

# INDIA: Forced evictions of indigenous peoples during COVID-19 pandemic

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A Briefing Paper by the Indigenous Rights Advocacy Centre

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## 1. Introduction

In order to control surging Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in India, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced a complete country-wide lockdown for 21 days from the midnight of March, 24, 2020, which was later extended up to May 31, 2020 and gradually the country was unlocked in phased manner. At the time of announcing the country-wide lockdown, the Prime Minister with folded hands appealed to citizens to stay inside their homes and not venture out unnecessarily. “The next 21 days are of critical importance for us. As per health experts, a period of at least 21 days is extremely critical to break the infection chain of coronavirus. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, the country and your family could go back 21 years. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, several families will get devastated forever. Hence, you must forget what going out means for the next 21 days. *Stay inside your home, stay inside your home, and do just one thing — stay inside your home,*” he had said (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> “This decision... has drawn a Lakshman Rekha at your doorsteps. You must remember that *a single step outside your home can bring a dangerous pandemic like corona inside*” (emphasis added), he had further added.<sup>2</sup>

However, the indigenous peoples in India, who are referred to as Adivasis (original inhabitants) or tribals, or as Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution of India, have faced ruthless eviction by the State during the COVID-19 pandemic, including during the lockdown period.

Forced eviction constitutes torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which is prohibited under the international human rights law. Forced eviction during COVID-19 pandemic, when the humanity is struggling for survival and basic needs such as housing, food, water, medicine and livelihood, is totally inhuman and should be considered as one of the highest forms of human rights violation.

“In the face of this pandemic, being evicted from your home is a potential death sentence,” stated Leilani Farha, then United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing on April 28, 2020.<sup>3</sup> On August 18, 2020, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the incumbent UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, reiterated his predecessor by saying, “Losing your home during this pandemic could mean losing your life” and called on governments around the world to halt all evictions until the COVID-19 pandemic ends.<sup>4</sup> On July 29, 2021, the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of India, Justice A. K. Mishra while addressing a webinar with the human rights defenders said that “no tribal should be evicted without the settlement of his/her claim related to land rights.”<sup>5</sup>

But the State Governments did not heed to this humanitarian call given by the UN and India’s national human rights watchdog. The Indigenous Rights Advocacy Centre (IRAC) has documented as many as 16 cases of forced eviction of indigenous peoples, including

14 cases of evictions by the forest departments, in different states of India, as reported in the media between April 1, 2020 (i.e. after the COVID-19 lockdown was imposed) and September 30, 2021. Not only that the indigenous peoples were forcibly evicted from their homes and land but also various other atrocities were perpetrated during such eviction drives. Out of the 16 cases of eviction, forest departments were involved in 14 cases in 8 states and one Union Territory (UT) namely Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir (UT), Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. Analysis of these 14 cases of eviction by the forest departments bring out patterns of human rights violations as follows: the forest officials/guards have burnt down the houses in four eviction cases, demolished (pulled down) houses in seven cases, food grains were set on fire in one case, standing crops and agricultural lands were damaged/destroyed in four cases and in at least three cases the victims were subjected to physical torture during eviction drives. Further in at least one case (Madhya Pradesh), civilians (non-state actors) participated in eviction drive along with forest officials and police force.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Evictions in the name of forest protection**

Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states, “Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.”<sup>7</sup> Section 4(5) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA, 2006) states that save as otherwise provided, no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe or Other Traditional Forest Dwellers shall be evicted or removed from the Forest Land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete. The law does not provide for automatic or compulsory eviction even when the forest applications are rejected. On February 11, 2021, the Indian Government informed the Parliament that “no Scheduled Tribe persons and other traditional forest dwellers have been evicted due to rejection of claims under the Scheduled Tribe and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020”.<sup>8</sup> But this is not true as the cases of eviction documented by the IRAC in this paper will show.

