

# Stop Evicting Adivasis from their habitat

**The** Supreme Court has ordered the forced eviction of more than one million Adivasi and other forest-dwelling households from forest lands across 16 states. The final country-wide numbers of forced evictions are likely to rise substantially as other states are forced to comply with the court orders. The court's orders came in a case filed by wildlife groups questioning the validity of the Forest Rights Act. The petitioners had also demanded that all those whose claims over traditional forestlands are rejected under the law should be evicted by state governments as a consequence.

The Union government had not sent its lawyers to appear before the court and defend the law passed by the Parliament. A three-judge bench passed orders giving states till July 27 to evict tribals whose claims had been rejected and submit a report on it to the Supreme Court. It clearly shows that the government led by the BJP is hand in glove with the so-called wild life organization.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 also known as Forest Rights Act was enacted, after protracted mass movements across the country, with a view to address the widespread alienation of the forest dwelling communities in the country from their lands, forest and its resources since the colonial period. The Forest Rights Act, which was passed during the first tenure of UPA government requires the government to hand back traditional forestlands to adivasis and other forest-dwellers. It is the experience of the adivasis during the last one and a half decade that FRA was never implemented in its spirit and letter. Every attempt has been made to scuttle it taking excuse after excuse. In numerous places (such as in Polavaram in Andhra Pradesh) forest lands are being 'acquired' on a massive scale and sought to be submerged without settlement of claims or arbitrary 'rejections', all in the name of development.

The last time country-wide evictions took place was in 2002-2004, again triggered by a Supreme Court order. This order of the Supreme Court, if implemented, will take us to the situation of almost 2 decades ago. Any forceful implementation of this order will only cause unprecedented chaos, suffering and misery and set the forests on fire. Between May 2002 and March 2004 alone, evictions were carried out from 1,52,400 hectares of forest land. About 3,00,000 forest dwellers were evicted from their habitat and deprived of their livelihood during this period. Their houses were burnt, crops and food were destroyed, women were raped, and men were shot at and killed. Hundreds of villages were set on fire or demolished, which led to clashes and deaths in police firings.

CPI (ML) demands that Union government to immediately stop this massive eviction across the country by stopping the execution of this order.

We stand in solidarity with the struggling adivasis and forest based people of this land, who continue to face an onslaught on their lives and livelihoods at the hands of the successive anti-people governments. The three organ of the state – the law makers, the bureaucracy and judiciary - are working in tandem to deprive the adivasis of their legitimate right in order to serve the exploitative imperialist finance capital and Indian big bourgeoisie.

CPI (ML) demands implementation of the Forest Rights Act without diluting it and strictly observing the constitutional rights of Gram Sabhas.

We call upon all democratic, patriotic, anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces to demand the implementation of FRA, Gram Sabhas and protection of rights of forest peoples and support the struggles of adivasis.

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