

## ***CORRESPONDENCE***

### **Open Letter to the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal, Tripura and West Bengal**

*From the Steering Committee of the International Critical Geography Group (ICGG)*

*On the occasion of the Fifth International Conference of Critical Geographers, December 3-7, 2007 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India*

December 7, 2007

Geographers, other social scientists and activists from tens of countries around the world met at the Fifth International Conference of Critical Geography in the city of Mumbai at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2007. The purpose was to facilitate lateral flows of knowledge and identify, discuss, and propose alternatives to many of the world's prevailing patterns of development. A key concern arising from the research results presented at the conference was the destruction of the livelihoods, if not the very lives, of millions of people in India and worldwide.

We are shocked and pained by the state supported/sponsored repression and outright violence and atrocities in many parts of India, such as the brutally suppressed Adivasi uprising in Kalinganar in 2005 when 14 local activists were killed; the recent attempts to evict peasants and Adivasis by force so as to enable corporations to invade and make profits from their lands; the massacres in Nandigram, West Bengal in March and November, 2007 and the deadly attacks in late November, 2007 in Orissa. All these illustrate a lack of interest by the National and local State governments to prevent such attacks, which are designed to force people off their land to create Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the like for a few, such as the Salim Petrochemical Plant SEZ and the Posco iron and steel project in West Bengal and Orissa respectively. The horrific situation of Adivasis in Jharkhand is another case in point. Projects of resource extraction for wealth accumulation by and for the few have entailed massive forced migrations and impoverishment for Adivasis. It is astonishing that such projects are being promoted by the State and Union governments. We also strongly condemn continuing colonialism within the existing borders of India and the violent repression of movements towards protecting the fundamental rights and condemning State atrocities in places like Manipur in North-east India.

These ongoing atrocities compel us to demand that the National and State governments immediately desist from supporting, either directly or indirectly, current repressive actions against national minorities, peasants, fishing folk, Adivasis and similarly situated marginalised communities. We urge academics, activists and common people from other countries to come forward with similar demands to end such state-sanctioned violence and displacements of poor people, and reinstate and defend the rights of the dispossessed to their lands and resources.

In solidarity with all oppressed peoples of India and the rest of the world,

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the International Critical Geography Group,

Abel Albet i Mas, Swapna Banerjee-Guha, Lawrence Berg, Eric Clark, Caroline Desbiens,  
Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro, Jeronimo Montero, Joe Painter, Geraldine Pratt, Saraswati Raju,  
Blanca Ramírez, Susan Ruddick, Neil Smith, Judit Timár  
and of participating activists