

To,
Justice V. Ramasubramanian,
The Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission of India
Manav Adhikar Bhavan, Block-C, GPO Complex,
INA New Delhi – 110023

Date:

Subject: Submission of citizen "Heat Registries" documenting the human rights impact of extreme heat on the residents of Delhi requesting the recognition of extreme heat as a human rights issue and adequate funding of Heat Action Plans.

Respected Chairperson,

We the affected residents of Delhi place before this Commission a body of firsthand testimonial evidence of the human cost and rights deprivation caused by extreme heat, its impact on the life, health, income, livelihood, well being and dignity of residents of Sunder Nagri in North East Delhi, CR Park in South Delhi, Dwarka, Jamia Nagar etc and informal workers groups like street vendors, gig workers, home based workers in Delhi, students and elderly persons. The letter seeks to ask the Commission to recognize extreme heat as a human rights issue and the role it plays in rights deprivation. We urge the commission to recommend robust rights protective measures as well as mechanisms and funding to adequately implement them..

From May 2026, individuals from different neighbourhoods of Sunder Nagri in North East Delhi, CR Park in South Delhi, Dwarka, Jamia Nagar as well as groups of informal workers namely street vendors, gig workers, home based workers, students and elderly persons have been maintaining weekly **"Heat Registries"**. These registries record their lived experiences in their own words, documenting how extreme heat affects their daily life, work, health, income, livelihood, household finances and overall wellbeing. These accounts are accompanied by supporting documents, including electricity bills, medical bills and records, income records which provide ample evidence of both the cost of coping with heat and the health and financial harm it causes.

We place these **"Heat Registries"** before the Commission because surveys, temperature data and official accounts of heat related impacts capture only a fraction of this harm. Further, the people who bear its heaviest burden are rarely in a position to bring their experiences before the Commission themselves. The registries make visible a reality that statistics do not talk about.

The suffering these registries document are not merely climate impacts, their experiences violate the fundamental rights. In particular, they engage the right to health (*Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity v. State of West Bengal*), the right to live with dignity (*Francis Coralie Mullin v. UT of Delhi*) and the right to livelihood (*Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*), each set out with the specific registry accounts that evidence it in **Appendix B** to this letter. The right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution has long been held to include the right

to live in a healthy environment (*M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath*, (2000) 6 SCC 213). Building on this jurisprudential foundation, in *M.K. Ranjitsinh & Ors. v. Union of India* (2024), the Supreme Court of India recognised a distinct right against the adverse effects of climate change, which is derived from the reading together of Articles 21 and 14 with the environmental commitments of Articles 48A and 51A(g) of the Constitution. As the Court held, "(a) as the havoc caused by climate change increases year by year, it becomes necessary to articulate this as a distinct right. It is recognised by Articles 14 and 21" (para 24). It further observed that "without a clean environment which is stable and unimpacted by the vagaries of climate change, the right to life is not fully realised" (para 25). This Commission has itself recognised the gravity of the issue in its advisory of 28 April 2026 to 21 States and the NCT of Delhi to take advance action to protect the lives of the vulnerable population from heatwaves.

This recognition is not confined to India only. In 2025, two of the world's international courts, the International Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights pronounced that protecting people from the adverse effects of climate change is a matter of binding human rights obligation. In its Advisory Opinion of 23 July 2025 on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, the International Court of Justice held that "States bear binding obligations to protect the climate system and to safeguard the human rights of those affected by its degradation, a clean, healthy and sustainable environment being a precondition for the enjoyment of rights including the rights to life, health and an adequate standard of living"¹.

The protection that the Indian constitution guarantees under Article 21 and Article 14 require adequate funding and associated planning. Heat Action Plans of different cities and states in India exist on paper, but the measures they recommend like cooling shelters, shaded public spaces, drinking water access, adjusted working hours, early warnings, and preparedness of the health system. All of this require proper financial mechanisms and at present they remain inadequately funded (please refer to the Centre for Policy Research's 2023 assessment of Heat Action Plans²; Greenpeace India, CBGA and BARC Trust, *Standing the Heat: An Analysis of Heatwave Financing in India's Union Budget*³). In this regard we respectfully draw the Commission's attention to the Report of the Sixteenth Finance Commission, submitted in November 2025, which recommended that heatwaves be included among India's nationally notified disasters, on the reasoning that they often exceed the coping capacity of affected communities. Such notification would unlock dedicated disaster funding for prevention, preparedness and relief.

We therefore respectfully request that this Commission be pleased to:

(a) To incorporate these Heat Diaries and the accompanying evidence on its record and take note of the conditions they document and the human rights issues they highlight being

¹ *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change* (Advisory Opinion, 23 July 2025) International Court of Justice

² Aditya Valiathan Pillai and Tamanna Dalal, *How is India Adapting to Heatwaves? An Assessment of Heat Action Plans with Insights for Transformative Climate Action* (Centre for Policy Research, March 2023).

³ Greenpeace India, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and BARC Trust, *Standing the Heat: An Analysis of Heatwave Financing in India's Union Budget* (2026),

experienced by the residents of different neighbourhoods like Sunder Nagri in North East Delhi, CR Park in South Delhi, Dwarka, Jamia Nagar etc and informal workers groups like street vendors, gig workers, home based workers in Delhi, students and elderly persons who are among the 40 people/households maintaining these heat registries in Delhi

(b) Recognise that the impacts of extreme heat constitute a human-rights concern as evidenced in the heat registries and enumerating measures of how the state can fulfill its responsibility of protecting the human rights of those impacted by extreme heat.

(c) Recommend that the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi, heat vulnerable states [Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal] and the Union of India that adequate and dedicated funding be ensured for the preparation and full implementation of Heat Action Plans so that the protective measures they contain reach outdoor workers, the elderly, women and children and other vulnerable residents.

d. To recommend that the suggestion made in the Sixteenth Finance Commission that heatwave be notified as a national disaster be recognized to ensure adequate funding that states can access while addressing extreme heat.

We are available to provide any further information the Commission may require, and furnish additional diaries and documents. We submit the following in support of this representation: the enclosed Heat Registries maintained by the residents named in **Appendix A**, attached as separate files (Appendix A sets out, for each keeper, their name, age, locality and the pages of their Registry), **Appendix B**, which maps the specific accounts in the Registries to the fundamental rights they engage and the judicial authority recognising each, **Appendix C**, contains the evidence and testimonies written by the Heat Registry keepers and **Appendix D** contains the supporting material and press documentation.

Yours faithfully,

Residents of Sunder Nagri in North East Delhi, CR Park in South Delhi, Dwarka, Jamia Nagar, and informal workers groups - street vendors, gig workers, home based workers in Delhi