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Asia - India

Barbaric retaliation ?

Police said to have set fire to journalist, causing his death

10 June 2015

Reporters Without Borders is dismayed to learn that Indian journalist Jagendra Singh died on 8 June from the 60 percent burn injuries he received when police accompanied by a government official raided his home in Shahjahanpur, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, on 1 June

A well-known critic of Uttar Pradesh state government minister Ram Murti Verma, **Singh** had accused the police of deliberately setting fire to him during the raid. He died in a hospital in Lucknow, the state capital.

Singh named police inspector Sriprakash Rai as the person who set him on fire. Relatives and other eye-witnesses confirmed his version of the events.

Singh also accused Verma of subjecting him and his family to a "reign of terror" because of Singh's investigative reporting and comments about him. Singh recently posted an [article on Facebook](#) about Verma's alleged involvement in land seizures and illegal mining.

After he died, his family refused to cremate the body until the police registered their complaint. The police finally opened an investigation into suspected murder, criminal conspiracy and intimidation, provisionally detaining Verma, the police inspector and four other suspects the day after Singh's death.

A police representative nonetheless denied Singh's version, claiming that Singh set light to himself to avoid arrest. He did not say why the police wanted to arrest him.

"We are shocked to learn of Jagendra Singh's tragic death and we offer his family and friends our condolences," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"We note that an investigation into this terrible crime has been opened and we hope it will be as thorough and as transparent as possible so that all the perpetrators and instigators are quickly identified."

Ismail added: *"We also hope that the justice they receive will be exemplary. The most severe sentences must be passed on those found guilty. Their senior government positions or membership of the police should have absolutely no impact on the way the justice system functions in this case. The most severe sanctions must be taken against those who will be found guilty."*

A journalist for more than 15 years, Singh worked for leading India dailies such as Amar Ujala, Hindustan and Swatantra Bharat before focusing on social networks.

Ranked 136th out of 180 countries in the [2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), India continued to register a significant number of media freedom violations in 2014, including [physical attacks on journalists](#).