Thus, the actions of the forest department to evict the indigenous peoples were totally in violation of the FRA, 2006 and international human rights law including the UNDRIP, and further constituted “atrocities” as defined under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.<sup>9</sup>

### a. 14 cases of eviction by forest departments

The IRAC has documented as many as 14 cases of forced eviction of tribal families by the forest department in 10 different states of India during April 1, 2020 (i.e. following the announcement of country-wide lockdown) to September 30, 2021. Not only the tribals were forcibly evicted from their land, various other atrocities were perpetrated upon them at the time of eviction. An analysis of these 14 cases of eviction brings out the fact that the forest officials/guards have burnt down the houses of the tribals in four cases, demolished (pulled down) houses in seven cases, food grains were set on fire in one case, standing crops and/agricultural lands were damaged/destroyed in four cases and in at least three cases the victims were subjected to physical torture during eviction. Further in at least one case (Madhya Pradesh), civilians (non-state actors) participated in eviction drive along with forest officials and police force.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1: Cases of forced eviction of tribals by forest department since the imposition of country-wide COVID-19 lockdown in India**

| Sl No. | Date of eviction  | Number of families evicted (Tribals)   | Nature of rights violation apart from forced eviction   | State          |
|--------|-------------------|--|---|----------------|
| 1      | April 6, 2020     | Six families                           | Burnt down two houses, damaged the agricultural fields  | Gujarat        |
| 2      | April 24, 2020    | 32 families                            | demolished houses   | Odisha         |
| 3      | April 24, 2020    | 3 families                             | Demolished houses   | Manipur        |
| 4      | June 1, 2020      | One family (Sildaar Khajaan, 55 years) | burnt down house  | Madhya Pradesh |
| 5      | June 17, 2020     | 80 Koya families                       | destroyed standing crops  | Telangana      |
| 6      | October 13, 2020  | 35 families                            | 35 houses were demolished, standing crops destroyed and food grains were set on fire, and evicted | Chhattisgarh   |
| 7      | October, 2020     | 50 families                            | Houses demolished with JCBs (bulldozers)  | Chhattisgarh   |
| 8      | December 23, 2020 | One tribal family                      | house demolished, husband and wife  | Madhya Pradesh |

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|    |                    |   |   |                 |
|----|--------------------|---|---|-----------------|
|    |                    |   | tortured, molested and her husband's head tonsured  |                 |
| 9  | May 24, 2021       | Farooq Ahmad Dedar (40 years) and two women belonging to Gujjar Bakarwal community. | Beaten up   | Jammu & Kashmir |
| 10 | June 30, 2021      | 40 families   | Houses demolished   | Odisha          |
| 11 | July 6, 2021       | 12 families   | Evicted   | Kerala          |
| 12 | July 10, 2021      | 40 families belonging to Bhil and Barela  | Houses demolished using JCBs, food grains & livestock looted, toxic chemicals sprayed on agricultural lands, tortured | Madhya Pradesh  |
| 13 | August, 2021       | 34 families   | Several houses burnt down   | Tamil Nadu      |
| 14 | September 24, 2021 | Several families  | Several houses burnt down   | Madhya Pradesh  |

### b. Details of the 14 eviction cases

#### Case 1: Eviction of six tribal families by the forest officials in Dang district, Gujarat

On April 6, 2020, six tribal families belonging to the Bhil, Konkani, and Warli communities were evicted from their land by the forest department officials at Kamat village in Dang district of Gujarat. The forest officials came to the village and damaged the properties and torched two huts as well as damaged the agricultural fields of the tribal families in a drive to clear forestland of alleged encroachment.<sup>11</sup>

Around 10 AM on April 6, the forest department officials gave an oral warning to six tribal families to vacate the land or face consequences. The people in the village lived and cultivated land in the area for three generations. There were 51 individual forest rights claims filed in 2007 under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. All of them, except three, were rejected by the District-Level Committee (DLC).<sup>12</sup>

