

## Press Release

### **CNAPA calls for withdrawal of all forces from inside Nagarahole forests and recognition of rights under FRA for 52 families of Karadikallu Hattur Kollehaadi**

**Bangalore, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2025**

Around 120 personnel from Karnataka Forest Department, Karnataka state police and the Karnataka State Tiger Protection Forces (STPF) are currently forcefully trying to drive out around 150 (52 families) Jenu Kuruba Adivasi women, men and children from their ancestral village Karadikallu Hattur Kollehaadi from inside the Nagarahole forest. On 5<sup>th</sup> May, the 52 Jenu Kuruba families asserted their rights to their forest lands vested under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 and constructed homes for their sacred deities in their native village as per their customs for rebuilding a village. On 5<sup>th</sup> May evening, the Assistant Conservator of Forest, along with other officials of the Forest Department, forest guards and state police tried to stop them from performing their rituals and construction of sacred places on the pretext that their claims under the FRA have not yet been recognised. This morning, on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025, almost 120 paramilitary troops of the Forest Department, along with state police, have been deployed to forcibly remove them from their lands. The media is not being allowed to speak to the people and the area has been cordoned off.

The Jenu Kuruba leaders of Karadikallu argued with the ACF that they have already followed the due process of law, and that it is the Forest Department that is violating the 3 month notice period under the FRA, within which they are supposed to respond to claims filed for Individual Forest Rights (IFR), Community Forest Rights (CFR) and Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR). Recently, claims were filed by the people of Thundumundage Kolli Gaddehaadi, Kanturuhaadi (Brahmagiri pura), Karadikallu Hatturkollihaadi and Balekkovuhaadi for recognition of IFR, CFR and CFRR rights inside Nagarahole forests.

The Jenu Kurubas of Karadikallu have filed their IFR, CFR ad CFRR claims in 2021 and since then have been submitting memorandums and bringing it to the notice of senior authorities in the government for recognition of their forest rights. Even though the joint verification and GPS survey of their claims was conducted by the Panchayat Department, Tribal Welfare Department, Revenue officials and Forest Department personnel, the latter is now refusing to recognise the claims.

Infuriated by the deliberate delay in recognition of rights, the Jenu Kuruba leaders stated very firmly that they will not wait any longer. “The Forest Rights Act does not give us rights, but affirms that we already have the rights to our forest land. Therefore, we will assert our rights and whichever authority wishes to dialogue with us, they will have to come here to Karadikallu and speak to us in our Gram Sabha. Our Gram Sabha will continue to stand strong and resist any attempts by the Forest Department to call us encroachers and throw us out of our own lands,” said JA Shivu, president of the Karadikallu Forest Rights Committee (FRC) and leader of the local community organisation Nagarahole Adivasi Jammapale Hakku Sthapana Samiti (NAJHSS).

JK Putti, a Jenu Kuruba woman leader and elder reiterates, “We want to bring to the attention of the media that the Preamble of the Forest Rights Act acknowledges that there has been historical injustice to the tribal forest dwelling communities which must be set right by the implementation of all provisions of the FRA. This is an issue of social justice. However, it is being treated by the government as a law and order issue. The deployment of hundreds of officials and paramilitary troops is being done with the sole intention to intimidate and threaten us. But we are not backing down or leaving our ancestral homelands this time.”

Pranab Doley, leader of Community Networks Against Protected Areas (CNAPA), a national network of forest dwellers' community organisations, and also member of the Mising indigenous community of Kaziranga, Assam, made it clear that, "The Forest Department of Karnataka, under the direction of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), has been violating the forest rights of all Adivasi or indigenous peoples across all forest regions of India and denying access to peoples' fundamental human rights, charging them with false cases and treating people who live within and outside forest regions without dignity in the name of tiger conservation". Pranab Doley, who has visited Nagarahole several times, says that he has witnessed how the Jenu Kurubas have been facing several restrictions in collecting forest produce like honey, amla, wax, wild grass, tubers, etc which is their traditional occupation. He also said that the entry and exit into the Jenu Kuruba peoples' home lands has been intentionally obstructed by constructing forest check posts and gates and wired with solar light fencing which give out mild electric shocks if anyone tries to enter the forests post 6 pm.

JK Thimma, president of NAJHSS and member of Thundumundage Kolli Gaddehaadi FRC shared that, "We have been demanding the implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006 since the last two decades. Many of our people like the families of Karadikallu were forced out of the forests when the Wildlife Protection Act was enacted in 1972. Even now, many villages are facing the threat of eviction despite the fact that we are legitimate rightsholders of forest land rights which include Individual forestland, community forests and community forest resource rights.

NAJHSS, in a statement to media has said that, "We the Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba, Yerava and Paniya Adivasi peoples have been living and residing in the Nagarahole forests since many generations, long before the Forest Department was formed. We have been taking care of the forests, wildlife and the biodiversity of the Nagarahole since time immemorial. Forest and wildlife are sacred for our communities and we have been worshipping tigers, elephants, wild dogs, peacocks etc as they carry our spirits of ancestors and protect us. Our ancestors have taught us this way of life where forest, animals and people are equals. We need to care of each other and live together. We will not be deterred by any force from asserting our rights to our forests, animals and peoples, who are all equals in our eyes."

CNAPA unconditionally stands with the people of Karadikallu and Nagarahole and condemns the attempts to intimidate, forcefully evict and desecrate the sacred spaces of the Jenu Kurubas by the Forest Department, its paramilitary troops and the state police. We demand an immediate withdrawal of all forces from inside Nagarahole, allowing media into the Nagarahole forests to interact with the families and immediate recognition of rights under FRA for all the 52 families of Karadikallu Hattur Kollehaadi.

#### **On behalf of CNAPA :**

Pranab, Thimma, Arjun, Telenga, Leeladhar, Rajan, Amir and Venkatesh.

#### **About CNAPA:**

*CNAPA is a coalition of indigenous peoples and forest-dwelling communities, Gram Sabha/Village Council federations, activists, journalists and academics from across India. CNAPA came into being to debunk the idea of protected areas and advocate for justice, rights, and dignity of Indigenous and forest-dwelling communities through dialogues, resistance and cross-solidarity. This community network is committed to strengthening peoples' movements against the destructive idea of militarised fortress conservation imposed upon communities. We work together to dismantle the extractive-colonial-capitalist-casteist conservation model that is inherent to protected areas and to ensure that forests, peoples and animals continue to live as equals.*