

# Massive Protests against Sterlite in Thoothukudi

Monday 16 April 2018, by [MANUEL Thomas](#), [T. Venkat](#), [TADEPALLI Srividya](#) (Date first published: 1 April 2018).

**Thoothukudi, a town in south Tamil Nadu, came to a standstill on March 24 when thousands of farmers, fisher people, traders and even auto and cab drivers came together demanding a ban on Sterlite's copper smelting plant.**

This was a massive show of solidarity with villagers around Thoothukudi who have been on a protest for over 40 days. The protests also went international with Tamil residents in London protesting in front of the Vedanta CEO's house in Mayfair, London. Following the protests, the company announced the closure of the plant for two weeks pending maintenance.

The Times of India reported that, "...All the eateries, hotels, shops, trade and commercial establishments remained shut from the early hours of Saturday. Auto rickshaws, vans and minibuses too did not operate from 9 AM. Production was stopped in the salt pans too while the 12 cinemas in the city also did not screen any shows throughout the day."

"More than 2,000 country boat fishermen did not go for fishing. More than 50 associations and organisations have extended support to the one-day strike," M Krishnamoorthy, a coordinator of the protest told ToI.

Owned by Vedanta Resources Plc, Sterlite's main business is the production of copper and manufacturing copper products for the electrical industry. Copper production is a highly polluting process requiring very stringent regulations. Over decades, farmers and fisher people have been raising concerns over pollution of ground and seawater. They have been claiming that there has been an adverse impact on their livelihoods. In 2013, after a severe leak of sulphuric acid that led to residents suffering various symptoms of poisoning, there have been demands for the closure of the plant. The Supreme Court, which had found Sterlite guilty in the case, had imposed a Rs. 100 crore penalty.

Nithyanand Jayaraman, an environmental activist, has listed the health impacts of the copper plant in an article in The News Minute. He had also earlier highlighted an accident at the copper plant that left a worker maimed for life.

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