

7th National Conference of Women's Movements, Kolkata condemns State repression on the people of Kashipur in Orissa

Monday 18 September 2006, by [Movements \(Women\)](#) (Date first published: 12 September 2006).

To,

Shri Naveen Patnaik,
Chief Minister,
Government of Orissa,
Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

SUBJECT: 7th National Conference of Women's Movements, Kolkata condemns State repression on the people of Kashipur in Orissa.

Dear Sir,

We, as participants of the 7th National Conference of Women's Movements, 9 - 12 September, 2006, Kolkata strongly condemn the continuing State and police repression on the struggle of the people of Kashipur, who are resisting the attempts of UAIL and ALCAN to begin bauxite mining in the area.

Our enclosed statement has been endorsed by 62 women's organizations and activists from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, New Delhi, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. It has also been endorsed by several eminent women like Mahashweta Devi (Kolkata), Gabriele Dietrich (Madurai, Tamil Nadu), and Ilina Sen (Raipur, Madhya Pradesh).

— We view the current 'industrial development' agenda for Orissa set by multinational companies and the State, as adversely affecting the lives of the adivasis and dalits of the area who will be displaced in thousands by the mining projects.

— We supported the struggle of the people of Kashipur for land, livelihood and dignity in conference sessions pertaining to Displacement, Adivasi Rights, and State Violence.

— We strongly condemn your government overruling people's just demands and using repressive measures to facilitate the entry of mining companies in the name of development.

— We demand:

- o an immediate cancellation of mining projects in Orissa

- o immediate stoppage of police repression

- o unconditional withdrawal of police charges on local people and activists of Kashipur

- o that development of any kind be carried out with the explicit informed consent of the people whose lands and livelihoods are at stake.

Anticipating an urgent intervention from you in the interests of the people of Kashipur,

Sincerely,

On behalf of the 7th National Conference of Women's Movements, Kolkata

Signed/-

Ranjana Padhi, New Delhi; Shabnam, Mumbai; Nilanjana Biswas, Bangalore

Dated: Kolkata, 12 Sep. 06

Contact: kashipur_sangharsh yahoo.co.in

Oppose State and Police Repression on Adivasis and Dalits in Orissa!

In the name of development, a war is being waged in the state of Orissa today. The primary targets of this war are the adivasi and dalit people, who have lived for generations in Orissa's mineral-rich hills, forests and plains. Today, a gigantic corporate mining lobby for whom these mineral reserves guarantee unimaginable profit is viewing the adivasi and dalit dwellers as an obstacle to economic progress, to be removed at any cost, by any means.

In the centre of the war zone is Kashipur in southern Orissa where for more than a decade a fierce resistance movement has grown. People have put everything, including their lives at stake in the struggle against these mining companies. In Kashipur, the Baphlimali hills alone contain more than 2000 lakh tons of bauxite ore, the source of aluminium for the booming automobile, aviation,

defense and missile industries. With an investment of Rs 4500 crores, the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) consortium plans to set up a refinery at Kucheipadar to mine about 200 million tones of bauxite every year from Baphlimali. The Orissa government, led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who has publicly declared war on any opposition to his plans, is also signing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) documents with other corporate giants like POSCO (South Korea), Vedanta (UK), Rio Tinto (UK), BHP Billiton (UK - Australia), ALCAN (Canada), HINDALCO and Larsen & Toubro.

As multinational giants close in on Kashipur, their entry is facilitated through the country's new economic liberalization policies. Mandatory environmental impact studies and social audits of hazardous open-cast mining projects are waived; fast track project approval mechanisms created; large tracts of mineral-rich land are identified and sold without the knowledge and consent of adivasi and dalit inhabitants; eviction notices are served; and finally, to crush local resistance, armed security forces and gangs of hired mafia are deployed throughout the region.

Repeated fact finding studies and recently, a people's tribunal have testified that the people of Kashipur are facing brutal state repression. Three adivasis were killed in police firing on unarmed villagers on December 16, 2001. In the recent intensification of repression, the terror tactics being used to wipe out resistance include large-scale arbitrary arrests, 'disappearances', rape, and constant patrolling of villages by security forces and hired mafia gangs. It may be recalled that two decades ago, the Tatas were forced by the organized resistance of the local people to withdraw from the plans to commercially exploit Orissa's Chilika Lake. Today, capital is much more determined to wipe out opposition. On 12th January 2006, 12 adivasis were gunned down by the police for demanding compensation for the loss of their lands to the Tata-owned Kalinganagar industrial complex. So powerful are the corporate mining lobbies and so widespread the regime of kickbacks and corruption associated with each MoU that not just the Orissa government but also political parties and local media are dancing to the corporate tune. Ignoring the

plight of the people, local newspapers have become the mouthpiece for company CEOs.

From the experience of the 14 lakh people who have been displaced since 1947 in Orissa to make way for dams, hydro electric plants, industries, mining projects, firing ranges, and wildlife sanctuaries, the people of Kashipur have learnt that when the government wishes to steal from the poor and give to the rich, it begins to talk about development. The women of Kashipur, whose labor, care, creativity and struggles sustain their communities, know from the experiences of adivasi women in the neighboring Damanjodi resettlement camp, that displacement from land is the beginning of the end. It shackles mobility, crushes freedom and self-reliance, exposes women to rape and sexual assault, and offers beggary or prostitution as the means of survival. The plunder of the natural resource base through commercial activities, combined with the lack of essential services like food, water, health, and education has reduced adivasi and dalit populations from a state of relative self-sufficiency to one of utter market dependency.

When Naveen Patnaik declares: "No one - I repeat no one - will be allowed to stand in the way of Orissa's industrial development and the people's progress", whose progress is he really talking about? Is the state of Orissa no longer a part of a functioning democracy for, of, and by the people or is it merely the Chief Minister's private property to sell at will to the highest bidder? Are the people of Orissa willingly sacrificing their lives, land and dignity to promote aluminium extraction for the global military industrial complex? Why have they not been asked?

As participants of the 7th National Conference of Women's Movements in Kolkata, September 9-12, 2006, we affirm the aspirations of the people of Kashipur to lead a life of dignity with better education facilities, health care, and sustainable irrigation facilities. We also affirm the inalienable right of the people of Orissa to their land, lives and livelihood.

Hence, we:

- Oppose the war on adivasis and dalits in the name of development.
- Oppose the model of development that crushes the rights of millions, irreversibly poisons the environment and barter our collective freedom for multinational profit.
- Demand an immediate cancellation of mining projects in Orissa
- Demand an immediate stoppage of repression by the police machinery and the hired mafia of mining companies.
- Demand that all police charges on the local people and activists be dropped immediately.
- Call for a process of genuine participation of the adivasi and dalit population to determine the course of their development.

P.S.

* Circulated by South Asia Citizens Wire | September 15, 2006 | Dispatch No. 2288.