

# Survival



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**We are the global movement  
for tribal peoples' rights. We help  
them defend their lives, protect  
their lands and determine their  
own futures.**

**Shri Dr Rajesh Gopal**  
**National Tiger Conservation Authority**

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change,  
First Floor, East Tower, NBCC Place,  
Bhishma Pitamah Marg  
New Delhi 110003  
India

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12 January 2015

Dear Mr Gopal,

**Re: Illegal evictions of tribal communities from Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.**

Survival International, the global movement for tribal peoples' rights, submitted a report to the NTCA in May last year (which is appended to this letter). We have yet to receive a response from the NTCA and would be grateful for an update from your office on your investigations into this matter.

Our submission concerned the 2013 illegal evictions of tribal families from Similipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha and the threat of further legal evictions there.

Since the date of our last letter, residents of Jamunagarh village in Similipal have reported being tricked, threatened and harassed into agreeing to 'relocate' from the Reserve, in blatant breach of Section 38V(5) of the Wildlife Protection Act Amendment (2006).

Moreover, in the summer of 2014, thousands of people were illegally evicted from Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. All the families in the villages of Jholar, Ajanpur, Bithli, Benda, Rol and Sukri were removed from their homes in the core of Kanha. We have found **no** evidence that **any** of the conditions stipulated in 38V(5) of the Wildlife Protection Act were met.

Villagers from these evicted communities have reported to us that

1. The free, prior and informed consent of the gram sabha was not given and they were pressurised and threatened, as individuals, to sign documents and / or agree to leave.
2. They had not applied for their forest rights, let alone had them registered or settled prior to their eviction
3. They were not given the option of land (option II under the NTCA Protocol), nor have any but a small minority received the full 10 Lakh Rupees that they should be entitled to under Option I.
4. Several were threatened by members of the Forest Department (FD) that, if they did not leave quickly, FD elephants would be used to trample their homes and fields

We have found no evidence in our researches to show that coexistence of the villagers and the wildlife has been proved to be impossible, as stipulated by the Act. Although some villagers did agree to leave voluntarily, most left only because they felt they had no other option and that they could no longer bear the restrictions, harassment and pressure from the FD.

Since their eviction, families report having had to 'scatter' to different villages; receiving abuse, including racial abuse, from residents of the villages where they are trying to settle; being tricked and cheated by middle men and land agents; and feeling lost, frightened and without means of livelihood or hope for their future.

We therefore ask that you act with great haste to investigate these illegal evictions, bring to justice those members of the relevant Forest Departments who are responsible for these illegalities and ensure that those who wish to return to their homes in Kanha are assisted to do so. We also call on you to enact a moratorium on any further relocations from tiger reserves unless and until it can be assured that **all** the conditions in the Act will be met in **all** cases.

Yours sincerely



**Stephen Corry**  
Director

Cc

Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister for Environment Forests and Climate Change  
Shri Jual Oram, Minister for Tribal Affairs  
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Madhya Pradesh  
Field Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh