

URGENT ACTION

THREE TAMIL NADU PROTESTORS FACE ARREST

At least three leaders of an anti-nuclear group in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are facing the threat of arrest, though more than 330 protestors ended their hunger strike on 15 May following a call from a former high court chief judge.

The peaceful protestors, including more than 300 women, went on hunger strike on 1 May at coastal Idinthakarai village as part of their protest against the commissioning of the Kudankulam nuclear power plant project. The state police issued orders prohibiting the protests and surrounded the village, as if about to arrest the protestors.

The three leaders, teacher **Dr S P Udayakumar**, former Jesuit priest **Pushparayan** and Jesuit priest **My. Pa. Jesurajan**, told Amnesty International that even as the hunger strike was on, the police continued to charge the protestors with offences including "sedition" (crimes against the state), "waging war against the state", "conspiracy" and "rioting with lethal weapons". If convicted, they could face life imprisonment. Police also charged the three leaders and four other protestors with having abused, assaulted and attempted to murder two Idinthakarai villagers for refusing to join the protests. Over 180 protestors were arrested in March, and all were released within a month except for two men, Mukilan and Satish.

The former chief justice of the Chennai high court, Justice A P Shah, led a public hearing at Chennai into the claims of at least 180 protestors that they had faced false charges, including "sedition" and "waging war against the State", and called for dialogue between the state authorities and the protestors on 14 May. The protestors ended their hunger strike after this. The judge also assured the protestors that he would take up the issue of filing of false charges with the National Human Rights Commission.

An Amnesty International researcher visited Idinthakarai and nearby coastal villages on 15 and 16 May, and found that hundreds of protestors were still defying the police orders prohibiting more than four people to gather within seven km of the project site, and were still assembling at the hunger strike venue. However, the police were not moving into the villages, and allowed visitors in.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities not to arrest the three protest leaders, and drop any false charges against them;
- Urging them to release the two peaceful protestors – Mukilan and Satish – currently in detention;
- Calling on them to immediately respect the protestors' rights to freedom of expression and assembly in accordance with India's obligations under international law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JUNE 2012 TO:

Prime Minister

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.php>
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:

NGO
People's Movement Against Nuclear
Energy
Dr S. P. Udayakumar
Idinthakarai PO 627104
Tamil Nadu
India

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fifth update of UA 367/11. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA20/020/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The People's Movement against Nuclear Energy has been leading the protests against the commissioning of the nuclear power plant since July 2011. Kudankulam's neighbouring villages were hit by the tsunami that struck South and South-East Asia in December 2004, and local residents are fearful of a radioactive leak if such a disaster strikes again. According to Dr Udayakumar, the expert panel established by the Indian authorities to conduct a safety assessment for the project failed to respond satisfactorily to several site and safety concerns raised by an independent group of experts.

Names: Dr S P Udayakumar, Pushparayan; My. Pa. Jesurajan

Gender: all male

Further information on UA: 367/11 Index: ASA 20/021/2012 Issue Date: 17 May 2012