

ACT NOW! Prevent carnage of peaceful resistance to scandalous POSCO project

by Environment Support Group
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Communities of the Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha state, India, are resisting the acquisition of their forests and fertile agricultural lands and coast for the scandalous POSCO steel-power-port-mining project - the single largest industrial investment of recent times that mainly benefits rich American corporations, including Warren Buffet.

To help prevent this violence please sign a petition to the Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister of Odisha urging them to back down their support for the controversial POSCO project and withdraw the police forces and the state of terror that has been unleashed. Please access the petition here: <http://www.petitiononline.com/posco/petition.html>

An earnest is made to all public spirited people, especially intellectuals, writers, social activists within and outside Odisha, to immediately rush and join the human barricade at Govindpur and Dhinkia villages.

Your support at this juncture will certainly boost the morale of the struggling villagers and put pressure on the government to restraint from its undemocratic and illegal support for the scandalous POSCO project.

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In one of the most exemplary displays of peaceful resistance in recent years, women, children, elders, youth and men of the Dhinkia, Govindpur and other villages of Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha state (India) managed to stave off yet another serious effort by the Odisha police to beat down this resistance to a major . The communities are resisting the acquisition of their forests and fertile agricultural lands and coast for the scandalous POSCO steel-power-port-mining project - the single largest industrial investment of recent times that mainly benefits rich American corporations, including Warren Buffet.

Over the past several days, over 1000 police have been deployed in the area to create a climate of fear in the communities to give up their fundamental rights of access to forests and their lands. Forceful acquisition has also been engaged in by the Odisha government intensively for weeks now. Today's effort was to displace communities of Dhinkia and Govindpur villages which has been the epicentre of this peaceful resistance for six years now.

Rain or shine, villagers did not relent:

From the early hours of the morning, several hundred heavily armed police personnel were gathered face to face with over 3,000 villagers who squatted and refused to give up their land and their rights. This through heavy rain in the morning which subsequently turned into an extremely hot day. None of the villagers moved even as several fainted from sheer exhaustion and had to be hospitalised.

The police then resorted to other violent tactics threatening through loud speakers that villagers must make way for the

police and give up their leaders, else face the wrath of the police lathi charge (caning) and tear gassing. There was also an unstated threat of firing on the peaceful protestors, considering that the police were very heavily armed.

Despite all these dire threats none of the villagers moved. Unable to break this remarkable resistance, the police finally withdrew their forces late evening, thus signalling a significant victory for this peaceful struggle for justice.

The threat of illegal and forcible displacement is far from over, SO PLEASE ACT NOW TO PREVENT A CARNAGE:

The threat of displacement is far from over, however. The Odisha Government is keen on displacing these communities based on the scandalous decision of the Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to approve the project. In so deciding the Minister disregarded findings of several independent expert committees that he appointed and which recommended that clearances granted must be cancelled as they were obtained by fraud and in violation of various forest rights, forest protection and environmental laws and norms.

The police will return to enforce the politically expedient decision of the Naveen Patnaik Government of Odisha to secure land for the POSCO project by engaging force and terror. A carnage is expected if the wide public does not rally in support of the just cause of the villagers.

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Widespread support for this just cause:

Tomorrow, a delegation of five political parties namely Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxists), Forward Block, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Samajbadi Party (SP) are going to the villages of Govindpur and Dhinkia to exhibit their solidarity with the members of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) who are resisting the project. These five parties are planning to start indefinite dharna against the forceful land acquisition for POSCO at Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Another delegation of civil society members under the leadership of retired Justice Choudhuri Pratap K. Mishra of Odisha High Court and Senior Journalist Mr. Rabi Das are visiting the villages to express widespread solidarity.

Make a solidarity visit to affected villages:

PPSS requests all progressive groups to start a dharna at Bhubaneswar (Odisha capital) to pressurise the Odisha administration to completely withdraw police forces.

An earnest is made to all public spirited people, especially intellectuals, writers, social activists within and outside Odisha, to immediately rush and join the human barricade at Govindpur and Dhinkia villages.

Your support at this juncture will certainly boost the morale of the struggling villagers and put pressure on the government to restraint from its undemocratic and illegal support for the scandalous POSCO project.

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