

11 December 2006

[RE: UA-393-2006: INDIA: Police violently assaulted peaceful peasants in West Bengal]

UP-224-2006: INDIA: Journalists and protesters criticizing the brutal attack on Singur village protesters are severely injured by the police

INDIA: Attack of journalists; abuse of rights of peaceful protestors; violation of the freedom of assembly; arbitrary arrest and detention

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received further information from its partner organization MASUM regarding the brutal attack on peaceful Singur peasants by the police during their protest against the forced acquisition of their land for an automobile project in the Hooghly district, West Bengal on 2 December 2006 (See further: [UA-393-2006](#)). On December 8, the Srirampur police brutally attacked unarmed peaceful protesters near Sheoraphully Railway Station, Hooghly district, injuring several protesters, journalists and cameramen.

UPDATED INFORMATION:

At around noon on 8 December 2006, a peaceful rally that was organized and announced well in advance proceeded from Sheoraphully Railway Station in Hooghly district towards G.T. Road. All the protesters gathered to criticize the state government's forced acquisition of land at Singur area and the recent brutal attack on the villagers by the police. To see the AHRC's original urgent appeal about the police attack, go to [UA-393-2006](#) and also see the MASUM's Fact Finding Report: [FS-037-2006](#).

Many journalists, photographers from print media, as well as the electronic media were present at the scene. The Srirampur police began to obstruct the rally and ordered the protesters to disperse immediately. The protesters were then surrounded by a huge police contingent with batons, tear gas, revolvers and rifles. The police were acting under the direct control of the Hooghly district police administration.

The organizers then told the police officers that they had no authority to disperse the rally because the area is not under the jurisdiction of the Singur police station. Also, no promulgation had been declared as stipulated under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code of India. Section 144 of Cr. P.C states, "Power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger..." As of 2 December 2006, the entire Singur area has been cordoned off by a huge police force. According to the West Bengal State government, 6,000 policemen have been deployed there; however, local people put the number at more than 14,000.

The police began to indiscriminately attack the protesters with lathis. At that time, the huge crowd of protesters was in front of Udayan cinema hall and a large number of journalists were present. When cameramen from various TV channels started capturing the incident, the police then assaulted them and other journalists. As a result, several protesters and media personnel were severely injured. They include; Mr. Shyamapada Shit, a cultivator of Dhaniakhali in Hooghly district, Ms. Swapna Sarkar of Kolkata, Ms. Gayetri Roy of Tollygunge, Mr. Upen Koilya, a cameraman of Tara News channel, Mr. Jyotirmoy Basu, a cameraman of ETV channel and 12 other protesters. In particular, Mr. Jyotirmoy received a grievous injury causing bleeding over his head and his camera was broken by police. Two injured cameramen are now being treated at Walsh hospital in Srirampur but their present condition is reportedly poor.

The police forces at the scene that were reportedly from the Srirampur police station area in Hooghly district have been functioning under the direct control of the Hooghly district police

administration. It has been confirmed that Inspector -in-Charge of Srirampur police station, Mr. Salil Kumar Ganguly, and Sub Divisional Police Officer of Srirampur, Mr Meena, were present during the incident. However, they claim that there were other senior police officers who were there at that time.



Meanwhile on December 7, hundreds of protesters gathered in front of the Central Office of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in New Delhi on 7 December 2006 to voice their condemnation towards the forced acquisition of land in the Singur area. The MASUM from Kolkata and other human rights organizations from Delhi held a protest in front of the Central Office of Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPIM), at AK Gopalan Bhavan, Bhai Veer Singh Marg in New Delhi. The CPIM is the ruling

party in West Bengal.

Hundreds of protestors gathered there to register frustration against the indifference shown by the West Bengal state government and the brutal police attack on the protestors at Singur, who are opposing the forced acquisition of the land belong to the marginalized agrarian population. During the protest, Ms. Bharati Das, a victim of police brutality on December 2 was also present.

Students from JNU, several Human Rights activists, social activists and Concern Citizens of Delhi (a combination of 32 organisations), noted writer Ms . Arundhuti Roy, activist Senior Advocate Mr. Prashant Bhushan and Editor of Mainstream Mr. Sumit Choudhury were also present with the Secretary of MASUM, Mr. Kirity Roy.



Later that day, a press conference was organized at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi and a large number of journalists from Delhi attended the meeting. The MASUM's secretary Mr. Kirity Roy, noted writer Ms. Arundhuti Roy, a senior advocate Mr. Prashant Bhushan, well known editor Mr. Sumit Chowdhury along with a socialist leader Mr. Surendra condemned the atrocities upon the rural populace of Singur in a single voice. They also demanded an immediate national moratorium on all land acquisition and displacement until a national consensus on the issue is achieved.

