

NOTE: The statement was launched for signatures in November 2024. As the state violence continued to escalate, with an exponential increase in the numbers of people killed and other human rights violations, updates were added to the statement in January, February, March and April 2025. These updates have been added at the end of the statement.

International Statement Condemning the Escalating State Violence on India's Indigenous Adivasi Communities in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, India

We, the undersigned, urgently draw global attention to the escalating violence by the Government of India and its security forces against the Indigenous Adivasi communities in the Bastar Division of the state of Chhattisgarh, in central India. Since January 2024, the systematic and severe repression of the Adivasi communities has been escalated, with over 180 [extrajudicial killings](#) [estimated number at the time of writing; at time of going to press on 8 May 2025, the estimated [number is over 450](#)]; currently estimated as numerous arbitrary arrests, and reports of torture and sexual violence. This escalation underscores the [complete negation of universally recognized human rights by the Government of India](#) in a resource-rich region that has come to be characterized by a longstanding cycle of forced displacement, dispossession, and wrongful and illegal appropriation of Adivasi land and extensive militarization.

The Adivasis of Bastar are the custodians of its biodiverse forests, and rely on this ecosystem for their subsistence and livelihoods. Their traditional knowledge and cultural heritage have maintained the delicate balance of the region's ecology. Despite the [Constitution recognizing and protecting the rights of the Adivasi community](#) over their land and resources under the Fifth Schedule, and those granted under the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), and the Forest Rights Act (FRA), the Government of India has steadily allowed extractive

industries to encroach on Adivasi lands. Profit-driven mining enterprises under public-private partnerships and the garb of development has met with [stiff local resistance from the Adivasi people](#).

In response, the Government of India has systematically deployed large numbers of armed forces in the region since over two decades. In 2005, a state-sponsored militia, Salwa Judum, composed of Adivasi youth was launched that targeted Adivasi villages under the guise of combating Naxalite (Maoist) insurgency. Employing “strategic hamletting” tactics, Salwa Judum reportedly burned and emptied 644 villages, displacing approximately 350,000 villagers. [Civil society reports](#) detail brutal reprisals, including extrajudicial killings, [sexual violence](#), forced relocation to camps and [mass scale internal displacement](#). In 2011, in an interim order, the [Supreme Court outlawed](#) the use of Adivasi youth as Special Police Officers (SPOs) in counterinsurgency operations, condemning the state’s tactic of pitting Adivasi against Adivasi. However, despite this ruling, the state is currently deploying the District Reserve Guards (DRG), [a force composed of surrendered Naxalites and local youth](#), as the primary instrument in counterinsurgency operations.

Officially justified as a “counterinsurgency” measure, the [heavy military presence directly facilitates](#) mining activities by public-private corporations on Adivasi lands, using violence as a means to remove resisting communities. The violence against Adivasis in Bastar aligns with [a broader authoritarian agenda](#) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, supported by the Hindu supremacist ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), targeting India's religious and social minorities, and prioritizing corporate enrichment and crony capitalism. In 2022–23, [mineral revenue from Chhattisgarh increased](#), to reach INR 12,941 crores [USD 153 million], with nearly half generated from Bastar’s Dantewada district. During the same time, the civilian-to-security personnel ratio in the region has also increased, to approximately 9:1 in some areas, making Bastar one of the world's most militarized regions. This is manifested by the proliferation of military camps in the region, with camps every 3–4 kilometres in some areas. [A recent report notes](#) that “[t]he proliferation of camps has been accompanied by mass arrests, including of many elected representatives, and members of the Moolvasi Bachao Manch. Framing people under Maoist charges is an easy way to silence their legitimate constitutional

demands. Based on official figures, 6,804 arrests have been made in Bastar region from 2011 to 2022” [see also below regarding the Moolvasi Bachao Manch].