### **Case 2: Forest officials evicted 32 tribal families in Kalahandi district, Odisha**

On April 24, 2020, the forest department officials demolished homes of 32 tribal families without any prior notice at Sagada village in Kalahandi district of Odisha. The sudden razing of their huts forced about 90 members to live under mahua trees (*Madhuca longifolia*) and survived for many days on mahua leaves. Sundhar Manjhi, one of the victims, told the media, “When the forest department officials had come to demolish the houses, we were visiting a village close by as someone had passed away. When we returned in the evening, we didn’t have homes.”<sup>13</sup>

T. Ashok Kumar, the Divisional Forest Official (DFO), Kalahandi, however, blamed the tribals for encroaching the forest land. He told the media, “These tribals arrived here after the lockdown was announced. We were constantly trying to explain to them to stay put in their village during the lockdown. Their village is on a hill 12-13 kms away from the spot, but they insisted they wanted to live here. The land where they had started living belongs to Sagada Reserve Forest. How can we allow them to stay here?”<sup>14</sup>

### **Case 3: Eviction of three tribal families in Manipur**

On April 24, 2020, three houses of Rongmei Naga tribals were demolished at Macheng village in Mantripukhri in Imphal West district of Manipur. The eviction drive was carried out without giving prior notice on the ground that the tribals were encroaching reserved forest lands.<sup>15</sup>

### **Case 4: Tribal home burnt down by forest officials in Burhanpur district, Madhya Pradesh**

On June 1, 2020, the forest officials burnt down the home of a tribal namely Sildaar Khajaan (55 years) at Siwal village under Neapanagar police station in Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh. The Gram Panchayat of Siwal village submitted a complaint at the local police station alleging that the tribal family had gone to work when the forest department officials came and burnt down the hut. By the time the tribal villagers came to know of the actions of the forest department and reached the place, the officials had already burnt down the hut and fled from there. But when the villagers called up Neapanagar Forest Ranger Dinesh Waskale to inform them about what had happened, he allegedly threatened them saying, “Abhi toh main tereko bone nahin doonga. Tension mat le. Udaa doonga. Saare tapre udayenge abhi. Abhi aayenge wapas, tu bahut ud raha hai (Translation: I will not let you sow the seeds. Don’t worry, I will destroy all the huts. We will come back, you’re acting too smart).”<sup>16</sup>

The tribals have been farming on their lands since 1984. The family of Sildaar Khajaan had applied for land patta under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and were awaiting the processing of their claims, delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Case 5: Eviction of 80 Koya tribal families by forest department in Bhadradi Khotagudem district, Telangana**

On June 17, 2020, 80 Koya tribal families were evicted from their land by the forest officials at Satyaranarayanam village in Bhadradi Khotagudem district of Telangana to pave way for a plantation drive under the *Haritha Haraam* afforestation programme. These tribals had already sown crops such as pulses, millets and cotton in around 200 acres of land but the forest officials brought labourers from neighbouring villages and dug trenches to begin the plantation drive and the tribal farmers were prevented from accessing their agricultural fields.<sup>18</sup>

Their applications for land title under the Forest Rights Act were still pending. Hence, the eviction is illegal under the FRA.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Case 6: Eviction of 35 tribal families in Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh**

On October 13, 2020, houses of 35 tribal families were demolished at Biranpara village in Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh, allegedly by the Joint Forest Management Committee<sup>20</sup> (JFMC) of Dugli village and neighbouring Dinkarpur village. During the eviction, standing crops were destroyed and food grains were set on fire. Biranpara is a forest village under the jurisdiction of Dugli Gram panchayat and is home to about 100 families. According to the Land Conflict Watch (LCW), the victims have been possessing and cultivating about 100-120 acres of land in the village since 1993-94. They had applied for forest rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, several times, but their claims were always rejected verbally, and they did not get receipts of their applications. Without legal rights over the land, the JFMC called them encroachers and started demolishing their houses.<sup>21</sup>

The eviction rendered the tribal families homeless and forced them to take shelter in makeshift tents in Dhamtari.<sup>22</sup>

The victim families tried to file police complaint against the demolition of their houses but the police refused to register their case. The families then submitted a memorandum to the district collector but no action was taken. On the other hand, the then District Collector J.P. Maurya told LCW that officials from the forest department and sub divisional magistrate office inspected the village thrice and found the tribal families to be “encroachers” and justified the action of the JFMC.<sup>23</sup>

### **Case 7: 50 tribal families evicted in Korba district, Chhattisgarh**

In October 2020, the local authority allegedly demolished houses of 50 tribal families at Rainpur village in Korba district of Chhattisgarh. Ironically, those houses had been given to them under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The tribal families were evicted without any prior warning, allegedly to clear the land to set up a shelter for cows. As a result, these 50 tribal families were rendered homeless during the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

Bulldozers were used to demolish the houses of the 50 tribal families.

One of the victims, Chander Singh, in an interview to the media said, “My house was completely destroyed; we were not given any warning. I was taken aback and did not know what was happening. Four generations of my family have lived on this land, we still do not have the *patta* (land claim); we have applied three or four times [under the Forest Rights Act]. However, we have still not been given any acknowledgment of these applications and what action was taken. Till date, we do not know. On the contrary, bulldozers have been used on our houses in an attempt to evict us from the forest land.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Case 8: Torture and eviction of a tribal family in Khargone district, Madhya Pradesh**

On December 23, 2020, the house of a tribal family was demolished by the forest officials in Bhikangaon forest area under Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh. The tribal woman (about 30 years) alleged in her police complaint that a team from forest department carried out an eviction drive at the odd hours around 2.30 AM and demolished her hut. She alleged that she was beaten, tortured and molested by forest officials. They also tied her husband’s hands and legs and shaved his head.<sup>26</sup>

District Forest Officer (DFO) J S Bhargav stated that the tribal couple was trying to encroach part of a proposed 100-hectare plantation site and they had also sown crops. The tribal couple had failed to produce any document to substantiate ownership of the land they were occupying, the DFO said. On the other hand, the family claimed that they have been in possession of the land for nearly 50 years.<sup>27</sup>

### **Case 9: Eviction of Gujjar tribals by forest officials in Shopian district, Jammu and Kashmir**

On May 24, 2021, the forest department officials allegedly assaulted and evicted, without serving any prior notice, many Gujjar tribal families at Zampathri in Shopian district in Jammu and Kashmir. Over a dozen persons, including both forest personnel and the tribals, were injured after locals and officials from the forest department clashed during the eviction drive to remove ‘encroachments’.<sup>28</sup> Among the tribals who were injured included Farooq Ahmad Dedar (40 years) and two women belonging to the Gujjar Bakarwal



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community. Farooq Ahmad was severely injured in the head due to beating by the officials.<sup>29</sup>

### **Case 10: Eviction of 40 tribal families in Kalahandi district, Odisha**

On June 30, 2021, about 40 families, majority of who belonged to tribal community and a few were Dalits, were forcibly evicted from Bhatapani and Dumerpani hamlets in Sahajkhola reserve forest under Ampani police station area of Koksara block in Kalahandi district of Odisha allegedly by the members of Vana Surakshya Samiti (VSS) (forest protection committee) from neighbouring Gotomunda village with alleged tacit support from the forest officials.<sup>30</sup> The VSS are constituted at the village level by the Government of Odisha for the protection of “Reserved Forests, Protected forests, Village forests, Revenue forests etc. not covered under Protected Areas” under Joint Forest Management system.<sup>31</sup> The eviction was allegedly instigated by the forest officials.<sup>32</sup>

