



29 years journey of struggle, solidarity and building alternatives

National Alliance of People's Movements

जन आन्दोलनों का राष्ट्रीय समन्वय

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NAPM

END SPREE OF ARBITRARY ARRESTS, ABDUCTIONS & ALLEGATIONS

UAPA cases on Niyamgiri adivasis and activists invites national outrage

Hundreds write open letter to Odisha CM: Call for revocation of arbitrary cases; Seek end to repression and corporate-loot

22nd Aug, 2023: Hundreds of well-known activists, citizens and people's organizations from across the country expressed outrage at the imposition of UAPA cases against 9 adivasis and activists of the Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti (NSS), which spearheaded the historic struggle against bauxite mining by Vedanta Company, in the ecologically bio-diverse Kalahandi and Rayagada regions of Odisha. **In a strong open letter to Mr. Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha, they called for immediate quashing of the fabricated FIR filed under UAPA and other serious provisions of IPC against adivasi leaders and supporters of NSS, an end to arbitrary abductions and repression of adivasis, as well as corporate-enabled loot of natural resources in Odisha.**

Those charged in the impugned FIR No. 87/2023, dt. 6/8/23, include Dongria Kondh adivasis Lada Sikaka and Drenju Krushka (leaders of NSS), Manu Sikaka and Samba Huika (youth leaders of NSS), Lingaraj Azad, (Advisor of NSS), British Kumar (Khandualamali Surakhya Samiti), Lenin Kumar (poet and solidarity activist), Gobinda Bag (villager associated with NSS) and Upendra Bag (member spokesperson of NSS). Of them, Upendra was kept in police custody for 4 days and later lodged at Rayagada Jail on 14th August, on the eve of 'independence' day! Reportedly, he was threatened, hit, slapped multiple times, during detention. Additionally, another youth leader (Krusna Sikoka) was abducted on 5th Aug and later jailed on questionable charges.

The letter to the CM stated, *"We have perused through the FIR and are aghast to note the cavalier and ill-motivated manner in which allegations have been levelled against the aforesaid 9 persons. For instance, lathis and axe which many Dongria Kondh adivasis traditionally carry, are being cited as a ground for filing this FIR under UAPA! Likewise, imputations linking the NSS to 'left wing extremism' are completely unfounded. We condemn this abuse of process of law and brazen attack on the right of the democratic movement to peaceful resistance"*.

The letter decried the suspicious ways in which adivasi leaders, especially youth, are being abducted by police, kept in long periods of detention in violation of law, and some of them are shown as 'arrested' after many days! It has come to light that there have been midnight police raids at 3 villages in Kashipur block of Rayagada district, on the 13th and 16th Aug, after which several adivasi youth are reported 'missing'!

Amongst other things, the Letter demanded the CM & Govt. of Odisha to immediately:

- **DROP all the charges and QUASH FIR against the adivasi leaders, activists and supporters of the Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti, filed under UAPA and IPC.**
- **MAKE PUBLIC the whereabouts of all persons detained / arrested, during the month of August and details of pending cases against them.**

- **UPHOLD** the democratic rights of the people of Niyamgiri and all movements in Odisha to peaceful resistance and stop the spree of abductions and arrests, as well as, corporate-enabled violence and militarization in adivasi areas.
- **INSTITUTE** a fair inquiry into the questionable FIR against Krushna Sikaka in 2018 and release him from jail, pending the inquiry. **RELEASE** Upendra Bag from jail as well immediately.
- **REFRAIN** from undertaking / permitting any mining related activities or arbitrary action, including under the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2023 in violation of the rights of Gram Sabhas under the V Schedules of the Constitution, FRA, 2006; PESA Act, 1996 and Judgement of Supreme Court dt. 18th April, 2013.

Below are names of some of the endorsing national, state-level organizations & individuals:

Endorsing National Networks: *National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), All India Kisan Khet Majdur Sangathan (AIKKMS), People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSFW), All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP), New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), National Adivasi Alliance (NAA), Human Rights Defenders Alert (HRDA), All India Lawyers Association for Justice (AILAJ), National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), Mines Minerals and People (MMP), CPI ML (Red Star), Socialist Party (India), Nepal Disabled Women Association.*

Endorsing Organizations: *Indigenous Peoples Land, Life and Knowledge Systems Collective Human Rights Forum, Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan, Uttarakhand Mahila Manch, Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan, Federation of Rainbow Warriors Goa, Jharkhand Kisan Parishad, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity, Lok Sangharsh Morcha, Rajnandgaon Jila Kisan Sangh, Penn Urimay Iyakkam, Nagrik Mancha, Jeepal Krisak Sramik Sangha, Rashtra Seva Dal, Khorigaon Team Sathi, Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan, Kendriya Jan Sangharsh Samiti Netrahat, Rangmatipadar Adivasi Commune, Yugma Collective, Peoples Union For Democratic Rights, Sajha Sanskriti Manch, Association for Democratic Rights Punjab, Kangra Citizens Forum, Jan Vikas Shakti Sangathan Bihar, Youth for Himalaya, Environment Support Group, Delhi Forum etc.*

Endorsing Individuals from across India: *Manoranjan Mohanty, Jean Dreze, Medha Patkar, Prafulla Samantara, Annie Raja, John Dayal, Chayanika Shah, Diana Tavares, Narbinder, Suhasini Mulay, Sandeep Pandey, Xavier Dias, Roop Rekha Verma, Madhu Badhuri, Anil Sadgopal, Agnes Kharshiing, Walter Fernandes, Pranab Doley, Jerome Gerald Kujur, Neetisha Xalxo, Madhuri, Promodini Pradhan, Adv Pyoli, SP Ravi, Srikanta Mohanty, Cedric Prakash, Anuradha Talwar, Adv. Indira Unninar, Thomas Franco, VS Krishna, Ashok Shrimali, Soumya Dutta, Adv Shalini Gera, Veena Shatrughna, Sujato Bhadro, Henri Tiphagne, Pasarul Alam, Aditya Nigam, Kavita Srivastava, Adv Gayatri Singh, Meera Sanghamitra and many others. (these include names of activists, academics, advocates, artists etc.)*

The entire list of signatories and the full text of the letter to the CM is below.

Issued by: National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) | E-mail: napmindia@gmail.com

Also refer to the [Statement by Odisha activists](#), [PUDR statement](#) and [Statement by Campaign Against State Repression \(CASR\)](#) for chronology of events and more details.