As the Government of India hides behind the facade of “counterinsurgency” operations, [the armed police forces of India act with impunity](#) to intimidate, harass and torture the Adivasi people as well as committing extrajudicial killings and sexual violence. The use of severe, systematic and widespread violence as a means to remove resisting communities from mining areas includes using of state-of-the-art weaponry by the forces, such as drones which are being used reportedly for [surveilling the people’s everyday lives](#) and [bombing with drone-launched](#) mortar bombs.

The escalation in violence that the region is currently witnessing as well as the massive deforestation and increase in mining activities, is endangering the survival of the Adivasi peoples, and [portends severe ecological impacts](#) with implications for India and the global community.

These military operations of the security forces have reportedly led to the deaths of over 180 Adivasis in 2024 alone, with authorities claiming that these are “Naxalites” killed in encounters. However, [local Adivasi communities vehemently dispute these claims](#), alleging that many of these purported encounters were, in fact, staged executions, with victims being unarmed, and [picked up from their homes or fields](#). Moreover, in cases where confrontations with Naxalites have occurred, the police are accused of [executing those apprehended](#) instead of following due process. Many were said to carry “bounties on their heads” [that are distributed among the units](#) carrying out the operations, which has created further incentive for unlawful executions. All of these violate international humanitarian and human rights law applicable in conflict areas, and Constitutional and legal provisions of India itself.

Another particularly concerning development is Chhattisgarh state’s planned acquisition of 54,543 hectares of the Abujhmad forest in Bastar for an Indian Army training range. This will displace [nearly 10,000 Adivasis from 52 villages](#). The destruction of this unique forest ecosystem will also have cascading effects on biodiversity, water cycles, and climate resilience. Villagers fear that the occupation of

these indigenous lands will extend beyond training purposes, potentially involving the Indian Army in military operations against its own citizens. It is in these forests that many of the recent killings have occurred [including on 4 October 2024](#), when 35 people were reported killed.

We also highlight the targeting of [youth Adivasi human rights defenders \(HRDs\) at the forefront](#) of movements in the region to safeguard their lands from forcible land acquisition for military, mining, and other industrial ‘developmental’ projects. The peaceful movements with ongoing sit-in protests at multiple sites across Bastar include the [Moolvasi Bachao Manch](#) (Save the Indigenous Peoples’ Movement; MBM) and Maad Bachao Andolan [Save Mount Maad Movement]. On 8 November 2024, [eight members of MBM](#) were illegally detained along with about 50 villagers, of which [seven MBM members and about 18 villagers remain detained](#), and on 30 October the Chhattisgarh Government issued a notification in which MBM has been deemed an “unlawful” organisation [for a period of one year](#), highlighting the ongoing crackdown on indigenous activists in Bastar. Previously, Maad Bachao Manch president [Lakhma Koram](#), Adivasi Adhikar Bachao Manch leader [Vijendra Korram](#) and MBM co-founder [Suneeta Pottam](#) were arrested in false cases. The arrest of [Sarju Tekam](#), convenor of the Bastar Coordination Committee of Mass Movements (Bastar Jan Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti) and the Vice-President of Sarva Adivasi Samaj, a collective of all Adivasi organizations in Chhattisgarh, under anti-terror laws, also exemplifies the intensified suppression of dissent.

The heavy militarization of Bastar also has direct and indirect environmental impacts. Security forces, operating in ecologically sensitive areas, establishing camps, constructing multi-lane highways and using explosives are destroying natural habitats and impacting wildlife. The drone surveillance and mortar bombings inflict additional ecological stress, including forest fires and soil degradation. Such activities not only endanger local species but also undermine the regenerative capacity of these ecosystems.

A Call for Urgent International Intervention

What is unfolding in Bastar is not merely a territorial conflict or insurgency—it is a struggle for survival, dignity, and the recognition of Indigenous rights in the face of state violence and corporate greed.

We do not use these words lightly. The situation in Bastar demands immediate and decisive action. People across the world must act now to end the cycle of repression and to ensure that the voices of Adivasi communities are heard and respected. Silence in the face of the Government of India's atrocities would make the world complicit in the erasure of indigenous communities in this region.

