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## **India: Government decision to reject Vedanta refinery expansion welcomed**

Amnesty International today welcomed the Indian government's decision to reject plans for the expansion of an alumina refinery by a subsidiary of UK-based Vedanta Resources, in the state of Orissa.

India's Ministry of Environment and Forests rejected a six-fold expansion of the refinery in the Lanjigarh area, proposed by Vedanta Aluminium, finding that the project violated the country's environmental laws.

"The decision is very welcome - and tremendously important for local communities, who have been fighting to prevent this expansion going ahead," said Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Deputy Director, Madhu Malhotra.

"The refinery fails to meet accepted national and international standards in relation to its environmental, social and human rights impact. The authorities should order a clean-up and monitor the health status of the local communities."

Residents of 12 villages who live in the shadow of the massive refinery – mostly Majhi Kondh adivasi (indigenous) and Dalit communities who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods – have long campaigned against the expansion, arguing it would further pollute their land and water.

Kumti Majhi, a local indigenous leader, told Amnesty International, that the decision to prevent expansion was very welcome, adding that "however, we continue to breathe polluted air; our water sources continue to be polluted by the refinery and our health continues to suffer. We will not rest till these problems faced by us due to the refinery under operation are fully addressed."

The Ministry had in August rejected plans, by Sterlite India, another Vedanta Resources' subsidiary and the state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation, to mine bauxite at Niyamgiri Hills near Lanjigarh after finding that it would violate forest and environmental laws and the rights of the Dongria Kondh adivasi communities.

### **Background**

The Ministry's decisions have been based on reports by two expert committees which documented the companies' breaches of Indian law.

Their findings and the authorities' rejection of both the proposed mine and refinery expansion are consistent with the findings and recommendations of a detailed report published by Amnesty International's in February 2010, *Don't Mine us out of Existence: Bauxite Mine and Refinery Devastate Lives in India*.

*This work is part of Amnesty International's Demand Dignity campaign which aims*

*to end the human rights violations that drive and deepen global poverty. The campaign will mobilise people all over the world to demand that governments, corporations and others who have power listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognise and protect their rights. For more information visit the [\*\*Demand Dignity section\*\*](#).*

**See also**

**India: Don't mine us out of existence: Bauxite mine and refinery devastate lives in India** (Report, 9 February 2010)

**India: Rejection of Vedanta mine a landmark victory for Indigenous rights** (Press Release 24 August 2010)