



FoodFirst Information and Action Network
International human rights organization for the right to feed oneself

Fax

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Regarding: The Adivasis' insufficient access to land in Chitrakoot

Dear Chief Secretary

FIAN-Norway is concerned about the situation for the Adivasi people in Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh. FIAN is an independent, international human rights organisation and is engaged with the right to food. Because of the Adivasis' insufficient access to land and lack of working opportunities in this district, their right to food is seriously threatened. The right to food is entrenched in the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which India signed on the 10th of April 1979.

Members from FIAN-Norway and FIAN-Uttar Pradesh visited five villages, Elha, Shakroha, Jaromuafi, Moutwan and Jagarnathpuram, in Chitrakoot november 2003 to collect information regarding violations of the right to food.

During the last years the inhabitants in these villages have experienced that their legal right to land has been seriously violated and thus leading to malnutrition and undernourishment. This difficult situation for the Adivasis in this area is caused mainly as a result of two factors. Firstly, the Forest Department of Uttar Pradesh has established a forest reserve in the area. The villagers earlier used this area as forest and agricultural land, but with the establishment of the reserve the villagers are now denied access to this land. Secondly, the presence of powerful landlords has led to a situation where areas situated outside the forest have been taken from the villagers, mainly through fraud.

As an organisation working internationally for the right to food we would therefore like to ask:

- The government of Uttar Pradesh to enforce a strict implementation of the Land Ceiling Act. The villagers' lack of adequate food supplies is caused mainly because they are

landless. Local powerful landlords are in possession of large areas of land, which should be redistributed to the landless.

- The government of Uttar Pradesh to consider the Adivasis a scheduled tribe. The government of Uttar Pradesh makes it difficult for the Advasis in the area to feed themselves, as their traditional harvesting of minor forest produce is hampered. We will therefore strongly recommend that the Adivasis in Uttar Pradesh be considered a scheduled tribe, and thereby given an opportunity to uphold their culture and harvest minor forest produce.
- The local government of Chitrakoot to make sure that the Adivasi communities are not subject to harassment, unlawful imprisonment and violence from local police. When imprisoned, people must be provided with sufficient food and water supplies.
- The Forest Department to ensure that when employing people, payments below the standard wage of Rs. 67,50 is unlawful and therefore unacceptable. As a state institution the Forest Department should respect the law, not violate it.

We urge you again to consider implementing respective laws and agreements to restore the Adivasis' access to land and working opportunities. The Land Ceiling Act is an efficient tool in the fight against poverty. It is also a mean to ensure peoples rights to feed themselves through access to productive resources. Please now make a concerned effort to also improve the living standards of Chitrakoot's original people.

We are looking forward to discuss this subject with you. You can reply by ordinary mail, or e-mail if preferred.

Yours sincerely
FIAN-Oslo

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