

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

National Coordination Office
23, West Park Street, 1st Floor,
Shenoy Nagar, Near Post Office, Chennai – 600 030 Tamil Nadu, INDIA
Tel: +91-9994368540 Email : hrda.india@gmail.com

15 May 2013

Mr. Naveen Patnaik
Chief Minister, Odishas
Tel. No.(O) 011 91 674 2531100, 011 91 674 2535100,
011 91 674 2531500, Epbax 2163
Tel. No.(R) 011 91 674 2590299, 011 91 674 2591099,
011 91 674 2590844, 011 91 674 2591100,
Fax No- (91)6742535100
E Mail: cmo@ori.nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Odisha: Arbitrary Arrest of Anti – Posco Leader Abhay Sahu - Reg

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are now writing to express our grave concern regarding the arbitrary arrest of the Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti leader Mr. Abhay Sahu on the morning of the 11th of May 2013, i.e. today from near the Biju Patnaik airport in Bhubaneswar in connection with several cases including a bomb blast in the proposed steel project site in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district.

About the Human Rights Defender under attack:

Mr. Abahay Sahu has been leading an agitation under the banner of Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) against the proposed South Korean Mega Steel Project of Posco since 2005 and had been arrested more than two years ago in connection with various alleged offences. He was released after obtaining bail in December 2011. Four new cases were subsequently slapped against the anti-Posco leader.

One of the cases was related to an explosion allegedly during bomb making at Patana village in which three persons were killed on March 2, this year. The government of Odisha has been clamping false cases against anyone trying to oppose POSCO.

The Perpetrators:

Odisha Police

Date and Time of Incident:

11th of May, 2013, at about 9.00 a.m.

Place of Incident:

Near Biju Patnaik Airport, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Incident

Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti leader Abhay Sahu was arrested from near the Biju Patnaik airport in Bhubaneswar in connection with several cases including a bomb blast in the proposed steel project site in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district this morning.

Sahu was to leave for Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu to take part in a Conference there when he was arrested from Bhubaneswar by a police team from Jagatsinghpur. The PPSS leader was then taken to Kujanga near Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district.

There are a total of 54 cases of different nature against Sahu. He was on bail in 50 cases and the arrest was made in connection with four fresh cases involving a bomb explosion, obstruction in Government work and other offences.

Before this Abhay Sahu was arrested in 2008 and was kept in jail for 14 months. Mr. Sahoo was again implicated in another false case leading to his incarceration from 25th November 2011 to 14th March 2012. HRDA sees this as part of a larger game plan to destabilize the movement and force the project on the unwilling people. The false cases slapped against the anti – POSCO leader are, in our view, coercive measures taken by the police to suppress the protestors' constitutional right to dissent.

Appeal

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that:

- Mr. Abhay Sahu is released immediately and unconditionally since his detention is only arbitrary as it only aims at impeding his human rights activities.
- All necessary measures are taken to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Mr. Abhay Sahu
- All acts of repression are stopped and the illegal, unjust and economically destructive project is withdrawn immediately.
- All human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment in all circumstances.
- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by India is guaranteed

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,



Henri Tiphagne

Honorary Working Secretary

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India