

## **NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS**

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### **Arrest of Adv. Roma and Sokalo Gond is a condemnable attempt to crush democratic struggles**

#### **Immediately release the activists and accept the demands of struggling people of Sonbhadra, UP**

**New Delhi: 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2015:** National Alliance of People's Movements expresses its outrage at the arrest of senior activist and advocate, Roma Malik, Sokalo Gond, and other women activists of the All Indian Union of Forest Working People from the organization's office in Robertsgunj today morning by the police. We are shocked and amazed at the attempts by the UP administration to repeatedly arrest activists and the struggling people for asserting their constitutional rights and protecting the environment.

While the memory of ruthless repression where the police open fired at the peaceful protesters at Kanhar Dam on Ambedkar Jayanti is still fresh, this attempt to crush the voice of dissent comes in the wake of the planned people's rally against land acquisition and loot of natural resources that was to take place tomorrow in Robertsgunj is unjustifiable and unacceptable. The right to peaceful protest is part of the fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of India and no government can take away or infringe upon this sacred right. It needs to be noted that in numerous instances in the past the higher courts have repeatedly come down on the authorities for trying to muzzle protests through fabricated cases and arrests.

We also wish to remind the UP government that some of us met the CM at the CM House in the last week of April, in the wake of the brutal police firings at adivasis and dalits in the Kanhar dam-affected area. The Order of the NGT as well clearly establishes the illegality in the entire process. The CM had assured us that he take note of all the demands in our memorandum and ensure that the conflict is resolved through dialogue with the people and Gram Sabhas. Is this how the Government seeks to resolve conflict? Are these arrests really necessary and lawful? Such actions will only intensify the conflict and lead to further tensions in the area.

We hope that the UP Government will take serious note of the national discontent against the arrest of senior activists of the AIUFWP and direct the district administration to drop all charges and release the arrested activists and villagers. We convey our deep disdain for the approach of the UP government to openly harass and target activists who are engaged with the people's issues on the ground and are raising important questions of land, natural resources and equality and democracy. We wish to remind the government and the administration that peaceful and democratic struggle of the adivasi and dalit communities,

led by the women of Sonbhadra, is their constitutional right and we stand in full solidarity with them.

It would be disgraceful if administration tries to resort to such means to silence democratic voices. The rally, which was announced many days ago and is a matter of public knowledge cannot and should not be stopped by such means, we urge. National Alliance of People's Movements demands immediate release of Adv. Roma and Sokalo Gond. We also urge the government to redress the grievances of the struggling people and accept their demands urgently.

**Medha Patkar** - Narmada Bachao Andolan and the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM); **Prafulla Samantara** - Lok Shakti Abhiyan & **Lingraj Azad** –Samajwadi Janparishad, NAPM, Odisha; **Dr. Sunilam, Aradhna Bhargava** - Kisan Sangharsh Samiti & **Meera** – Narmada Bachao Andolan, NAPM, MP; **Suniti SR, Suhas Kolhekar, Prasad Bagwe** - NAPM, Maharashtra; **Gabriele Dietrich, Geetha Ramakrishnan** – Unorganised Sector Workers Federation, NAPM, TN;

**C R Neelkandan** – NAPM Kerala; **P Chennaiah & Ramakrishnan Raju** – NAPM Andhra Pradesh, **Arundhati Dhuru & Richa Singh** –Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan, NAPM, UP; **Sudhir Vombatkere, Sister Celia** - Domestic Workers Union & **Rukmini V P**, Garment Labour Union, NAPM, Karnataka; **Vimal Bhai** - Matu Jan sangathan & **Jabar Singh**, NAPM, Uttarakhand; **Anand Mazgaonkar, Krishnakant** - Paryavaran Suraksh Samiti, NAPM Gujarat; **Kamayani Swami, Ashish Ranjan** – Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan & **Mahendra Yadav** – Kosi Navnirman Manch, NAPM Bihar; **Faisal Khan**, Khudai Khidmatgar, NAPM Haryana; **Kailash Meena**, NAPM Rajasthan; **Amitava Mitra & Sujato Bhadra**, NAPM West Bengal; **B S Rawat** – Jan Sangharsh Vahini & **Rajendra Ravi, Madhuresh Kumar, Kanika and Shabnam Shaikh**– NAPM, Delhi