



December 19, 2018

People's Watch Condemns Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry's statement on NGT Order on Sterlite Copper

People's Watch strongly condemns the statement issued by Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (TNCCI) Senior President S. Rethinavelu and President N. Jagatheesan, welcoming the order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to reopen the Sterlite Copper plant in Thoothukudi. The senior president and president in their statement referring to the closure as 'wrong impressions in the minds of investors', is highly condemnable as it completely ignores the demands of the local people, 15 of whom were killed in police firing & lathi charge. Tamil Nadu can't be left behind in corporations not abiding by the commitments to human rights and environment, many of which are part of globally accepted principles concerning business and human rights. It is the duty of not only the government but also of bodies like TNCCI to ensure greater compliance and commitment to human rights and environment and not sway away only towards crony capitalism.

Prior to the massive rally in Thoothukudi, protests for 100 days were held across the district. It is a pity that the TNCCI cared little about the demands of the protestors and took steps to reach out to them for a dialogue. TNCCI could have played an important and crucial role between the protestors, Sterlite Copper and Government of Tamil Nadu to initiate a dialogue on the concerns raised by the people affected by the Sterlite Copper. TNCCI chose to do nothing and its silence has only led way for harmful business practices to continue in Thoothukudi.

TNCCI should note that protests have commenced in Thoothukudi after the NGT order and hence it should respect people's demands and initiate actions towards it rather than openly supporting and welcoming Sterlite Copper.

TNCCI's welcoming of NGT's order seemed premature and an act of desperation to please powerful crony businesses. The NGT while referring to the order relied solely on the one-page closure order of the Government of Tamil Nadu. The Madras High

Court, several political leaders, representatives of people's movement in Thoothukudi and many others had expressed concerns on the one-page closure order when it was issued and had demanded that the Government of Tamil Nadu in this case initiates and adopts a policy decision. NGT's order recognises the absence of a policy decision and struck down the one-page order stating it to be based on the assessment of Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB). A better and honest application of mind and the will towards social responsibilities of businesses would have been an acceptable approach by the TNCCI.

As we strongly condemn the statement issued by the TNCCI which goes against the spirit of justice and corporate accountability in India. We appeal to the TNCCI to adhere to the corporate responsibility to respect human rights as laid out in the United Nation's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In the absence of National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights in India, bodies like the TNCCI should demonstrate commitment towards internationally accepted principles and procedures, especially in the wake of the upcoming Global Investors Meet.

TNCCI should demonstrate its commitment to human rights and issues concerning environment and respect the peaceful protests by the people in Thoothukudi. Failing to undertake its responsibility in an independent and unbiased manner will lead to further criticism.

People's Watch in solidarity with the people in Thoothukudi calls upon the leaders of all political parties and social organisations to jointly undertake peaceful protests in Madurai against the statement of the TNCCI.

With kind regards,



(Henri Tiphagne)

Executive Director

For more information : 98940-25859