

Arbitrary Arrest of our leader Mr Abhaya Sahoo - 11th May 2013

Dear Friends,

We strongly condemn the arrest of our leader and president of PPSS Mr. Abhaya Sahoo this morning i.e. on 11th May 2013. As you are all aware 50 cases had been filed against him at different stages of the movement and all the cases are blatantly false and fabricated. The district administration and police were after him as the movement instead of withering away under severe repression has gathered more momentum. Abhayji has been taken to Kujang jail in Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha.

We understand that this is part of a larger game plan to destabilize the movement and force the project on our unwilling people. Earlier also Abhaya Sahoo 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.

Every time when Abhayji was arrested the movement got further strengthened and our people threw up more leaders with solidarity from you all.

We have been informing you that our life has been severely disrupted since the state government signed the said project with POSCO. The police force has been using coercive measures to suppress our constitutional right to dissent. We have been peacefully resisting all types of criminal forces for more than eight years, but ironically hundreds of cases are being lodged by the police against us. Our protesters have been murdered by bomb attacks, assaulted by hired goons and beaten by police-all done by at the behest of administration. Local authorities ignored our demands for recognition of our right to the land. Instead, armed forces were engaged to silence our voices. Till now more than 200 false cases have been registered against our villagers by the government, 1500 warrants have issued out of which 340 are women.

Our people are unable to go out and receive treatment because of the threat of arrests. None of the cases has any basis and all are fabricated by the police to keep our people inside jail for as many days as they think by doing this they could spoil our democratic movement. The government of Odisha has been clamping false cases against anyone trying to oppose POSCO, It is matter of regret that all the actions till date by the government of Odisha against us is totally unjustified as the entire projects stands on shaky ground.

We call for all the Jan Andolans, People's organisations, Political parties, activists, intellectuals and people at large to condemn in strongest possible terms this cowardly and undemocratic act of the administration. We appeal you all to demonstrate and demand immediate release of Abahya Sahoo. Also please lodge your protest near the following authorities.

Let me assure that our people will put up a more determined resistance and what they all need is your continuous support and solidarity.

Kindly forward this mail widely.

Hoping for Solidarity.

Prashant Paikaray

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