documentation reviewed by Humanists International, on 4 March 2023 Nayak received notification from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in Mangalore that he would be required to pay for his protection detail from there on in. Although a prominent figure in the rationalist community, Nayak does not have the means to pay for such vital protection, which he informed the DCP warning them that “stopping it would amount to an open invitation to all those forces who want to finish me.” Nonetheless, Nayak’s protection detail was withdrawn.

The timing of the withdrawal of his security detail is of particular concern as the trial of the alleged killers of activist Vinayak Baliga is currently taking place. Nayak was instrumental in ensuring the identification and apprehension of the alleged assailants. Several witnesses in the case have reportedly been the [subject of threats and harassment](#).

For more information, please contact: Emma Wadsworth-Jones, Casework & Campaigns Manager, by email on: emma-casework@humanists.international