

Rally Against War on People

from Ramlila Maidan to Parliament Street

11 am, 17th December 2009, New Delhi

Dear friends,

For a vast majority of the people of our country, these are indeed difficult times. It is not just because the prices of every commodity in the market is rising sky high, not even because jobs are being cut and workers are facing retrenchment, also not because health care and education are increasingly going out of reach of the man on the street. In this period of an all-encompassing crisis, when a vast majority of the people in the cities and villages of this country are struggling to procure even the basic necessities of life and to make the ends meet, a greater and more immediate crisis is looming large on a section of the most oppressed people of this country: the entire population of central and eastern India. This crisis is forced upon them because the Indian government led by Manmohan Singh and P Chidambaram has declared war on the people, a war not against any external enemy, but against our own people. This war however is not going to be confined to the forested and far-off adivasi regions alone. It will engulf the entire country and all its inhabitants, including each one of us. It is a desperate attempt of the Indian government to wriggle itself and the big corporations out of the present economic crisis which has engulfed the entire capitalist world and their dependent economies. This is a war against the poorest and most exploited of our people, a war that we must make all efforts to stop.

A war against the people: As a result of the government's militarisation, a civil war situation is building up in the regions of central and eastern India encompassing Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal and adjoining areas, inhabited primarily by the adivasis. After Kashmir and North East, where the Indian government has been fighting the nationality movements for decades, it is now opening its third war front. The central government is drawing its troops from Kashmir and the North East for deployment in the regions where Operation Green Hunt is presently going on. More than 100,000 soldiers of the Indian security forces are already operating in these regions, and these forces are being increased to 2,50,000. Central paramilitary forces such as CRPF, IRB, ITBP, CISF, along with Grey Hounds, CoBRA and other special forces, state police and Special Police Officers, state-sponsored vigilante gangs like Salwa Judum, Sendra, Nagarik Suraksha Samiti, Tiritiya Prastuti Samiti, Harmad Vahini, Sunlight Sena etc., all are being pitted against the adivasi people. The special units of the army such as the Rashtriya Rifles are being readied for deployment, air force helicopters and drone surveillance aircrafts are brought in to strengthen the war operations. The government is taking help of intelligence inputs from US defense satellites too, as was revealed during the joint paramilitary operations in Lalgahar, West Bengal. It is worth noting that many teams of US security establishment secretly visited Chhattisgarh in order to assess and assist in the government's war preparations. Draconian laws like the UAPA, NSA, Chhattisgarh Public Securities Act etc. has been put in place to silence all voices of resistance and

dissent and to give the security forces a license to kill without impunity, as AFSPA has been used in Kashmir and North East. This is in addition to the state's routine acts of extra-legal murders through fake encounters and custodial killings, of using torture, rape and arson as means to crush the people's resistance against exploitation and repression in all these regions. The results of all these moves by the government have already started to take its toll.

The war has begun: After the war was started on 1st November this year, the casualty among the people is escalating by each passing day, as grows the number of burnt villages, persons displaced, injured or arrested, as per the sporadic news from the war zone that through the media. By mid-November, more than 12 villages have been completely ravaged, their inhabitants forced to take shelter deep in the forests. Two separate incidents of mass killings took place in Dandakaranya and one in Orissa, in which more than 17 adivasis were murdered by the government's armed forces. There are reports that thousands of adivasis are abandoning their houses in Chhattisgarh and migrating to adjoining Andhra Pradesh after the Operation Green Hunt was launched. The renewed offensive by the joint forces in Lalgahar too has left hundreds of protesting adivasis homeless. The brutalities of the government forces are increasing by every passing day as can also be seen in Narayanpatna, Orissa. Last month, adivasi peasants demonstrating for land rights were fired at by the police killing two leaders of the Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha. Seventy two people were arrested on cooked-up charges. Cantonments are being built and school buildings are being used to station Security Forces in these areas. Three districts in UP in adjoining Allahabad have been declared 'Naxal-infested', and an AIKMS meeting of peasants and workers was disallowed by the government. No open meeting is now allowed in this region. Given these developments, the number of dead and injured people along with the displaced and destroyed villages will only mount in the coming weeks if the Indian government does not call for an immediate halt to this military offensive against the people, against our fellow citizens. And the government is not going to stop this war on its own, it can only be stopped by building up a strong people's resistance against it.

