

PRESS RELEASE- ESCR NET calls for Suspension of POSCO-India Steel Project

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For immediate release

New York, . Human rights violations connected to the POSCO-India project must be addressed as a matter of priority by India and South Korea during South Korean President Park Geun-Hye's state visit to India, said ESCR-Net today. India and South Korea should discuss and make public concrete measures to address serious allegations of human rights abuse tied to POSCO's steel project in Odisha state. In the lead up to President Park's visit to India, Indian officials took several measures aimed at accelerating POSCO's Odisha project. India's new Environment Minister revalidated environmental clearance for the project's steel plant, while Odisha's Chief Minister approved POSCO's compliance report, a prerequisite for the granting of a prospecting license for mining rights.

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) urged India and South Korea to suspend the POSCO-India steel project until and unless it complies with international human rights standards.

"In light of serious allegations of human rights abuse, India and South Korea should suspend any further activities on the POSCO project and take meaningful and immediate action to address human rights concerns," said Chris Grove, Director of ESCR-Net, adding that "development projects should not come at the expense of the human rights of people".

ESCR-Net's June 2013 report The Price of Steel: Human Rights and Forced Evictions in the POSCO-India Project—which was co-produced with the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) at NYU School of law— found that Indian authorities have actively targeted those who speak out against the POSCO-India project with violence and arbitrary arrests and detentions. Local police have barricaded villages, occupied schools, leveled thousands of fabricated criminal charges against individuals opposing the project, and have failed to protect individuals from consistent and sometimes fatal attacks by private actors who are allegedly motivated by the interests of the company and of the State.

The report further concluded that India's attempts to forcibly evict people from their lands to make way for the project violated both international legal standards and Indian law.

In October 2013, eight independent U.N. human rights experts called for a halt to the mega-steel project, citing serious human rights concerns including the impact of forced evictions on affected communities' livelihoods and means of subsistence. The experts

urged India, POSCO and the Republic of Korea to fulfill their respective human rights responsibilities.

More than six months after being published, India has yet to respond to the human rights concerns raised by ESCR-Net and IHRC in the Price of Steel report, or publicly address the Press Statement released on October 1 by the group of U.N. experts.
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