



- For immediate release -

Alcan't in India asks Alcan to do everything they can to prevent further police violence against the people of Kashipur

MONTREAL- December 7, 2004 –On December 1st, 2004, under the direct command and in the presence of the District Collector and Police Superintendent, hundreds of armed police tear-gassed, brutally attacked, and critically injured 16 indigenous peoples, most of them women, in the Kashipur region of Orissa, India.

Through violent and direct police repression, the Orissa government was attempting to forcibly inaugurate an approach road and police outpost for the proposed bauxite mine and alumina refinery of which Montreal's Alcan Inc. has a 45 percent share. Around 400 local indigenous people had gathered to prevent the activities of these violent state encroachers, as part of their continuing efforts to protect their lands and livelihoods. After the attacks, many people are missing and are believed to be in secret police custody. Several reports further claim that many of the victims, although sustaining severe injuries, are not receiving any medical attention while in detention.

Both past and recent events demonstrate that this police violence is a conscious program of the Orissa government in support of the Alcan-backed aluminum project. As reported by the state-wide daily "Dharitri" on November 25, the Chief Minister (head of state) of Orissa, Shri Naveen Patnaik, gave clear instructions to state bureaucrats and police superintendents that all anti-mining movements must be firmly suppressed. Several days earlier, politicians and bureaucrats held an all party meeting requesting that the Alcan mining project be launched at any cost and the opposition be suppressed.

Furthermore, these recent attacks come on the eve of the fourth commemoration of the killings of three indigenous villagers who dared to speak out against the destructive mining project. On December 16, 2000 Anhilas, Damodar, and Raghunath Jhodia were shot dead by heavily armed state police who attacked their village after local people held a massive anti-mining meeting. Further, as far back as 1998, village leader Mangta Majhi was effectively killed by police when they arrested him, severely beat him, and then allowed him to return home to die.

Despite the peoples' clear resistance, more armed police have been sent to Kashipur, and the Collector and Police Superintendents are residing with the police platoons in the nearby town of Tikiri. At the same time, thousands of people throughout the state are rallying against the police repression and the corporate encroachment on their lands.

Alcan has previously denied culpability regarding police violence in Kashipur.

Given the explicit nature of this December 1 incident, involving attempts to build an approach road and police outpost whose only purpose would be for the development of Alcan's proposed aluminum project, we demand of this Canadian company to do everything in its power to mitigate all police violence in Kashipur. Likewise, we must question Alcan's recent claims that this project is still only in "conceptual" and "development" stages, especially when Orissa government officials are claiming now January 2005 as an appropriate start date for construction.

Information :

Abhimanyu Sud or Patrick Cadorette

(514) 398-7432 • (514) 298-9974

alcantinindia@yahoo.com

<http://www.saanet.org/alcant>