

An Appeal to the International Community
From the Committee for the Release of
Political Prisoners (CRPP)
to Raise their Voice against State repression
in Lalgarh, West Bengal, India

[Circa June 18, 2009]

The CRPP hereby wish to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of the adivasi people in one corner of the State of West Bengal, India. That area is called Lalgarh--an integral part of Jangal Mahal i.e., Forest area and situated in the West Medinipur district of West Bengal. The tribal people of India had always been the victims of anti-people policies of the ruling classes, be that during colonial times or during the period following the ‘transfer of power’ to friendly hands in 1947. Forest lands were being systematically cleared to make room for agricultural lands for revenue earning. Vast stretches of land were converted into reserved areas by evicting adivasis from their land and habitats on a massive scale. In the recent times, the central and state governments have initiated the land-grab movements so as to facilitate the loot and plunder of the country’s natural and mineral resources by the foreign MNCs.

At a place called Salboni within the same district and somewhat far from Lalgarh, a Special Economic Zone was to be created by the big business house of the Jindals on 5,000 acres of land. In November 2008, immediately after the inauguration of the said SEZ project, the convoy of the WB chief minister, that of one central minister and of Jindal was attacked with landmines by the Maoist insurgents as a result of which some policemen got injured. What followed was police repression of the most brutal kind. Village houses were raided at dawn when people were still asleep, people were arrested, women were humiliated and beaten with rifle butts on all parts of the body and the eyes and molested. One woman lost her left eye as a result of police cruelty. One pregnant wife, whose husband was picked up, was forcibly dragged out of her home and then thrown on the road and beaten up. Schools students returning home after attending a village cultural performance and a retired school and others were picked up and detained illegally on mere suspicion of being involved in the mine explosion. These atrocities were committed in Lalgarh and Binpur areas—far from the site of the mine explosion.

The people of Lalgarh, however, refused to be cowed down by such terror. They formed the People’s Committee Against Police Atrocities and demanded public apology from the police and

compensation for the damage done to the people. They dug roads, felled trees on the roads, formed village committees and this just struggle for dignity and against state brutality has spread to other parts of Jangal Mahal embracing as many as 1,100 villages, if not more, in the three adjoining districts at present. The People's Committee formed village committees, women's branches, youth branches and have carried on development work in the form of the setting up of health centres for free medical care of the poor. They raised demands concerning initiated a total social boycott of the police, raised blockades and check-posts preventing the entry of police and the CPI (M) goons.

After the Lok Sabha elections held recently, and the formation of a Congress-led government at the centre, the central government is all set to send more para-military forces to help the 'left-front' government suppress this just struggle of the people. The central and state forces are being accompanied by CPI (M) led goons who had already set up Salwa Judum-type reactionary organizations to suppress the Lalgarh people's, as they had done in Nandigram earlier. The CPM-sponsored hermands/goons had already attacked many villages controlled by the People's Committee, killed some members, wounded others and burnt a large number of houses. They are bent upon making genocides in the Jangal Mahal area with the backing of the state and central forces. Very recently, when a cultural team from Jangal Mahal went a place called Chakulia in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand to mobilize people to participate in a women's rally scheduled to take place on 5 June, many of them were arrested and molested in the police station and sent to jail. When the committee members proceeded towards the police station to seek release of the political prisoners, they were prevented from doing so by a massive mobilization of state forces and the use of tear-gas shells against the precisionists. The situation is really very critical and needs immediate intervention by the international community.

The CRPP urges upon the international community to raise their voice against the brutality done by the Indian ruling classes to the people of Jangal Mahal to nip their just struggle in the bud by putting pressure on the government of India through various means. The struggle being waged by the people of Lalgarh, nay of Jangal Mahal, is a just struggle and we urge upon you to stand by its side to the best of your ability.

Gursharan Singh
President

Amit Bhattacharyya
Secretary General

SAR Geelani
Vice-President

Rona Wilson
Media Secretary

Postscript:

As reports last came in, the central government has kept its 'Cobra' force—a commando force of the notorious 'Greyhound' type--ready on the Jharkhand-WB border. Helicopter surveys have been going on and the state is preparing for a massive crackdown with the para-military forces and the state police forces to crush this just struggle of the people in pools of blood.

Needless to state, they will be joined by the notorious CPI(M) goons. Nobody knows how many people will fall down dead in the battle ahead, how many people will receive bullet wounds and get disabled for life in the process, how many children would lose their parents, and how many women would be humiliated in their just and heroic struggle for justice and dignity.