

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTORS COULD FACE LIFE IMPRISONMENT

At least 16 people campaigning against the construction of a nuclear power plant in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu could be arrested on charges of sedition at any time. If found guilty of these charges, they could be sentenced to life imprisonment. Amnesty International believes that the Indian government has fabricated the charges against the group, in an effort to silence their peaceful protests.

Police in Tamil Nadu have filed more than 55 charges against at least 16 people, who are all part of a campaigning group known as the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy. The group has been leading peaceful and non-violent protests against the construction of India's biggest nuclear power plant. They feel that the plant, located next to the village of Kudankulam on the Tamil Nadu coast, poses a danger to local communities. On 19 December, India's central government asked the Tamil Nadu state authorities to begin arresting members of the group. Among the protestors are **Dr S. P. Udayakumar**, a teacher and the convenor of the group; **Jayakumar** and **Jesuraj**, who are both priests; and **Sivasubramanian**, a lawyer. These four are leaders within the protest movement, and most likely to face imminent arrest. They face charges including sedition, waging war against the State, conspiracy and rioting with deadly weapons. The charges of sedition and waging war against the State carry a penalty of life imprisonment. Amnesty International believes that these charges are false, and constitute a deliberate attempt by the state and national authorities to silence the protests against the nuclear plant.

The group is part of a wider protest movement against the nuclear power plant, involving at least 15,000 people living in communities close to the site. They have blockaded the site, delaying the construction of the plant. The protests began following the release of radioactive material from the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan when it was hit by an earthquake. The site of another coastal nuclear power complex at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu was hit by the tsunami that struck south-east Asia in December 2004, and local residents are fearful of a radioactive leak if such a disaster strikes the Kudankulam complex. Dr Udayakumar told Amnesty International that the People's Movement against Nuclear Energy had met an expert panel set up by India's central authorities to allay the fears of the local communities, but that the panel had not given satisfactory answers to their questions.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities not to arrest the members of the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy, and to drop the charges against them if they have been brought solely to silence the peaceful protests of the group and others;
- Urging them to respect the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly of the peaceful protestors against the nuclear power plant at Kudankulam, in accordance with international law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 FEBRUARY 2012 TO:

Prime Minister of India
Prime Minister Manmohan Singh
South Block, Raisina Hill
New Delhi 110 00, India
Fax : +91 11 2301 7931
Email: Through website:
<http://pmindia.nic.in/feedback.htm>
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister
Ms. J. Jayalalitha
Fort St George
Chennai 600 009
India
Email: cmcell@tn.gov.in
Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Solidarity messages may be sent to:
Dr S. P. Udayakumar
People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy
Idinthakarai PO 627104
Tamil Nadu
India
Email: drspudayakumar@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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Names: Dr S. P. Udayakumar, Jayakumar, Jesuraj, Sivasubramanian and at least 12 others
Gender m/f: all males

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