

Annexure 1

UPDATE FROM POSCO PRATIRODH SANGRAM SAMITI (PPSS) AS ON 01.01. 2018

Dear Friends,

Revolutionary Greetings and Happy New Year from our struggle. Hope, 2018 will give us hope and peace.

If you can kindly recollect, we have informed you about the withdrawal of POSCO due to the continuous peaceful resistance of our people and also because of your overwhelming support to our cause.

However, the saga of repression is continuing in our villages. On December 19th, 2017, the police has arrested two villagers i.e. Mr Judhistira Jena -Age – 60 and Village-Dhinkia-Charges -GR case no-382/10-341,323,354,506,3sst, GR case no-609/10-147,148,341,323,294,3sst,1498.389,427,506, GR case no-610/6-457,380,511,341B, he was arrested on 18th Dec forwarded to jail 19th Dec and Mr. Babula Samal -Age – 45 of Dhinkia village , Charges- GR case no-585/7-447,294,323,389,506,341B, GR Case No-123/6-395, GR Case no-340/10,147,148,341,323,332,427,307,436,506,149IPC,7CRL act,9BI act , GR Case no-143/7-341,323,389,506,3IB, GR Case no-376/6-341,323,294,389,506,34IPC and put both of them into the jail. A case also has been registered in the name of leading agitator Babula Samal viz GR case no -616/14-section -147, 148, 323, 307, 506, 149 B.

The prime objective of this repression is to sabotage our democratic movement and to hand over our land to JSW Steel Limited. We learn from media that the government of Odisha is planning to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to hand over our land to JSW Steel Limited. JSW Steel Limited is a part of the Sajjan Jindal controlled JSW Group. The Odisha government is helping the corporate forces avoid direct confrontation with land losers by floating land bank through Industrial Development Corporation of Odisha (IDCO) – an unconstitutional body designed to promote ruthless land grabbing in the interests of private corporate interests.

Now PPSS is struggling to provide legal defence for a total of 420 individuals. In addition, warrants have been issued against 1500 people, including 500 women. Of these, approximately 400 of these individuals were, in fact, arrested. About 400 cases have been registered against 2500 people who face the permanent risk of getting arrested anytime. Thus they live without liberty.

Our people cannot go out and receive treatment even in emergency situations because of the threat of arrests. The inability to leave the village has resulted in a complete lack of access to medicines or any medical treatment to the villagers. There is no doctor who visits the villages, and no health centers in the vicinity, and the virtual siege prevents us from taking medical assistance from outside the village. This is particularly difficult for women as they find it difficult in even carrying out their regular daily chores that demand them to move within or outside the village. Our women leader Manorama Kathua from Dhinkia village had not left the village for 10 years due to the fear of being arrested, and if she had to, then she had to go out stealthily. She complained of severe joint pain, but she could not visit any doctor, as that would put her in the risk of being arrested.

The arrest of some of the members of the PPSS has resulted in tragic consequences at family front. One Prakash Jena, who was arrested on 12/09/2008, lost his mother after she committed suicide in despair. His sister became mentally depressed and continues to suffer from severe depression. His brother Manas Jena was killed by hired goons of the company. Altogether 4 persons have lost their lives due to attack by hired goons of the company.

Others have fears in regard to pending warrants. The siege of the villagers has an obvious impact on their relationships, especially with the outside world. They are unable to meet their families, and ties with families have also been affected due to their constraints.

Since most of the villagers are in Beetle vine cultivation, there is a need to maintain ties with traders in Bombay, Calcutta and other cities to which the same is supplied. However, the inability to leave the village and maintain business ties has adversely impacted this trade which is the major source of livelihood for them.

However, in such an atmosphere of threats, repression and intimidation, the Govindapaur village in its Palli Sabha (Village Council) unanimously resolved on December 6, 2017 that land will not be allowed to be handed over to IDCO for any purpose and it demanded for implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006.

Hence, we demand for the following:

1. The government should stop all types of repression on our people and withdraw all false and fabricated cases against our people.

2. The government must also immediately stop the construction of a boundary wall around the land and allow our communities to access common lands that we have traditionally depended on for our livelihoods.
3. Urgently process individual and community forest rights claims on land it had taken over for a POSCO project instead of transferring the land to a land bank.
4. The government of Odisha must follow the Supreme Court's ruling on the Singur issue in which the land of farmers bought for the Tata Nano plant was returned to them,
5. The government needs to replant the trees in our sensitive coastal areas where more than two lakh trees were indiscriminately cut down by the Government for POSCO.
6. Proper and adequate Compensation should be paid by the government to the widows and children and the injured family members attacked by POSCO goons in the year 2008 and 2013
7. A committee consisting of sensitive jurists, human rights advocates, activists, ecologists and ecological economists should be formed to keep a watch on what the government is doing in our area just to promote corporate interests at a huge cost to our native people and their permanent sources of livelihoods which are part of an ecologically sensitive coastal zone.

Kindly circulate this mail widely.

Hoping for your continuous support and solidarity, I remain.

Prashant Paikray

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