We, therefore, call on people all over the world to demand:

- **Immediate Cessation of State Violence:** Demand an immediate end to all forms of state violence against the Adivasi communities in Bastar, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture. The ongoing violence, carried out under the pretext of counterinsurgency, must cease immediately, and those responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable.
- **Demilitarization of Bastar:** Call for the urgent demilitarization of Bastar and the dismantling of military camps in the region. The extensive militarization, which has transformed Bastar into one of the world's most militarized zones, must be reversed. The Government of India must prioritize peaceful dialogue and political engagement with Adivasi communities over military and security measures. The Adivasis' legitimate demands for autonomy, land rights, and self-determination must be addressed through political solutions, not violence.
- **Compliance with Supreme Court Orders:** Demand that the Government of India fully complies with the 2011 Supreme Court order prohibiting the recruitment of Adivasi youth for military operations. This practice violates both domestic and international law.
- **Respect for Constitutional and Legal Protections:** Demand full enforcement of constitutional and legal protections for Adivasi communities, including the Forest Rights Act (FRA), Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act

(PESA), and the Fifth Schedule, to protect Adivasi land from state and corporate encroachment.

- **End to Land Grabbing and Adherence to the Principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** The Government of India must halt all plans to acquire Indigenous lands for military, mining, or industrial purposes without the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected Adivasi communities. Any land use must be contingent on Adivasi consent, free from coercion. This includes the planned acquisition of 54,543 hectares of the Abujmad forest for an Indian Army training range.
- **Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Activists:** Demand the protection of Adivasi human rights defenders from threats, arrests, and harassment. End the unlawful detention of activists, including members of Moolvasi Bachao Manch and Maad Bachao Manch, and stop the repression of Indigenous movements.
- **Accountability for Violations of Human Rights and International Law:** Hold the Government of India accountable for violations of international law and human rights in Bastar, including the use of drone surveillance, mortar bombings, and military operations that cause ecological harm and loss of life. Those responsible must face justice.

By endorsing these demands at this urgent hour, people across the world can play a pivotal role in holding the Indian government accountable for its actions and fostering a resolution that upholds the dignity and sovereignty of indigenous peoples. We call on governments, international human rights organizations, and the global public to stand in solidarity with the Adivasi communities in Bastar in their struggle for justice, dignity, and the preservation of their land and culture.

Updates to statement: January to April 2025

January 2025 Update

Since we opened our statement to signatories in November 2024, the number of people killed in Bastar increased exponentially and as of 10 January 2025, over [280 people](#) had been killed as per news reports.

February 2025 Update

The killings and other violations continue in Bastar. Also, on 28 February 2025, the 23-year-old Moolvasi Bachao Manch Bastar Division President Raghu Midiyami, [was arrested on fabricated charges](#) of 'anti-national' activities by the elite National Investigation Agency under the anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. We condemn this arrest of an exemplary youth Adivasi human rights defender who has been demanding the state to [implement the legal and constitutional rights](#) of the Adivasi communities in Bastar.

April 2025 Update

24 April: Intensification of military operations in the Adivasi regions of central India

According to media and ground reports, security operations of an unprecedented scale are currently ongoing across these regions. In the Karregutta hills and adjacent areas alone, [more than 20,000 security personnel](#) have reportedly been deployed to encircle approximately 1,000 members of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), a political organisation primarily composed of Adivasis. Heavy and consistent firing [is being reported](#), including bombing.

This militarised offensive is being conducted [despite multiple public statements](#) by the CPI (Maoist) offering a one-month ceasefire and readiness for unconditional peace talks, contingent solely on the government's suspension of military operations. In fact, they have already declared a unilateral ceasefire, instructing their cadres not to initiate any attacks unless provoked or fired upon.

