

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **India must address forced evictions and other human rights abuses in Delhi during Commonwealth Games**

The Commonwealth Games cannot be used as an excuse to forcibly evict seasonal vendors, street-based workers and beggars, Amnesty International said today.

Thousands of seasonal vendors and street-based workers are facing joblessness as the police prevent them from working on the streets during the Games. The majority of people who have been evicted are being placed in makeshift collective shelters with the residents complaining that these lacked water and sanitation and were not suitable for habitation.

This continues the trend of forced evictions of the poor and marginalized carried out by the local authorities in Delhi in the run up to the start of the Commonwealth Games on 3 October.

Amnesty International received information that the authorities carried out a series of forced evictions in Okhla and neighbouring areas and roads linking the city with its north-eastern parts on the banks of river Yamuna where the Games infrastructure including many stadia, flyovers and bridges were erected in the last few months.

Human rights organisations in India said 2,500 persons and 150-200 families were forcibly evicted from the suburban town of Gurgaon and central Delhi respectively during the last two weeks before the start of the Games.

Amnesty International is concerned that a high number of evictions during August and September appear to have been carried out without safeguards required under international law. In particular, there was no genuine consultation with the people who were evicted. They were not provided with adequate prior notice. The makeshift collective shelters that the authorities have provided, in several instances, do not meet requirements for adequacy of housing under international standards. Some people have not been provided with any alternative housing.

The Indian authorities have a duty to ensure that alternative housing is provided which complies with international standards. They must also provide effective remedies to all those who have been forcibly evicted.

### **Amnesty International therefore urges the Indian authorities to:**

- ensure that evictions are carried out only as a last resort, and only in full compliance with requirements under international human rights standards;
- ensure that those who have been evicted are provided with adequate alternative housing and/or land to undertake their livelihoods as a matter of urgency;
- ensure that any alternative housing that is provided complies with requirements for adequacy of housing, under international human rights standards; and
- provide all victims of forced evictions with access to effective remedies.

Indian authorities must also address the growing number of labour rights abuses and violations of labour laws practised by various state agencies and private firms involved in construction activities, despite the efforts of a four-member committee appointed by a directive of the Delhi High Court to monitor such violations.<sup>1</sup> These violations, documented by India's human rights organizations, included irregular registration, denial of statutory minimum wages, equal payment of wages to women workers and statutory health benefits, poor safety standards leading to deaths of workers in accidents and occasional use of child labour.

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<sup>1</sup> This committee was set up in February 2010 on a petition filed by Peoples Union of Democratic Rights (PUDR), Common Cause and Nirmaaz Mazdoor Panchayat Sangam. For a detailed list of violations, see PUDR report, *Games the States Plays: A Follow-up Report on the violations of Workers' Rights in Commonwealth Games Related Construction Sites, August 2010*. The report holds the authorities responsible for failure to devise mechanisms for checking the abuses identified by the committee and taking action against the perpetrators.