

# Human Rights and the POSCO Struggle

April 25, 2013

One of the most inspiring examples of people fighting back against the predations of international capital is taking place in the Jagatsinghpur district of the Indian state of Orissa (also spelled Odisha).

POSCO, a South Korean steel giant, has been seeking since 2006 to build a \$12 billion steel plant in Jagatsinghpur, wreaking havoc on the rights and livelihood of the local people and on the environment, and in the process trampling upon democratic norms, human rights standards, and the truth. Popular resistance has been blocking the project and the state has responded with repression and violence.

Background to this struggle and the latest developments can be found on the website of the Mining Zone Peoples' Solidarity Group. A good introduction is provided by the video below:

The government of Orissa has been happy to sell out the rights and well-being of its citizens in many ways. In addition to POSCO, it has also been trying to displace villagers in order to make way for a toxic waste dump—a project by the UK mining giant Vedanta. The struggle against Vedanta has included a successful divestment campaign that has encouraged investors such as the Church of England and Rowntree Trust (Quakers) to pull out.

Various reports have documented the abuses on behalf of POSCO. A recent report is "Captive Democracy: Abuse of the criminal system and filing false cases to curb dissent against the POSCO steel plant in Orissa," February 2013, by the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore.

Solidarity activists have organized many support campaigns, including one to get TIAA-CREF to divest from POSCO. Their latest effort is a Petition to the National Human Rights Commission of India against state violence in Jagatsinghpur. Adding one's name is a way to express one's support for an important popular resistance struggle as well as making it more difficult for state violence to continue unimpeded.

Please join Michael Albert (ZNet), Zaheer Baber (Univ. of Toronto), Barbara H. Chasin (Montclair State Univ.), Vivek Chibber (NYU), Noam Chomsky (MIT), Dan Clawson (UMass Amherst), Richard W. Franke (Montclair State Univ.), Martin Hart-Landsberg (Lewis & Clark College), Suvir Kaul (Philadelphia, PA), Joanne Landy (co-director, Campaign for Peace & Democracy, NY), Ania Loomba (Univ. of Pennsylvania), Stephanie Luce (CUNY), Marvin and Betty Mandell (*New Politics*), Biju Mathew (Rider Univ.), Ali Mir (William Paterson Univ.), Aamir Mufti (UCLA), Balmurli Natrajan (William Paterson Univ.), Justin Podur (York Univ.), Stephen R. Shalom (William Paterson Univ.), Adaner Usmani (*New Politics*), Kamala Visweswaran (Univ. of Texas at Austin), and others in signing this petition (see the full list of signatories here; organizations listed for identification only).

Global capital seeks to advance everywhere, shredding democracy and human rights along the way. When people resist, we need to support them.