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Public Statement

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India: Concerns over harassment and continued detention of protestors against Dadri displacement in Uttar Pradesh

Amnesty International is concerned by reports of continued detention of eight activists of the Dadri Kisan Union (DKU) in Ghaziabad district jail in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) since 27 September 2006.

They were detained by the UP state police for protesting against displacement of farmers in Dadri following the state government's recent decision to acquire farmland, part of which would be sold to and part leased to the Reliance Energy Group's (REG) proposed gas-based 3,740 MW power plant.

Reports received by Amnesty International say that the eight persons, including the DKU leader Bhupendra Singh Rawat and two women, were travelling in a vehicle to New Delhi to attend a press conference to highlight the ongoing protests at Dadri when the state police detained them.

The police allegedly threatened Mr. Rawat and other detained activists that they should drop their protest plans and accused them of several charges. These charges, including attempting to murder police personnel on duty and resorting to rioting and violence, were reportedly registered in such a manner to delay their release on bail.

On 6 October, a team of activists from New Delhi was not allowed to meet Mr. Rawat and other detained activists at the Ghaziabad district jail.

Amnesty International urges the UP government to release of Mr. Rawat and other DKU activists immediately and unconditionally.

Amnesty International also urges the UP government to ensure that the right to peaceful protest is upheld in the state and that the police should not resort to harassment of activists involved in exercising their constitutionally guaranteed right to peaceful protest.

The organization also calls on the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure that the rights of those sought to be displaced by the proposed project at Dadri are upheld in full.

Background Information

Since June 2006, Dadri has witnessed protests by farmers fearing displacement and threat to their livelihood following the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to acquire, at very low rates, nearly 1,000 hectares of farm land, part of which would be sold to and part which is planned to be given on lease to the REG for its gas-based power station. Farmers to whom the lands belong have complained that they were caught unawares by the acquisition process. Opposition parties have demanded that the state government

make the entire land acquisition process transparent so that the farmers' right to just compensation is not affected. Farmers of Bajhera Khurd, one of the villages near Dadri, also complained to AI that, on 8 July, the state police used excessive force and mass detentions of the protestors against the government's decision to take over their farmland.