Rather than seizing this opportunity for dialogue, the Indian state has responded by [intensifying its assault](#). Whether or not one agrees with the political programme of the CPI (Maoist), its members are Indian citizens—many of them Indigenous people asserting their constitutional right to defend their lands, forests, and autonomy. A

democratic state cannot claim legitimacy while unleashing violent repression against a political formation that has explicitly sought negotiation.

[An urgent appeal](#) has been sent to President Droupadi Murmu by hundreds of Indian civil society organisations and individuals, clearly stating that a unilateral ceasefire by the government is not a matter of political charity, but a constitutional obligation rooted in India's foundational values.

On the killings

The killings in Bastar have intensified further, with a [disturbing surge in extrajudicial executions](#) carried out under the guise of 'encounters', driven by a state-sanctioned reward system. After each killing, the state issues press releases claiming the deceased was a Maoist with a reward on their head—yet these bounties are almost always declared posthumously, and no public list of wanted individuals has ever been released. In this perverse economy of death, posthumously declared cash rewards are used to retroactively legitimise executions, then disbursed among security personnel upon the production of a body. Death becomes the evidence, the justification, and the reward. This has [commodified killing and institutionalised impunity](#) on an industrial scale.

Around 400 people have been killed since November 2024, with at least 165 in the [first four months of 2025](#). One estimate suggests that up to one-third of those killed since January 2024 may have been unarmed civilians. Even where Maoist party members were killed, eyewitness accounts indicate that these too [were custodial executions](#) — not battlefield fatalities. The majority of those affiliated with the Maoist party who have been killed [are themselves Adivasis](#), including a significant number of Indigenous women fighters.

Bastar is no longer just a site of conflict — it is being transformed into a killing field. What we are witnessing is not counterinsurgency but a slow-motion genocide, enabled by militarised governance, judicial silence, and global indifference. If this machinery of violence is not dismantled, the very survival of Indigenous communities in Bastar stands at grave risk.

On Raghu Midiyami

Since Raghu Midiyami's arrest on 27 February 2025, [it has come to light](#) that he was seriously injured in a road accident shortly before his detention. Despite suffering from visible injuries to his hands, legs, and neck, he was arrested and remanded to custody without any medical attention. Since then, his condition has reportedly deteriorated further, yet he continues to be denied adequate medical care. Instead of ensuring treatment, the NIA obtained seven days of custodial interrogation and transported him to Raipur — over 280 kilometres from the Jagdalpur prison where he was originally lodged. The denial of urgent medical care while under custodial interrogation amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment — and forms part of a broader pattern of state reprisal against Indigenous rights defenders in Bastar.

SIGNATORIES

Organizations

International Solidarity with Academic Freedom in India (InSAF India) (worldwide)

India Justice Project, Germany

Foundation the London Story, Netherlands

London Mining Network, UK

Indian Alliance Paris

Abe Hayeem, Chair of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine

South Asian Diaspora Action Collective (SADAC)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas/ECMIA

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Copenhagen

International Land Coalition, Asia

Land Forum India (International Land Coalition)

International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation

Other indias, Amsterdam

Ekō (International)

India Labour Solidarity (UK)

Money Rebellion UK

Transform South Asia

SOAS Bla(c)k Panthers
Money Rebellion London
Solifonds, Switzerland
Coal Action Network, UK
Ecoforensic CIC
Rational Medicine Network
South Asia Solidarity Group
Hindus for Human Rights, International
Stoke Palestine Solidarity Campaign (UK)
India Civil Watch International
Corner House
POSSIBLE FUTURES, Phillipines/Brazil
Earth Thrive, UK/Serbia
Yes to Life, No to Mining, Global (64 orgs)
CATAPA vzw
Revolutionary Writers Association
Stop Operation Kagaar Committee, United States
Anti-imperialist front, UK
Land Skills Hub, UK
Food Not Cops Brum, Birmingham, UK
The RYSE (Radical Youth Space for Educations), UK
International League of Peoples' Struggle UK
Leeds Students Against Apartheid Coalition, UK
Red Guards - Sheffield, UK
Global Majority Copwatch, UK
Revolutionary Students' Front, West Bengal, India
Queers For Palestine Birmingham, UK
Alleanza friulana Domini collettivi, Ravascletto - Friuli – Italia
End Fossil Occupy, Utrecht
Utrecht University Encampment
Justice For All Canada
Campaign to Defend Nature and People
Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida
Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment

International League of Peoples' Struggle - Commission on Environment and Climate Justice

Peoples Rising for Climate Justice

cBalance

Roots for Equity

Rede Cosmopolíticas

Center for Environmental Concerns – Philippines

Asia Pacific Network of Environmental Defenders

Individuals

Chihiro Geuzebroek, Pax peace prize winner 2022 and cofounder Aralez Foundation

Gail Orduna, Global Coordinator of People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty

Maddy Ryle, TerraJusta

Lotika Singha, InSAF India

Partho Sarothi Ray

Sruti Bala, University of Amsterdam

Mary Mathai

Ritumbhra Manuvie, University of Groningen

Henna Amin

Shishu Ranjan

Anisha Pucadyil, London

Sacha Ismail, Worker in UK fire service, activist in trade unions FBU and UNISON

Minesh Parekh, Councillor for Crookes and Crosspool, Sheffield City Council, UK

Prabir KC

Rafela Fitzhugh, Fossil Free Science Museum, UK

Sarah Kinlen

Mike Rowley

Gopa Roy

Sofia Karim, Turbine Bagh, London

Malcolm Hunter, Labour Party, UNISON and Friends of the Earth

Abha Sur

Sana Rizvi

Alba Fieira Vilariño

Roshan Lal, India Labour Solidarity UK

Thomas Niblett

Chris Flanagan, UNISON South Staffordshire & Shropshire Healthcare Branch

Yvonne Zimmermann, Solifonds

Jake Simms, London Mining Network

Surinder Guru

Emma Scholin Tipping

Charlotte Tipping

Dr Andy Higginbottom

Ronak M Soni N/A

Prof. Felix Padel

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Madhusudhan Raman, University of Delhi

Gayatri Chakrvorty Spivak, Columbia University, USA

Saad Quasem, SOAS University of London

Dr Vanja Hamzić, SOAS University of London

Jens Lerche, SOAS University of London

Vinita Damodaran, University of Sussex

Madhuvadhani M, PhD Scholar

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Dillon Maxwell, UCU

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Egbert Wever, Extinction Rebellion Landbouw the Netherlands
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Karuna DW, Academic, Bangalore
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Maithri, the Netherlands
Pallavi Banerjee, Canada
Irene Shankar, Professor of Sociology
Gabor Papp
Saswati Ghosh, Kolkata
Rohan D'Souza, Kyoto University
Simon Senn
Suzanne Senn
Jo Goutrié, the Netherlands
E. Smeets
Adwait Gaikwad, University of Witwatersrand
Karan Singha
Suchetana Ghosh, Kolkata
Professor David Treece, King's College London
Ruben Reus
Prakriti, Feminist researcher
Prajval Shastri
Dr Philipp Zehmisch, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University
Thabo Huntgeburth, SOAS, London
Marco Bassi, University of Palermo
Biraj Mehta
Randall Sequeira, Odisha
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Sabine Feuillet, France
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Akudo McGee
Julia Sallabank
Esther Kuiler
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Dayton Andrews, Committee to Stop Operation Kagaar, USA
Arya Baburaj, Researcher
Salisha Chandra
Lucian Stephenson
Louisa dix
Amanda Waters
Colin Walker
Sharanya Nayak
Otto, Red Guard, UK
Nikita Naidu, Climate Action Specialist
Deepak Kumar, Campaign Against State Repression
Pradyumna Behera, IIT Bombay
Kristina Babiera, PCFS Global Secretariat - Philippines
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AS Vasantha Kumari

vs krishna, Human Rights Forum

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