

Sterlite India employees return to duty even as the plant remains closed

Wednesday 25 July 2018, by [MANUEL Thomas](#), [T. Venkat](#), [TADEPALLI Srividya](#) (Date first published: 22 July 2018).

45 days since the closure of Sterlite Copper Smelter in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, the Vedanta Group that operates the plant [has recalled all the workers of the plant to present themselves regularly from July 16](#). These workers had been given leave or transferred to other facilities after the government of Tamil Nadu decided to close the factory for violation of environmental regulations. The order for closure had come after the massive protest by residents of Thoothukudi and adjoining villages turned bloody after police opened fire on the protestors, killing 13 people. The company has been arguing that the whole affair is a smear campaign by NGOs and vested interests. They have launched a PR exercise to claim their innocence and as a way to put pressure on the government to rescind the closure order, have asked their workers to present themselves regularly to work at the staff quarters. An e-mail sent by Sterlite Copper CEO Ramnath said: “[Vedanta] Chairman wants this time to be utilised to building a new approach to all that we do in Sterlite Copper – concentrate (on) procurement, logistics, production process, commercial, marketing, housekeeping, business excellence, CSR, PR, finance, IT, maintenance, etc... all of you have to work on these aspects.” When contacted by *The Hindu*, M. Esakkiyappan, a spokesperson for Sterlite Copper, said the move was to ensure the employees were not kept idle for a long time. Given these efforts by Vedanta to restart operations at the copper smelter, [the villagers have written to the Tamil Nadu government](#) not to rescind the order and instead move towards permanent closure of the factory that has caused enormous pollution to their environment.

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