

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India

National Coordination Office

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Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,
Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palais Wilson
United Nations Office at Geneva
CH 1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Email: urgent-action@ohchr.org

Dear Ma'am,

Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action –India/ Odisha- Protect the victims of the POSCO Mining Project- 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 brutal attack on the innocent villagers who are fighting for their land rights in a democratic and peaceful means to stop the works POSCO Mining Project in Odisha.

Incident

Name of the Perpetrators: More than 500 armed goons from the Paradip Industrial development Council and the Odisha policemen.

Place of incident: Govindpur Village, Odisha

Date of incident: December 14, 2011 at 1:30 p.m

According to the information received more than 500 armed goons from one Mafia don Bapi Circle under the banner of Paradip Industrial development Council and patronized by the police and administration forcefully entered the site of the peaceful and non-violent protest in Govindpur Village, Odisha around 1.30 pm on

December 14, 2011 and started attacking the villagers with bombs and weapons. As a result, eight villagers of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) were injured and one of them has got serious injury.

In the morning more than 2000 villagers were making a peaceful demonstration against the construction of a coastal sea road for POSCO Mining Project. Apart from injuring the villagers, their own bombs also resulted in killing a member of their own team. Though the situation is grim and the village people are shocked and are still waiting with the same determination to protest peacefully.

Case Narrative:

As per the information received, the government made a plan to build a coastal road along the beach from the Indian Oil Refinery complex to the port near to Govindpur village for POSCO mining project and the villagers have prevented the entry of the police by peacefully sitting in Dharna. The government was considering this as an alternative road to make entry from the sea side. The construction has been contracted to Paradeep Paribahan, a private company led by Bapi Circle. On 19th of August 2011, the government has laid the foundation for road construction. On 20th of August, around 400 people including the contractor and workers were proceeding to the site during the day and the villagers strongly protested the move and chased them away.

On November 2nd 2011, the police visited the villagers from Govindpur and Dhinikia, Odisha and told them that 400 – 500 strongmen would enter into their villages for the construction of a coastal road. Although this did not happen, the local people were prepared to strongly oppose any such invasion by these persons and the armed police.

In this stage on 25th November 2011 Mr. Abhay Sahu, the top leader of the anti POSCO agitation in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district, was arrested. His arrest was widely condemned by many civil societies and organisations. On November 30, 2011 a statement was passed on condemning the growing brutality of the state repression against the peaceful, democratic protesters of the POSCO project area who are only fighting for their legal and fundamental rights.

This is a very planned and calculated move to crush the peaceful democratic movement against the forceful displacement. The malicious plan of the government to project this entire situation as a law and order problem in the media and accordingly police will enter into the area. This is nothing but a very shameful act of POSCO to terrorize the villagers.

Appeal

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

1. Condemn the heinous attack and the nexus between POSCO and the state government.
2. Ensure that the innocent villagers are provided safety and security and are able to take forward this issue of land rights.
3. Stop the acts of repression and immediately withdraw illegal, unjust and economically destructive project.
4. Demand a police intervention into the conspiracy hatched by the Naveen Patnaik government and private militia which created a situation of crisis and terrible shock.
5. Order a departmental enquiry against the police officials who were involved in this act and the perpetrators are brought to book.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

Henri Tiphagne

Hon'ble National Working Secretary

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