Eighteen well-known social leaders and activists signed the statement. They are; Mr. Rabi Ray (former speaker of Lok Sabha (the House of the People)), Mr. Justice Krishna Iyer (former judge of Supreme Court), Prof. Rajni Kothari (former member of the Planning Commission), Ms. Aruna Roy (former member of the National Advisory Council, UPA Government), Prof. Muchkund Dubey (former secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. D. Bandopadhyay (former commissioner of Land Reforms, West Bengal & former secretary of Rural Development, Government of India), Mr. S.P Shukla (former member of Planning Commission), Mr. S.R Sankaran (former secretary of Rural Development, GOI), Mr. K.B Saxena (former secretary, Rural Development, GOI), Mr. K. Subramanian (former director general of Police, Tripura), Mr. K. Balagopal (human rights lawyer), Dr. Bela Bhatia (sociologist), Mr. E.A.S. Sarma (former secretary of Ministry of Energy, GOI), Prof. Arun Kumar (Economist, JN University, Delhi), Prof. Chaman Lal (president of JN University Teacher's Union), Mr. Vijay Pratap (social activist), Mr. Suhas Borker (filmmaker and social activist) and Mr. Sumit Chakravarty (journalist).

Meanwhile, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Member of Parliament and main opposition leader in West Bengal is continuing a 6 day hunger strike in Kolkata. The local member of legislative

assembly (MLA) of Singur and five others were also staging hunger strikes against the forced eviction. All had later been forcefully taken to hospital by police.

BACKGROUND:

Singur, in Hooghly district of West Bengal was in the national news for the resistance by the agrarian populace in Singur against the forceful eviction from their property by the state government. The local people had long been building up their resistance in the area where the TATA group had been permitted to establish a 'small car' factory after the acquisition of the total 997.1 acres of fertile land by the state government. The protesters camped in Beraberi, Ghaser Veri and other nearby villages in order to resist the forced acquisition of the fertile and multi-crop producing lands.

The West Bengal state government claims that about 95% peasants of the concerned area have already handed over their land title to the government but the peasants and human rights groups say that the figure is completely untrue. They also say that the peasants who did not sell their property are not allowed to harvest crops on their own land, although the fields are full of paddy.

The West Bengal state government has also not provided any rehabilitation programme for the Singur villagers as it did in earlier forced evictions in the Bellilious Park ([FA-27-2003](#), [UP-54-2003](#) and [HA-06-2004](#)), Tolly Nala, Rabindra Sarovar and so on. Furthermore, the villagers have been denied access in their right to information as per RTI Act 2005 in West Bengal.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Please write to the relevant authorities listed below and urge their strong intervention into this matter. Please urge them to bring those responsible for attacking the protesters to justice, respect the Singur peasants' land rights and provide adequate rehabilitation programme to the affected people.

PLEASE SEND YOUR LETTER TO:

1. Mr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
Prime Minister's Office
Room number 152, South Block
New Delhi
INDIA
Fax: +91 11 23016857

2. Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee
Chief Minister/ Minister of Home Department
Government of West Bengal
Writer's Building
Kolkata - 700 001
West Bengal
INDIA
Fax: +91 33 2214 5480/ 2214 1341

3. Justice Mr. Y. K. Sabharwal
Chief Justice of India
Through the Office of the Registrar General
Supreme Court of India
1 Tilak Marg, New Delhi
INDIA
Fax: +91 11 23383792

4. Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission of India
Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg
New Delhi -110001
INDIA
Fax: +91 11 2334 0016
Email: chairnhrc@nic.in

5. Chief Secretary
Government of West Bengal
Writers' Buildings, Kolkata - 700001
West Bengal
INDIA
Fax: +91 33 22144328

6. Home Secretary
Government of West Bengal
Writers' Buildings, Kolkata - 700001
West Bengal
INDIA
Fax: +91 33 22143001
Email: sechome@wb.gov.in

7. Minister-in-charge
Municipal Affairs and Urban Development
Government of West Bengal
Writers' Buildings, Kolkata - 700001
West Bengal
INDIA
Tel: +91 33 22145497
Fax: +91 33 22143853

8. Home Minister
Ministry of Home Affairs
Jaisalmer Hosue
New Delhi
INDIA
Fax: +91 11 23094221/ 23794833

9. Mr. Jean Zeigler
UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food
c/o Mr. Carlos Villan Duran
Room 4-066, OHCHR, Palais Wilson,
Rue des Paquis 52, Geneva
SWITZERLAND
Tel: +41 22 917 9300
Fax: +41 22 9179010 (ATTN: SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR RIGHT TO FOOD)