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Follow us on:
How far would you go to fight for what you believe in? Would you hop on a boat, brave the treacherous seas, sail to the top of the world and confront the problem head on? For most, this would seem outrlandish but for the valiant Arctic 30, this is just another day on the job! It’s been over a month since the Greenpeace ship, Arctic Sunrise, crewed with 28 brave activists, two freelance journalists and supported by millions, set sail to stop drilling for oil in the Arctic.

The Pirrazomnyaya oil platform, which is expected to become the first to produce oil from ice filled Arctic seas, is owned by Gazprom, a major Russian oil company. While attempting a peaceful protest, the activists were intercepted at gun point by the Russian Coast Guard who detained the ship with all hands, in international waters, on no charge. It’s been over a month now and the charges filed against them are simply absurd.

These disproportionate charges have triggered a wave of solidarity protests both within and outside the Greenpeace community. It’s moments of action like this where the true spirit of who we are comes to light. People from all walks of life including eleven Nobel Laureates, have written an open letter to President Vladimir Putin, urging him to drop the charges against the Arctic 30.

Leading by example, we will continue to uphold the spirit of the protest and not waver from our core value of non-violence. In the fight for a better tomorrow, numerous hurdles have to be crossed today. Join us as we take a stand to free the Arctic 30.

On September 18, a small group of Greenpeace International activists approached the Gazprom Pirrazomnyaya oil platform, in the Pechora Sea off the Russian coast, to engage in a peaceful protest of Arctic oil drilling. Two activists were detained and held overnight on a Russian Coast Guard vessel.

The following day, September 19, the Russian Coast Guard illegally boarded the Greenpeace International ship Arctic Sunrise while in international waters. All 30 members of the crew were held under armed guard for five days as the ship was towed to the port of Murmansk. Upon arrival, the activists were taken from the ship and held by authorities on land.

On September 26, 28 of our activists, along with a photographer and videographer who were documenting the action, appeared at a preliminary court hearing in Murmansk, where most of them were remanded in custody for two months, facing investigation for possible piracy.

We are demanding the immediate release of all activists, our ship and an end to offshore oil drilling in the Arctic for good.
**Forest and the Fight for Life**

**Background**

One of the oldest Sal (species of tree) forests of Asia – Mahan, Madhya Pradesh are facing the threat of an absolute wipe out. Giant corporations Essar and Hindalco are after the coal reserves below these forests.

Over 14,000 lives and livelihoods are dependent on the Mahan forests, Madhya Pradesh. Their culture, community and lives are intertwined with the forests that the corporations threaten to destroy. Displacement from their natural habitat is going to be devastating for the indigenous community.

**Initiative**

The people of Mahan have come together to reclaim what is theirs. The Mahan Sangharsh Samiti (MSS) was formed in March 2013 to protect the forests and land from coal mining. Since then, the MSS has expanded to 11 villages and garnered the support of the Minister of Tribal Affairs, KC Deo and civil society groups. They have also organised rallies and public meetings to raise awareness of their rights in the region.

**Impacts**

The campaign has brought the issue of FRA (Forest Rights Act) violation in Mahan to the forefront of the media in Madhya Pradesh and the centre. With the support of the Tribal Affairs Minister and his letter to the MP government, FRA violation in Mahan has become an established fact.

The campaign has also seen MSS members become stronger in their fight by spreading from five to eleven. MSS is now reaching out to all the villages affected by the Mahan Coal Block.

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**Water for Farmers, Not Industries**

Maharashtra suffered the worst drought in 40 years this summer. Around 11,000 villages and about 15 districts were affected. Though this drought was not unexpected, the government’s mismanagement of the drought led to its severity.

Greenpeace produced reports on how even during the drought, thermal power plants were provided water while farmers and people were migrating for drinking water. Ajit Pawar, the Dy. Chief Minister for the state, made an insensitive statement insulting the misery of the farmers by offering to ‘urinate’ in the dams to provide water for farmers in April. Protesting this, a farmer from Amravati, Sanjay Kolhe hosted a petition on Greenpeace X where he demanded to provide water back to farmers instead of industries. Greenpeace supported his demand and protested by hanging a large banner on the spill way of the dam. Farmers who were affected by the diversion were present to show solidarity.

We also ran a mobile petition drive and got over 2.5 lakh petitions which were provided to the Agriculture Minister on August 1, 2013 pressing the demand that water should not be allocated to thermal power plants at the cost of irrigation. The minister agreed with our argument about the impacts of water diversion on agriculture. He supported Greenpeace’s demand and said that he will take it into consideration in future dialogues with the government.

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**GM Free India**

The Parliamentary Standing Committee of Science and Technology and Environment and Forests had opened the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill for public feedback for only 30 days. A strong effort by the civil society and other organisations extended this timeline to 75 days. While this definitely is not the ideal time required for feedback, it helped more individuals and groups to send their feedback on this controversial legislation. The opposition to GM crops gained momentum in August when thousands of citizens from 20 different states across the country, 18 MPs and farmer leaders came together on August 8, the eve of Quit India Day demanding GMOS, BRAI and Monsanto Quit India.

As the voices against GM crops continue to get louder across the country, three lakh people had signed a petition addressed to the Chair of the Standing Committee to recommend the withdrawal of the BRAI Bill. The Chairman accepted this saying he will address citizens’ concerns while reviewing the BRAI Bill. Greenpeace was actively involved along with the Coalition for GM Free India in this public campaign to stop the contentious BRAI Bill from getting passed in the parliament.

Cotton which was used as a symbol for our struggle for independence is now under control by biotech American multinational, Monsanto. 93% of the cotton seed market is owned by Monsanto’s proprietary technology Bt.