

Campaign for Peace and Justice in Chhattisgarh

For the People's Right to Say No to Displacement and Tribal Genocide and to Demand the Right to Live with Justice and Peace

1 December 2009, Raipur / Dantewada

Dear Friends,

You are aware that the tribals of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh State are continuously facing large-scale displacement from their homes, fields and forests as well as a genocide in the last five years. The first aggressive onslaught was by the state sponsored vigilante group called the Salwa Judum. In the last five months, the people of this region are victims of a war called the Operation Green Hunt. Paramilitary troops along with the state armed police deployed in very large numbers by the Central and the state governments are carrying out operations against the tribals in the name of curbing Maoists and reclaiming territories from them.

In order to build public opinion and to support the tribal people in their demand to stop this displacement and genocide and to reclaim their right to live with justice and peace, several community based and people's organisations, union and human rights groups from Chhattisgarh and outside are planning a series of activities in Dantewada in Chhattisgarh.

This letter is being sent to you so that you can block the dates between 14 December 2009 and 7 January 2010 and come to Dantewada in support of tribal people. The list of events and dates are as follows:

1. Padyatra: 14 December to 26 December 2009

A padyatra [journey on foot] from Nendra village to Dantewada town via Lingagiri is being organised that will pass through more than 17 villages. This padyatra will be led by Himanshu Kumar of the Vanvasi Chetna Ashram and this group of approximately 40 persons will mainly consist of students, journalists and activists from all over the country. The main objective is to restore a sense of confidence amongst the tribals who are living in acute fear due to the onslaught of the security forces. The padyatris will also document the atrocities that the tribals have been subjected to

including the situation of hunger, food insecurity, lack of health and educational facilities and other forms of deprivation faced due to the ongoing displacement and war in the region.

2. Dantewada Satyagrah: 25 December 2009 to 5 January 2010

Tribal people from all over Dantewada and other regions of Chhattisgarh will launch a Satyagrah [active non-violent resistance] on 25 December 2009 which will have the support of tribals from Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, among other states. We are hoping that large groups of people from these states and from all National Networks, unions and organisations working on diverse people's issues will respond to this call and join in the Satyagrah for some of these days. The objective of the Satyagrah is to bring together concerned people from all over the country to demand in one voice an end to displacement of people and to the war that is underway in this region.

A Raipur assistance group set up for the Satyagrah will be headed by Shri Rajendra Sail of the PUCL to help people coming to join the Satyagrah from the North, East and West India as well as from other parts of Chhattisgarh. Raipur is situated on the Mumbai-Kolkata route and is well connected by train from most parts of the country. Dantewada is situated 400 kms. from Raipur and direct buses are available between the two towns through the day and night that take about 12 hours each way

People coming from the South can take train or bus from Vishakhapatnam or bus from Hyderabad. The distance is 500 kms. from Hyderabad via Bhadrachalam and takes about 16 hours.

3. Jan Sunwai: 6-7 January 2010 (the date may be advanced or postponed by a day)

The Satyagrah will culminate with a Jan Sunwai where tribal residents of this region will share their experiences of the Salwa Judum, Operation Green Hunt and their struggle for justice. This Jan Sunwai will be witnessed by a panel of ex-justices, senior activists from various people's movements, ex-bureaucrats and policemen, journalists and intellectuals including those from among the tribals.

This letter is a request to you and your group/organisation to begin preparation for your participation in the series of events given above. A more detailed invitation shall be sent to you soon. For more details please contact at the phone numbers provided below.

We are:

Vanvasi Chetna Ashram, People's Union for Civil Liberties (Chhattisgarh), Chhattisgarh Visthapan Virodhi Manch, Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha – Mazdoor Karyakarta Samiti,

Nadi Ghati Morcha, Human Rights Law Network (Chhattisgarh), National Alliance of People's Movements, Chhattisgarh Mahila Jagriti Sangathan, Chhattisgarh Bal Shramik Sangathan, Gram Sabha Parishad, Tribal Welfare Society, and others (endorsements by other organisations are awaited)

<http://cpic.wordpress.com/2009/12/10/invitation-to-dantewada-padyatra-satyagraha-and-jan-sunwai/>