Whose war and against whom? The declared aim of this war is to 're-establish the sovereign rule of the Indian state' by clearing off these areas from the Naxalites or Maoists. However, this war is being fought by the Indian government at the behest of the corporates and for their benefit, targeting the life and livelihood of lakhs of adivasis. The worldwide imperialist economy presently faces its most severe crisis after 1929. The military-industrial complex, which includes multinational and Indian big business interests, is looking for wars that have the potential to artificially generate the much-needed demand for their products in a crisis-ridden market. Moreover, this war is an attempt to forcibly displace the adivasis from their ancestral homeland and hand over their

land and forests to the multinational and Indian corporations who will then plunder the rich natural resources. One of the main proponents of this war on people is Manmohan Singh, who was an economist with the World Bank controlled by US imperialism before he joined active politics. Till the day of becoming the finance minister of the UPA government, P Chidambaram was a member of the Board of Directors in Vedanta, the British mining multinational. He was also the lawyer of the notorious US electricity corporation, Enron. Both Singh and Chidambaram have been die-hard advocates of foreign investment to the country, the two foremost agents of US imperialism in the country. Three years back in June 2006, the prime minister told the parliament that 'the environment for foreign investment is going to be severely affected if left-wing extremism continues to grow and expand in the mineral-rich regions of the country'. This makes it very clear to understand whose interest the government is waging this war. This at the same time is to crush all forms of resistance against the policies of the government. In the pretext of this war, the government has imposed an undeclared emergency, and is curbing the democratic rights of the citizens guaranteed by the Constitution. Right to free speech and opinion is restricted or is denied outright, the media is being muffled, bribed and censored to ensure that only the government's version gets publicity. A situation already exists in many parts of the country where any protest or dissent against government policies is branded as anti-national or 'against the national interests', where any form of resistance movement is termed as 'Naxalism' or 'Maoist' and persecuted.

From the year 2001 onwards, there was a scramble among various state governments to outsmart one another in inviting foreign investors and big business houses of the country to their respective states, and to conclude hundreds of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). In Jharkhand itself, more than 100 MoUs were signed by the state government with Mittal, Jindal, Tata, RioTinto and other foreign and Indian big corporations in the last nine years involving mining projects, steel and aluminum plants, electricity plants, dams, and so on. In Orissa too, companies like Vedanta, POSCO, RioTinto, Tata, Hindalco, Jindal and Mittal are eyeing for the unexplored natural resources. The BJP government in Chhattisgarh has already concluded many agreements with big corporations to set up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the mining sector. In these three states alone, agreements worth Rs.873,896 crores of investment in various projects have been concluded till September 2009. In addition, the people of Bengal, Maharashtra, etc. too are facing the forceful acquisition of land, leading to an outburst of people's anger and protests. There are many more MoUs, the information of which the government has been hiding from public view.

Exploited and dispossessed continually by the feudal forces as well as by British colonialism, the adivasi who have been systematically robbed of their natural resources, have continued to pay the heaviest price for 'national interest' even in the post-1947 period. They have been forced to give up their land and forests for big projects, be it for mining or for big dams. Even though constituting about 10 percent of the country's population, the adivasis constitute more than 40 percent of the 5 crore people displaced by such projects in the last six decades. The rich of the country have become richer

by plundering the adivasi land, who themselves have remained the poorest of people. They are among the people who come to our towns, build our houses, construct your metro, work on our roads... people who paid with their land, homes and lives for the benefit of a few. Theirs are the land where our steel, coal, electricity comes from, but has got nothing in return. The rulers have been mindlessly selling away the most precious minerals of the country to the MNCs to extract super-profits at a time when minerals have become scarce anywhere in the world.

The government intensified its onslaught on the people soon after the agreements and MoUs were concluded, and the adivasis in particular subsequently became the targets of state terror. The unleashing of Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh have left hundreds of adivasis dead, raped and mutilated, thousands of houses burnt, and more than seven hundred villages displaced. Children were decapitated, dead bodies of adivasi villagers were mutilated and hung from trees, rape and violence on women was used as a means of state repression. Around three lakh adivasis were forced to leave their villages, of which more than fifty thousand were forcibly kept in Salwa Judum camps. As a recent government report admits, the first of these police camps that came up in Chattishgarh were financed by Essar and Tata. Those who have refused to be herded into these camps or give up their land are being all termed as 'Naxalites', and the Operation Green Hunt launched against them.

The peasants who are largely dependent on land, forests and rivers for their livelihood, particularly the adivasis, have refused to give up their resources for corporate plunder. Inheritors of a glorious legacy of uncompromising anti-colonial struggles, the adivasi masses have organized themselves against age-old exploitation and oppression, against forcible land-acquisition for big projects, and for defending their lives and livelihood. Both unarmed and armed, the resistance movements of the people have been able to beat back the brutal repression of the state, be in the form of police-paramilitary or the Salwa Judum-Harmad. The present war is an intensification of the offensive by the government which has so far failed to crush the people. Though the state is presently targeting the adivasi-inhabited regions for its war offensive, this war is not against the adivasis alone. It is against all the oppressed people who have chosen the path of resistance. Nor is it only against the Maoists and or all Naxalites, but is against any and every people's movement and organization that questions or challenges the imperialist-dictated policies of the govt.

We demand that the Indian government must stop this war on people, followed by an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its armed forces from these regions. All the MoUs and agreements with foreign multinationals and Indian corporations for the plunder of natural resources of the people must be scrapped, and the land forcibly acquired for such projects must be restored to their rightful owners. The rights of the people over land and forests must also be acknowledged. **Participate in large numbers in the RALLY AGAINST WAR ON PEOPLE on 17th Dec. 2009 from Ramleela Maidan to Parliament Street.**

Forum Against War on People

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