

Press Release

India: UCIL Stop Victimising Union Activists

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UCIL STOP! VICTIMISING UNION ACTIVISTS WHO RAISE THEIR VOICES FOR DISPLACED VILLAGERS AND CONTRACT LABOUR

The NTUI condemns the management of Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL) for serving termination notice on Sagar Besra, President, Jharkhand Krantikari Mazdoor Union-Turamdih unit for raising his voice as a displaced person from Dohdangavillage and concurring with the gram sabha decision of his village calling upon UCIL to stop unsafe mining in the Banduhurang mines which are located just 150 meters from the village, in violation of safe mining norms.

This incident is the latest in a series of victimization that the management of UCIL has unleashed on the activists and union leaders of the Jharkhand Krantikari Mazdoor Union (JKMU). On 10 March 2011 the Sundernagar Police Station lodged FIRs on false charges on 37 office bearers and executive committee members of JKMU on the behest of UCIL management and on 20 April 2011 forced the arrest of 3 union leaders - Srijan Tudu, Subodh Patro and Kalicharan Karmakar. UCIL management has chargesheeted JKMU union leaders on a regular basis, 15 charge sheets thus far. NTUI demands that the UCIL management withdraws all false charges against the union leaders of JKMU. In the event of unjust, unlawful and unfair termination of Sagar Besra the NTUI will launch a nationwide campaign in support of the union and mobilize villagers who have been displaced by the UCIL management.

On 20 February 2012, NTUI delegation of Ashim Roy (General Secretary), Rakhi Sehgal (Hero Honda Thekha Mazdoor Union), Phudan Murmu (President, JKMU), Arjun Samad (Jt General Secretary, JKMU) visited Dhodanga village of displaced persons and observed firsthand that the JKMU union leaders like Sagar Besra are being victimized for raising their voices asking for:

- safe mining norms to be followed, in order to protect both the employees of UCIL as well as displaced and mine affected villagers in the vicinity of UCIL mines from radiation and injury from unsafe blasting;
 - a uniform rehabilitation policy for all displaced villagers;
- filing RTIs asking in public interest for greater transparency from UCIL on these issues;
- acting as whistleblowers and ensuring that the union brings these issues to the attention of UCIL management, PM Office, Jharkhand administration, DGMS, SC/ST Commission, and the State Commission for Women.

NTUI demands that the UCIL management respects the workers' and their union's Right to dissent and Right to be protected when serving as whistleblowers in the larger interest of the community and the nation.

NTUI also demands that the UCIL management implement:

- A uniform rehabilitation policy with credible enforcement mechanism;

Monitoring of radiation due to mining of uranium;

- Full medical check-ups for all workers and affected villagers and sharing of medical records with the workers, affected villagers and the public.

The NTUI and JKMU call upon all workers to join the All India Strike on 28 February 2012 and make it a success. NTUI demands that the Government ensure that all permanent nature of work is done by employing regular workers and all workers are paid equal wages for equal work!

Ashim Roy

General Secretary

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