

URGENT Action



0615UIND,
India:

27.07.2006

**Right to food of
15,000 peasants
threatened by a
car
manufacturing
unit of Tata
Motors in Singur,
district Hooghly,
West Bengal**

More than 15,000 peasants and their families including small holders, agricultural labourers, unregistered sharecroppers, cottage industry workers, local small business people in Singur district Hooghly currently live under the threat of imminent eviction from their land and deprivation of livelihood resources as the Government of West Bengal has decided to acquire their agricultural lands for the construction of "Tata Motors", a car manufacturing unit of Indian MNC Tata.



Background

Seventy two per cent of the people of West Bengal live in rural areas and the majority of them depend on agricultural activities to earn a living and survive. In order to acquire the land from the peasants in Singur, Hooghly, to make way for a car manufacturing plant by Tata, the government has ordered the peasants to immediately stop sowing paddy (now is the paddy sowing season) on their land and accept the States decision to acquire their lands and evict them. There have been no efforts by the state of West Bengal to identify other non-agricultural land for the car manufacturing plant and to protect the peasants' access to land and continue with the agricultural activities.

Around 1500 small holders will be directly affected and around 15,000 peasants, agricultural labourers, unregistered sharecroppers, cottage industry workers, local small business people who depend on the agricultural land will be directly and indirectly affected by the land acquisition. Loss of land and earning opportunities from the land will lead to hunger, malnutrition and starvation. As compensation for the land acquisition only one time monetary compensation is promised, which the small holders think would be below market price. The state has not offered any adequate compensation or sustainable rehabilitation package to the 15,000 peasants who will directly or indirectly lose their livelihood resources. Peasant women will be most severely affected as a result of the evictions as in most cases lands are not recorded in their names and therefore they would not get any compensation themselves. Thus they will lose their access to food producing resources i.e. land and would be exposed to hunger and starvation. In fact the whole process of designing the compensation package is not transparent and there is no participation of the affected people in this process.

FIAN – With human rights against hunger!

FIAN Mandate

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, India and therefore the state of West Bengal is duty bound under international law to respect and protect the peasants' right to adequate food. By acquiring their lands without taking effective steps to ensure the peasants right to feed themselves in a sustained manner, India and the state of West Bengal would violate the people's human right to food and feed themselves.

Call to Action

An international action is urgently needed to protect the right to feed themselves of the peasants. Please write polite letters to the Chief Minister of West Bengal with copies to the Minister In Charge of Land and Land Reforms Department urging them to refrain from forced evictions without ensuring proper long term sustainable rehabilitation of all the people and recommend to them to take steps to identify non-agricultural land for the construction of the Tata Car Manufacturing Unit.

Addresses:

**Shri Buddhadeb
Bhattacharjee
Chief Minister
Government of West Bengal
Writers' Building,
Kolkata 700001
Fax: 0091-33-22145480**

Copies to:

**Shri Abdur Rezzak Mollab
Minister In Charge
Land and Land Reforms
Department
Government of West Bengal
Writer's Building
Kolkata – 700001
Fax: 0091-33-22144025**

End of Action:

**30th of
September,
2006**

***Please inform FIAN
International about any
response you receive
to your faxes and letters.***



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Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee
Chief Minister
Government of West Bengal
Writers' Building,
Kolkata 700001
Fax: 0091-33-22145480

Dear Mr. Chief Minister,

Recently I heard the disturbing news about the threat that 15000 peasants currently face to be imminently evicted from their lands and to be deprived of their livelihood resources in Singur Hooghly, as your government has decided to acquire their agricultural lands for the construction of a "Tata Motors" plant, a car manufacturing unit of Indian MNC Tata.

The land would be acquired by the State (your government) through the Land Acquisition Act, and would be leased or sold out to Tata at a subsidised rate. The selected land is so fertile that the peasants can grow three crops per year. It was brought to my attention that the peasants have been ordered to immediately stop sowing paddy on the land and to accept the State's decision of eviction. The whole process of designing the compensation package is not transparent and there is no participation of the affected people in this process. Only one time monetary compensation is promised, which the peasants think, would be below market price. Other experiences of land acquisition in West Bengal seem to agree with this impression. Neither is economic rehabilitation offered to the 1500 smallholders whose livelihoods would be directly affected, nor is any compensation offered to those thousands of agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and others who depend on these lands indirectly and would be deprived of their livelihoods due to land acquisition. Peasant women would be severely affected as in most cases lands are not recorded in their names and they would not get the compensations themselves. Thus they will lose their access to food producing resources i.e. land and would be exposed to hunger and starvation.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, India and therefore the state of West Bengal is duty bound under international law to respect and protect the peasants' human right to adequate food. As a person working internationally for the right to feed oneself, I would like to ask you to:

1. Immediately allow the peasants to resume (continue) agricultural activities in Singur.
2. Refrain from any forced evictions unless and until
 - the process of land acquisition has been transparent and participatory.
 - steps have been taken to provide adequate land for land compensation to the peasants with guaranteed social and cultural rehabilitation.

I would strongly recommend to immediately take steps to identify non-agricultural land for the construction of the Tata Car Manufacturing Unit.

Please inform me about the action you plan to take in this matter.

Yours sincerely,