



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

GENEVA

37-39

Rue de Vermont
P.O. Box 104
P CH-1211 Geneva
20 Switzerland

T 41 22 919 4010

F 41 22 740 2433

geneva@fiop.org

www.franciscansinternational.org

To: Mr. James Anaya
Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples

Geneva, 5 October 2011

*Re: **Follow-up** information on the Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO) submitted by Franciscans International (FI) on 27 May 2011.*

According to reliable follow-up information received, Franciscans International would like to inform the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples about the recent attack perpetrated against the villagers of Govindpur, Orissa, India.

The following events have been reported:

- Since the Government laid the foundation on 19 August 2011, the population of Govindpur has been opposing the construction of a coastal road which goes from the Indian Oil Refinery complex to the port near the Govindpur village, for the benefit of the POSCO steel plant (see FI Urgent Appeal 27.05.2011). They fear that they will be forcibly evicted in conjunction with the building of the road.
- On 26 September 2011, at 8.30 am, about 400 people armed with rod, sticks, and hand-bombs, attacked the village of Govindpur, Orissa, India. It is reported that these armed people were belonging to private militia of the contractors. Although more than 30 villagers were severely injured, the state police did not intervene.
- The locals did not want to seek for healthcare outside Govindpur because of the fear that the police could arrest them, build false accusations against them, and make them appearing as the cause of the violence that they instead suffered.
- Reportedly, the leader of the Contractors' association admitted to have attacked villagers in front of electronic media. Those responsible for the attack were identified as the private militia of Paradeep Paribahan, a private company to which the State Government has contracted the construction of the coastal road.
- Ever since that attack, the villagers of Govindpur have been living on permanent alert, worrying about other possible attacks aimed at coercively evicting them.

Recommendations

Franciscans International calls upon the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to urge the Government of India to:

- Put an immediate stop to all violent attacks against local villagers and opponents to the POSCO project;
- Establish an independent and impartial judicial Commission to conduct an inquiry into the attack that took place on 26 September and into the harassment, intimidation and other violence perpetrated by private militia. This independent commission should publish its report within a fixed time period, identify those responsible for the violations and bring them to justice. The commission should also enquire about the reasons why the national police did not intervene and therefore assess its responsibility.
- Ask the Government to set up an independent commission to assess the environmental and human rights impact of the POSCO project, with a holistic approach. Ensure that the local communities are fully informed and consulted during the entire process.
- Suspend the construction of the coastal road as long as this independent commission makes public the outcome of the environmental and impact assessment, demonstrating that the rights of local communities are upheld.

For further information, please contact **Ms. Francesca Restifo**, International Advocacy Director of Franciscans International, f.restifo@fiop.org.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely in peace,



Sr. Denise Boyle,
Executive Director