

URGENT ACTION

ABDUCTED INDIGENOUS CAMPAIGNERS RELEASED

Lado Sikaka, a leader of the Dongria Kondh Indigenous communities in India, was released on 12 August, two days after being abducted. Sana Sikaka, another leader who was abducted at the same time, was released on 11 August.

Lado Sikaka has told local media that he and Sana Sikaka were stopped by some 12 armed plainclothes police officers, and two unidentified people in the Niyamgiri Hills in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, as they were travelling to Delhi with other activists to protest against a local bauxite mine. They abducted the two men in the van the activists had been travelling in, forcing Sana Sikaka out of the van at Bijepur town. However, they detained Lado Sikaka for another day and interrogated him at the District Intelligence Bureau office in the town of Rayagada. Lado Sikaka says that while he was there, he was beaten on his hands and legs, and interrogated about whether he had links with supporters of banned Maoist groups, and was involved in any violent incidents in the Niyamgiri Hills. He replied in the negative. However, his captors forced him to sign two blank pieces of paper, before taking him to the nearby town of Kalyansinghpur and releasing him there. He is currently walking back to Lakpaddar, the village where he lives, accompanied by several Dongria Kondh Indigenous people. The Rayagada district police superintendent has denied that Lado Sikaka and Sana Sikaka were detained by police.

Lado Sikaka and Sana Sikaka are both campaigning against a proposed bauxite mine in the Niyamgiri Hills. Research by Amnesty International indicates that the Niyamgiri bauxite mining project, which would be located on the Dongria Kondh's sacred sites, traditional lands and habitats, is likely to result in violations of their rights to water, food, health, work and other rights to protection of their culture and identity. The project is currently awaiting clearance from India's Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

Further information on UA: 172/10 Index: ASA 20/022/2010 Issue Date: 12 August 2010

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