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We help tribal peoples defend  
their lives, protect their lands  
and determine their own futures.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination  
Human Rights Treaties Division  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson - 52, rue des Pâquis  
CH-1201 Geneva  
Switzerland

February 14, 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

Survival International is an NGO, with consultative status in ECOSOC, campaigning for the rights of tribal peoples. On November 28, 2006, we submitted a report regarding the threats faced by the Jarawa tribe in the Andaman Islands, India, to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The Committee subsequently raised our concerns in the concluding observations of their seventieth session on 19 February – 9 March 2007 and called for the Andaman Trunk Road to be closed.

We would like to provide an update of the situation in the Andamans, and in particular to draw your attention to the recent controversy regarding 'human safaris' taking place on the road. These 'safaris' are trips undertaken by tourists who use the Andaman Trunk Road to drive through the Jarawa Reserve in the hope of spotting the tribespeople. Last month, *The Observer*, a British newspaper, published an article written by an undercover journalist who provided evidence of the complicity of police officials in these 'safaris'.

The Jarawa are racially distinct from the Indian settlers and tourists, many of who appear to view the tribe as barely human. One tourist described his trip thus, "The journey through tribal reserve was like a safari ride as we were going amidst dense tropical rainforest and looking for wild animals, Jarawa tribals to be specific". The racism which gives rise to these 'safaris' can be seen in the tourists' behaviour toward the Jarawa; many throw sweets and biscuits in order to lure the tribespeople, mainly children, toward the vehicles in order to photograph and film them. A video of one such instance of abuse was released by *The Observer* and is an example of the abuse that the Jarawa have to endure on a regular basis.

The road brings a daily invasion of outsiders into the Jarawa territory, and makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by outsiders. The Supreme Court in 2002 acknowledged the harmful impact of the road on the Jarawa, and ordered the sections which run inside or along the Reserve to be closed. The Andaman administration however, has ignored the ruling and continues to operate the road in defiance of the order.

Following Survival's 2006 report, which highlighted these concerns, CERD made the following statement in paragraph 19 of its concluding observations on India:

*'... it (India) should protect tribes such as the Jarawa against encroachments on their lands and resources by settlers, poachers, private companies or other third parties **and implement the 2002 order of the Indian Supreme Court to close the sections of the Andaman Trunk Road that run through the Jarawa reserve.**'*

We are greatly concerned that ten years after an order from the highest court of the country, and five years after a statement from the UN, the Indian government is yet to take action on the Andaman Trunk Road.

Unprecedented outrage in India, and internationally, generated by the video showing the abuse faced by the Jarawa gives some hope for change. The Ministers for Home Affairs and Tribal Affairs both promised action. However, their attention was focused more on the actions of tour operators and the police rather than on the fundamental issue of the road. Unless the road is closed the threat to the Jarawa's existence is very real. They could easily be decimated or reduced to a state of dependency like many of their neighbouring tribes.

We respectfully urge CERD to take appropriate measures to raise the issue again with the Indian government. We also urge the Committee to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its call, and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court order, by reiterating its call for the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road. The current ministerial attention on this issue in India will enable the call to be heard more widely than it was in 2007.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Corry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Corry  
Director