

# India's Indigenous Peoples Rise Up Against Evictions From Tiger Reserves

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**Adivasi (Indigenous) people have organized mass protests across India to denounce forced evictions from their forests to make way for tiger reserves.**

Thousands of people facing eviction from their villages, and some already evicted, joined the protests last week and this week at several of the country's most famous tiger reserves – including Nagarhole, Udanti-Sitanadi, Kaziranga, Rajaji, and Indravati. Many more protests are planned.

The director of India's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) sparked outrage among Indigenous communities in July when letters published after a Right to Information request revealed that he had written to Chief Wildlife Wardens in 19 states urging them to evict more Adivasis from tiger reserves.

Almost 700 Adivasi people from 25 villages protested at the entrance gates of Nagarhole in Karnataka state, one of India's best-known tiger reserves. Close to 400,000 Adivasis face eviction from tiger reserves across India.

Leading Adivasi activist JK Thimma said at the protest: "Declaration of tiger reserves on our lands is a violation of the law as our people neither consented to it nor were consulted in the process. Today they have put up signs on our lands declaring them national parks and tiger reserves. NTCA is a trespasser on our lands. This violation of Indigenous rights must immediately stop and the conservationist cartels (including NGOs like WWF, WCS & WTI) who are involved in doing this must be punished according to the law."

The lives of hundreds of thousands of Adivasis in Indian tiger reserves are being destroyed in the name of tiger conservation. The Indian government is illegally evicting them from the land where they have always lived, land which they have always protected.

The big conservation organizations such as WWF and WCS never speak out against the evictions, and claim that "relocations" of tribal people are "voluntary." But the "relocations" are almost always, in fact, forced evictions.

Survival International's Director Caroline Pearce said today: "The Indian authorities seem hellbent on sticking with a totally outdated and discredited colonial model of conservation, one still backed by the likes of WWF and WCS, which views Indigenous peoples as trespassers on their own lands, and brutally evicts them.

"There's a deep-seated racism at work here – the government and conservation organizations view the

Adivasis as second-class citizens at best.

“These evictions are unlawful according to both national and international law, and don’t work – the forest, the Indigenous people and the tigers can’t survive without one another. Conservation organizations and tour operators are complicit in this scandal – once the people have been cleared out of their ancestral forests, tiger reserve tourism is big business.”

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