

Water Pipelines in India, Police Repression of Farming Communities

Cops kill 3 as farmers protest water project, land seizure near Mumbai

By [Rady Ananda](#)

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On August 9, police shot nine farmers, killing three, who were part of a mass protest against a water pipeline project in Baur Village, 50 miles east of Mumbai, India. Police also smashed cars, fired tear gas and threw rocks at farmers as they fled the violence. This was all [caught on video](#):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=O97L9rpp1gU

Kantabai Thakar (age 40), Moreshwar Sathe (40) and Shyam Tupe (29) were fatally shot by police. Over 100 others were injured, and nine vehicles damaged in the lethal attack on protesters, report several news outlets in India.

The next day, the Pune police “registered a case of attempt to murder and rioting against 1,200 to 1,400 protesters,” although no one has yet been arrested. None of the officers involved in murder and excessive use of force have been charged or suspended.

Farmers from over 60 villages in Pune District in the state of Maharashtra have protested the pipeline project since its announcement in 2008, objecting to land takings and the potential for pollution of their water source. Around 4,500 hectares (over 11,000 acres) of farmland are threatened by the project.

The pipeline would draw 140 million gallons of water a day (525 million liters) from the Pavana Dam to be used for industry and a growing urban center.

Overseeing the project are three government agencies: Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), Talegaon Municipal Council and Dehu Road Cantonment.

The MIDC has long promoted industrialization of this primarily agricultural state. Its main objective is to “rapidly develop ... the underdeveloped parts of the state,” by redistributing land and providing infrastructure like roads, lighting, water treatment and supply, communication, and police and fire services.

Lands seized are then leased or sold to industry.

Though the MIDC promises to compensate those displaced by the pipeline project, it has been 40 years since the Pavana Dam was built and 75% of those displaced still have not been compensated, reports Times of India. For those lucky 300 who were given other lands, their name is not on the titled deed. Nor have promised jobs materialized for displaced

villagers.

Providing water to industry is “a unique specialty of the MIDC,” which also manages the toxic liquid waste from industry.

But locals don’t trust the government, and for good reason.

Lack of effective oversight of industrial pollutants has led to soaring cancer rates and other health problems in Bathinda, located in the northern state of Punjab. Forty percent of that population requires medicinal inhalers in order to breathe. Many of the waters are so toxic that no life survives.

State-sanctioned violence directed at farmers and tribes is common for India, including murder, torture and destruction of villages.

India’s state governments “have signed hundreds of [Memoranda of Understanding] with corporate houses, worth several billion dollars, all of them secret, for steel plants, sponge-iron factories, power plants, aluminium refineries, dams and mines,” explains activist Arundhati Roy. “In order for the MoUs to translate into real money, tribal people must be moved.”

Maharashtra is the second largest state in India both in population (115 million) and land (308 lakh sq. km, or about 120,000 sq. mi.). Forty-two percent of the population is urbanized. The ‘scheduled castes’ and ‘scheduled tribes’ – officially recognized populations seen as “historically disadvantaged” – make up another quarter in the state.

Maharashtra farmers cultivate cereals, pulses, sugarcane, soy, cotton, oilseeds and onions, as well as mangoes, grapes, bananas, pomegranates and oranges.

The Pune District is one of several major industrial sectors planned by the MIDC, which has so far developed 233 industrial parks on 160,000 acres, with another 80,000 acres planned.

Deregulated sectors now open to foreign investment include the biotech seed industry, mining, pharmaceuticals, chemicals & fertilizers, construction, and oil & gas.

Driving the destruction of tribal and agricultural lands is trade liberalization that began in earnest since 2000. As a result, foreign direct investment (FDI) in India ranks third in the world, with Maharashtra bagging a quarter of all of India’s FDIs.

Officially, the Republic of Mauritius is the largest foreign investor in India, but a closer look reveals that through an indirect investment scheme, the U.S. is actually the top foreign investor. Advisors explain that because the India-Mauritius tax treaty removed capital gains tax, it’s more lucrative for foreign firms to invest in India indirectly through Mauritius.

As part of the G20, the World Trade Organization, and a signatory to international trade agreements including GATT and TRIPS, India ranks 51 in overall “competitiveness” in a field of 139 nations, according to the World Economic Forum.

State-sanctioned violence increases as resistance to globalization grows. People are left landless, jobless and sickened by industrial destruction of the biosphere. Episodes like these confirm Derrick Jensen’s “20 premises” from his book, *Endgame*.

Industrial civilization “destroys landbases. That’s what it *does*,” writes Jensen in his new book, *Deep Green Resistance*. “And it won’t stop because we ask it nicely.”

Rady Ananda specializes in Natural Resources and administers the sites, [Food Freedom](#) and [COTO Report](#). To obtain a full copy of this report, including all Sources Used, [click here](#).

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