



Forest Peoples Programme

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Dr Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
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May 18th, 2010

Dear Mr Singh,

Unprovoked shooting, atrocities and arson by police against indigenous people, farmers and fisher folk in Jagatsinghpur District, Orissa

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is writing to you to express its deep concern after receiving reports that the Orissa state police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells at hundreds of villagers in Balitutha, Jagatsinghpur District on May 15th, 2010. Reports also suggest that the police lathi-charged the villagers and set on fire many shops and houses, injuring over 100 people.

It appears that, in blatant disregard of Constitutional values, about 40 platoons of police were involved in this well-planned and brutal operation against the villagers of the PPSS (POSCO Ptatirodh Sangharsh Samiti) in Balitutha, who have been sitting in peaceful protest against the proposed POSCO steel plant since January 26th, 2010. It is the fundamental right of the people who are likely to be affected by the plant to peacefully protest to express their dissent against the proposed plant. We are concerned to note that reports suggest that the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police are leading these violent attacks on the villagers without just reason, instead of coming to a constructive and peaceful dialogue with the people.

According to the information available to us at this time, prior to this police action, the state administration had already imposed an economic blockage in villages earmarked for land acquisition and where resistance is the strongest. We strongly oppose these police attacks on communities which are driving them from their lands, leading to the loss of innocent lives and hardship in an area where people have already lost so much as a result of recent cyclones. Using violence to crush peaceful protest of anti-POSCO protesters is a grossly disproportionate and unjust action that risks serious violation of villagers' human rights.

We have also received reports of more destruction and killing in the Kalinganagar area in the vicinity of a proposed TATA steel plant, where we hear that villages have

been destroyed and that terrified villagers have had to seek refuge in the forest. The information available to us at this time suggests that a tribal man, Lakshman Jamuda, was killed and many other people were severely injured when they were shot by police in Kalinganagar on May 12th, 2010. Further reports suggest that journalists and medical teams are being denied access to the area.

We urge your authorities to take urgent measures to withdraw police from both Kalinganagar and Balitutha and to conduct a proper investigation into the police arson, destruction and attacks on villagers in these areas. We also urge your authorities to enter into good faith dialogue with the representatives of the PPSS in order to peacefully resolve their grievances regarding this assault on their rights and the threats to their lands, livelihoods and the environment posed by the planned POSCO steel plant.

Mr. Singh, we call on you personally to take immediate steps to firstly, ensure that the police forces are immediately withdrawn from the area; secondly, to fully investigate the police atrocities; and lastly, put in place a formal dialogue with the villagers of Jagatsinghpur District so that the POSCO steel plant can only go ahead with their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Such action on your part will demonstrate the commitment of your authorities to implement the Forest Rights Act (2006) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as well as other relevant national and international obligations.

We look forward to learning of your positive response to the issues we have raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Annabelle Galt