

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Sixth session  
New York, 14-25 May 2007  
Item 4(b) of the provisional agenda  
Theme: "Environment"

Madam chair,

We on behalf of Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP), Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples North East Zone, ICITP-NEZ, All India Tribal Literary Forum would like to make this collective statement.

We wish to draw your kind attention to a serious incident of gross violation of human rights/right to life of the indigenous and tribal communities of North-East India particularly of Assam.

You might be aware that the Indian parliament recently passed an Act of a far reaching implication pertaining to the recognition and recording of forest/land rights to the Forest Dwelling Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and other Traditional Forest Dwelling Communities. The most significant aspect of the said act is that it is against any eviction of the concerned people from the forest lands which they have been in possession for at least three generations from the day of the law in effect, in addition to provision of deeds of ownership rights and bringing them to the purview of all development activities, which the people have been deprived of so far.

In anticipation of the implementation of this historic redressal, certain land mafias are moving into the forest areas of the country with their ulterior designs. This is what we believe, is involved in the recent kidnapping of the Tirap Indigenous couple, Mr. Prasanna Turung and his wife Komai Turung, by a land mafia working in connivance with the local police at Margherita, Assam. As is well known, the land in the Brahmaputra river valley is best suited for Tea plantation. What we suspect is that the concerned mafia aided by the suspected Pappu Chand, Ramu Chand and Gopal has a vested interest of setting up of a Tea plantation in the community lands under the custodianship of this couple. The police and the local administration seem to have been silenced by the suspected land mafia. Consequently, no serious action is being taken against the real culprits.

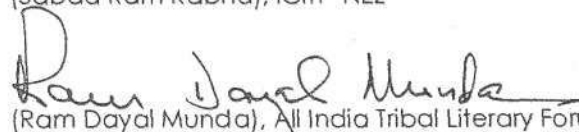
We apprehend a large scale violation of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples and other Traditional Forest Dwelling Communities is going to be unleashed in all forest areas, particularly in the scheduled areas of the country if a timely decisive action is not taken to discourage this kind of move by the concerned vested interest groups.

Madam Chair, through your office we call upon the government of India to take immediate step to intervene and deligate the matter to the Central Beauro of Investigation (CBI), so that proper action could be initiated against the suspected agents of a large scale land grabbing mafias.

Thanking you, Madam, for your kind attention,

  
(Jebra Ram Muchahary), ICITP / India

  
(Sabda Ram Rabha), ICITP-NEZ

  
(Ram Dayal Munda), All India Tribal Literary Forum