

Struggles in India

## Open Letter to Indian PM

Thursday 12 November 2009, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 12 October 2009).

October 12, 2009

We are deeply concerned by the Indian government's plans for launching an unprecedented military offensive by army and paramilitary forces in the adivasi (indigeneous people)-populated regions of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal states. The stated objective of the offensive is to "liberate" these areas from the influence of Maoist rebels. Such a military campaign will endanger the lives and livelihoods of millions of the poorest people living in those areas, resulting in massive displacement, destitution and human rights violation of ordinary citizens. To hunt down the poorest of Indian citizens in the name of trying to curb the shadow of an insurgency is both counter-productive and vicious. The ongoing campaigns by paramilitary forces, buttressed by anti-rebel militias, organised and funded by government agencies, have already created a civil war like situation in some parts of Chattisgarh and West Bengal, with hundreds killed and thousands displaced. The proposed armed offensive will not only aggravate the poverty, hunger, humiliation and insecurity of the adivasi people, but also spread it over a larger region.

Grinding poverty and abysmal living conditions that has been the lot of India's adivasi population has been complemented by increasing state violence since the neoliberal turn in the policy framework of the Indian state in the early 1990s. Whatever little access the poor had to forests, land, rivers, common pastures, village tanks and other common property resources has come under increasing attack by the Indian state in the guise of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and other "development" projects related to mining, industrial development, Information Technology parks, etc. The geographical terrain, where the government's military offensive is planned to be carried out, is very rich in natural resources like minerals, forest wealth and water, and has been the target of large scale appropriation by several corporations. The desperate resistance of the local indigenous people against their displacement and dispossession has in many cases prevented the government-backed corporations from making inroads into these areas. We fear that the government's offensive is also an attempt to crush such popular resistances in order to facilitate the entry and operation of these corporations and to pave the way for unbridled exploitation of the natural resources and the people of these regions. It is the widening levels of disparity and the continuing problems of social deprivation and structural violence, and the state repression on the non-violent resistance of the poor and marginalized against their dispossession, which gives rise to social anger and unrest and takes the form of political violence by the poor. Instead of addressing the source of the problem, the Indian state has decided to launch a military offensive to deal with this problem: kill the poor and not the poverty, seems to be the implicit slogan of the Indian government.

We feel that it would deliver a crippling blow to Indian democracy if the government tries to subjugate its own people militarily without addressing their grievances. Even as the short-term military success of such a venture is very doubtful, enormous misery for the common people is not in doubt, as has been witnessed in the case of numerous insurgent movements in the world. We urge the Indian government to immediately withdraw the armed forces and stop all plans for carrying out such military operations that has the potential for triggering a civil war which will inflict widespread misery on the poorest and most vulnerable section of the Indian population and clear the way for the

plundering of their resources by corporations. We call upon all democratic-minded people to join us in this appeal.

*Indian Signatories* include Arundhati Roy, Author and Activist, Amit Bhaduri, Professor Emeritus, CESP, JNU, Sandeep Pandey, Social Activist, Prashant Bhushan, Supreme Court Advocate, Nandini Sundar, Delhi School of Economics, Anand Patwardhan, Film Maker, Dipankar Bhattachararya, General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, Sumit Sarkar, Historian, Tanika Sarkar, Professor of History, JNU, Gautam Navlakha, Consulting Editor, EPW and many others.

*International Signatories* include Noam Chomsky, David Harvey, Michael Lebowitz, John Bellamy Foster, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Mira Nair, Howard Zinn, Gilbert Achcar.

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**P.S.**

\* From Liberation, November, 2009.