

# URGENT Action



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**India:**

**22.05.2007**

## **Adivasi face massive land evictions through the construction of a TATA steel plant in Chhattisgarh, India**

1500 Adivasi families (indigenous people) face eviction from their lands due to the planned construction of a TATA steel plant in the area of Lohadiguda, Bastar, Chhattisgarh. This means a gross violation of the Adivasis' right to food – and hunger and malnutrition for them in the future.

### **Background**

Bastar is a district of Chhattisgarh in Northern India, where large natural forest areas still exist. 75 % of the district are covered with forests. Many wild animals still live in the Bastar forests, although there are only a few national parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries for the protection of forests and wild animals. Bastar is a very attractive area for tourism in Chhattisgarh. Of the total population more than 70 % are indigenous people (Adivasi).

The Government of Chhattisgarh pursues a policy of industrialisation and is attracting business investment. TATA Iron and Steel Company Ltd. (TISCO) is part of the Tata Group, a globally operating company, comprising 96 companies in seven business sectors and operating in 54 countries across six continents.

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Industrial and Mineral Resources Department of Chhattisgarh and TISCO about the construction of a steel plant by TATA in Bastar district, close to Jagdalpur town. The MoU has been kept a secret document and will be published only after the Tata Company has entered into an agreement with the state government and has got all rights and clearances as promised in the MoU.

Bastar is particularly protected because it is declared a Scheduled area under the Constitution of India, enjoying special privileges and provisions. Despite these facts, the Government of Chhattisgarh has promised the land of the Adivasi to TATA for their proposed steel project without having the consent of the affected people. Only for some parts of the land do the people have land titles, this private land needed will be acquired by the state and handed over to TISCO within a period of six to nine months after having received the formal application from the company. The plant will be located on 5300 acres of land. 1500 families of 10 villages will be affected.

The compensation packages for the land are far too low. Moreover, compensation will only be given to people who can prove land ownership. Since a majority of the Adivasi in Bastar are small sharecroppers without land titles, they will not receive any compensation. In the past few months, opponents of the project had to face increasing state violence.

According to the government, there will be large-scale employment and prosperity for all in the entire area. Even the MoU with TATA, however, indicates that large scale employment will only be generated at the full operation of the plant (2018). Other industrial plants in Chhattisgarh show that the units do not lead to much employment for the local population. Most of the workforce consists of outsiders.

***FIAN – With human rights against hunger!***

## **FIAN Mandate**

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, India and therefore the state of Chhattisgarh, is duty-bound under international law to respect and protect the peasants' human right to adequate food. By acquiring the peasants' lands without taking effective steps to ensure their right to feed themselves in a sustained manner including full rehabilitation & compensation, India and the State of Chhattisgarh are about to violate these persons' human right to food. Moreover, according to the 73rd amendment of the Indian Constitution, article 243G, the Panchayati Raj System of village councils prepares the plans for economic development and social justice. These village councils, however, were not even involved in the decision for the Tata steel plant.

An Urgent Action is needed to defend the Human Right to Food and the constitutional rights of the villagers many of whom otherwise face hunger and malnutrition.

Please write kind letters to Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India, with copies to Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the UPA coalition and Dr. Raman Singh, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

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***Please inform FIAN  
International about any  
response you receive  
to your faxes and letters.***

**End of Action:**

**July 20,  
2007**



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Honorable Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh,

Recently, I have heard the disturbing news that 1500 families face eviction from their protected tribal lands in the area of Lohadiguda, Bastar district. The affected villages are Dabapal, Dhuragaon, Bade, Paroda, Beliapal, Belar, Badanji, Takarguda, Sirisguda, Kumhali, Chindgaon and are all part of a scheduled tribal area. The land acquisition therefore violates constitutional rights of the tribals.

Your Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the TATA Iron and Steel Company about the construction of a steel plant in the area already in June 2005 but the local population has not officially been informed about the plans yet. In the past few months, opponents of the project had to face increasing state violence. Forced eviction from their lands and livelihood resources is a gross violation of the tribal populations' Human Right to Food.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, India and therefore the state of Chhattisgarh, is duty-bound under international law to respect and protect the peasants' human right to adequate food.

As a person working internationally for the Human Right to Food, I would like to ask you to:

Respect the constitutional rights of the Adivasi communities and their land ownership rights guaranteed to them by the provisions of the Constitution of India and stop the forced evictions of the affected villagers and the destruction of the above-mentioned villages;

Publish the Memorandum of Understanding, inform all affected people in the area about the plans for the steel plant and make all action concerning the issue public and transparent.

Please keep me informed about any action you take in this matter.

Yours sincerely,