

ILO 169

WHAT

IS IT?

ILO 169 is a convention of the International Labour Organisation, which is part of the UN. It is the most important international law for tribal peoples.

The convention recognises the land ownership rights of tribal people, and says they should be consulted on developments that affect them. Governments which ratify ILO 169 are legally bound to abide by it.

WHY

IS IT IMPORTANT?

The UN recently adopted a new declaration on indigenous peoples' rights. This is a great step forward, because it sets basic standards for how governments should treat tribal peoples. However, it does not have the force of law, and no sanctions can be applied to countries that ignore it.

ILO 169, by contrast, sets a series of standards for the treatment of tribal people, which governments who sign it are legally obliged to abide by. The more countries that ratify it, the greater the effect it has.

The convention recognises tribal peoples' right to equality and freedom from discrimination, and requires governments to consult them when taking decisions that will directly affect them. Most importantly, ILO 169 recognises that tribal peoples collectively own their lands and territories, and that they should not be forcibly evicted from them.

WHAT

IS THE PROBLEM?

The British government refuses to sign up to the convention, saying it is not relevant as no tribal people live in the UK. However, this has not prevented other countries in a similar position, such as Spain and the Netherlands, from doing so.

Ratifying ILO 169 would commit the UK government to basic standards of consultation for the 'development' projects it funds that affect tribal people. UK-based companies operating on tribal lands would also be under increased pressure to abide by the convention's principles.

There is no reason for the UK government not to ratify the convention, other than a reluctance to commit to the protection of tribal people and the need to consult them about projects which may profoundly change their future.

HOW

CAN YOU HELP?

Please write to the British government using this text or your own words: 'I am writing to urge the UK government to ratify ILO Convention 169 on tribal and indigenous people. The UK government has a duty, as a member of the UN and EU, to promote and encourage respect for tribal peoples' rights.

Furthermore, it has a direct responsibility to ensure their rights are protected, through the impact of its development projects on tribal communities around the world. ILO Convention 169



Yanomami father with his children, Brazil.



Himba mother and child, Namibia.



Woorani, Ecuador.

is currently by far the most effective way of protecting tribal peoples' rights, and the UK government should ratify it as soon as possible.'

Please send your letter to:

The Prime Minister
10 Downing St
London
SW1A 2AA
Fax: 020 7925 0918

Please also send a copy to your local MP. You can write to your MP directly through this website: www.writetothem.com

WHY

BOTHER?

Other governments have proven themselves receptive to campaigns to ratify ILO 169: this year the Spanish government signed up after a long campaign led by Survival supporters.

Widespread ratification of ILO 169 will make it harder for governments all over the world to ignore tribal peoples' rights to their land and the need to consult them on relevant issues. Ratification of the convention means that the protection of tribal populations is a subject of international concern.

THE STORY SO FAR:

1957 >>
The first ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 107) is adopted. 27 ratifications, of which 18 are still in force.

1989 >>
ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) is adopted, providing further protection for tribes.

1990 - 1998 >>
Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands ratify ILO 169. By 2003, there are 17 ratifications of the convention.

2006 >>
Spain agrees to sign up to the convention. The Spanish Prime Minister thanks Survival for its work on the issue.

2007 >>
UN adopts the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unlike ILO 169, it is not legally binding. Nepal ratifies ILO 169.

THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS.



