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Asia - India

Media obstructed

National media prevented from covering anti-nuclear protest in Tamil Nadu

21 March 2012

Reporters Without Borders condemns police obstruction of national print and broadcast media today in Idinthakarai, a fishing village in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, where the authorities are trying to remove entrenched anti-nuclear protesters from their camp beside the Koodankulam nuclear power station.

"It is always disturbing to see the authorities establish a perimeter and deny access to the media, even temporarily, for reasons other than their security," Reporters Without Borders said. "Installing police barricades and ordering the police not to let the media through is unacceptable. We urge the Tamil Nadu government to modify the orders and allow journalists full access.

"The authorities must not try to use security as pretext for restricting media coverage of a peaceful anti-nuclear demonstration that contributes to the debate on a subject of public interest. A continuing media presence will also help to dispel any concern about the way the police could be treating the demonstrators."

Police prevented journalists with [NDTV](#), [Times Now](#), [Times of India](#) and other national media from entering the fishing village at 7 a.m. today.

After initially saying they had orders from their high command to deny access to all journalists, the police manning the barricades allowed print and video reporters through. But, according to the [Madras Press Club](#), they continued to deny access to TV mobile broadcasting trucks on the grounds that live reports would just exacerbate the situation.

However, when reached by telephone by reporters outside the village, the head of the Tamil Nadu police denied giving any such orders and, according to the latest information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, TV trucks were finally allowed into the village.

The Tamil Nadu government launched its operation against the Koodankulam protesters at the start of the week. Led by the People's Movement against Nuclear Energy (PMANE), the protesters have been camped for more five months beside the power station, which is supposed to start operating soon.

Demonstrators have been denied access to the protest site, including by sea, since 19 March. They say that journalists have also been denied access since 19 March and that some journalists have been forced to leave the protest site.

Freedom of information has deteriorated significantly of late in India, which was ranked 131st out of 179 countries in the 2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.
