

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED ORISSA LEADER FACES FALSE CHARGES

On 25 November, Abhay Sahoo, a political leader of the Communist Party of India in the eastern state of Orissa, was detained and falsely charged in order to stop his campaigning. He has led a seven-year-long campaign against forcible acquisition of common lands of local farmers for a \$12 billion plant for South Korean steel giant POSCO.

Orissa state police detained Abhay Sahoo on the night of 25 November 2011; the state has levelled several false charges against him across four different cases – all filed between September and November 2011.

Amnesty International believes that the charges levelled against Abhay Sahoo are intended to silence his ongoing campaign against the state authorities' plans to forcibly acquire 1,600 hectares in five villages, the majority of which are common lands, and facilitate their forcible acquisition to make way for the proposed US\$12 billion steel plant set up by POSCO, the biggest foreign direct investment project in India. The charges appear to have been fabricated in order to be publicly detrimental to the campaign and slur his character as a public figure.

Following Abhay Sahoo's arrest, on 15 December, workers of a contracting firm engaged in construction of an access road for the POSCO plant broke barricades that villagers and protestors had erected, and attacked the villagers who turned violent leaving one worker dead and 25 persons injured. Police teams arrived well after the attacks commenced and did not immediately intervene to prevent the clashes.

Abhay Sahoo is currently in Choudwar prison in Orissa and has had his petition for bail refused by a local court this week. In 2008-2009, he spent ten months in prison after he was detained and similar false charges were levelled against him

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately release Abhay Sahoo and drop all false charges against him;
- Calling for them to take all necessary measures to guarantee that those campaigning for marginalized communities' land rights in Orissa and elsewhere are able to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities without fear of arrest, harassment and intimidation.
- Calling for them to ensure that, while law and order should be maintained, those who are engaged in peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly and speech are able to do so without fear of violence or harassment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JANUARY 2012 TO:

Prime Minister of India
 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh
 South Block, Raisina Hill
 New Delhi 110 00, India
 Fax : +91 11 2301 7931
 +91 11 2301 9545
 Email: Through the site:
<http://pmindia.nic.in/feedback.htm>
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Orissa Chief Minister
 Chief Minister of Orissa
 Naveen Patnaik
 Naveen Nivas
 Aerodrome Road
 Bhubaneswar 751001, India
 Email: cmo@ori.nic.in
Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

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

Name: Abhay Sahoo

Gender m/f: male

UA: 364/11 Index: ASA 20/050/2011 Issue Date: 16 December 2011

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