About 200 tribals and Dalits, including women and children, have been rendered homeless during this COVID-19 pandemic after their forcible eviction and destruction of their homes and properties in the attack on 30 June. These families have been living at Dumerpani and Bhatapani hamlets in Kalahandi district for the last 25 years. They had originally migrated from neighbouring Nabarangpur district of Odisha. They eked out a living by cultivating maize in the forest land and as daily wage earners. They have already enrolled themselves as voters of Kalahandi district, have Aadhaar cards as residents of Kalahandi district and getting government scheme benefits.<sup>33</sup> But the state government has not yet recognized their rights over the forest land under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Out of the 40 evicted families, 15 families are currently housed in a primary school building in Kuhudi under Chandahandi block in Nabarangpur district while the rest are taking shelter in polythene tents in a jungle near Dahimal village of Jharigam block in the same district. According to social activist Humeswar Hanse who has visited the families sheltered in Chandahandi block, there are 11 kids under five years of age, 17 between 5-10 years and 7 women who needed immediate medical attention due to deteriorating health conditions.<sup>34</sup>

### **Case 11: Eviction of 40 tribal families in Khandwa district, Madhya Pradesh**

On July 10, 2021, 40 Adivasi families belonging to Bhil and Barela tribes were attacked and forcibly evicted from their land by the forest department, police and a mob consisting of over 200 men at Negaon village under Jamuniya Panchayat in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh. The mob was allowed to loot food grains, chickens, goats, household items, mobile phones, cycles from the homes of the Adivasis. The thatched huts of the Adivasis were destroyed using JCB machines and their fields were allegedly dug up by JCBs and sprayed with toxic chemicals to prevent any further possibility of farming.<sup>35</sup>

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During the eviction, many Adivasi villagers, including women were beaten up. Three villagers identified as Ramlal, Mahesh and Sekariya were beaten and forcibly taken to the forest office in Khandwa where they were locked up and their hands tied with ropes. When the Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (JADS) activists namely Nitin Varghese, Ramesh Jadhav and Amarsing Solanki pointed out the illegality of the eviction and violence, they were also roughed up, their phones were snatched and they were forcibly locked up in the office of the District Forest Officer (Forest Development Corporation) who was overseeing the eviction. These 6 persons were released after more than 10 hours only after around 200-300 Adivasis sat on dharna outside the office of the Superintendent of Police, Khandwa, demanding their release. They were forced to sign on blank papers and their phones have still not been returned.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of this illegal eviction, 40 families comprising a total of 212 people, including at least 60 children were left without shelter amidst the rainy season and COVID-19 pandemic. The situation was so dire that the Adivasis were able to escape with just the clothes they were wearing. They were forced to live in makeshift tents, often just a piece of tarp strung to two tree branches, hardly any protection from the rain.<sup>37</sup>

The eviction of the 40 Adivasi families is illegal and violative of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The Forest Rights Act in section 4(5) prohibits any eviction until the procedure for verification and recognition of rights under the law is complete. The evicted tribal families are claimants under the FRA in whose case the verification had not even started. This eviction was also a violation of the order dated April 23, 2021 of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in WP 8820/2021 which prohibited any eviction during the pandemic and stated, “(ix) that the State Government or any of its Department or any Municipal Corporation / Council / Board or any Gram Panchayat or any other local body or any other agency and instrumentality of the State shall not take any action for eviction and demolition in respect of any property, over which any citizen or person or party or any Body Corporate, has physical or symbolic possession as on today till June 15, 2021”.<sup>38</sup> This prohibition was in force at the time of the assault on the Adivasis of Negaon-Jamniya.

### **Case 12: Eviction of 12 tribal families in Ernakulam District, Kerala**

On July 6, 2021, the forest department of Kerala evicted 12 tribal families from Vaishali cave in the Idamalayar forest in Ernakulam District, Kerala. Those evicted included 11 women and 12 children. After forcibly eviction the tribals were provided temporary accommodation at the tribal hostel at Idamalayar on 7 July. However, the authorities have failed to rehabilitate them.<sup>39</sup>

These 12 tribal families originally belonged to Arakkappu colony located on the banks of Idamalayar river in Thrissur district of Kerala. They had to abandon their houses due to frequent landslide that swept away their agricultural land and houses. On July 5, 2021,

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these 12 families migrated and took shelter inside the Vaishali cave from where they were evicted by the forest department.<sup>40</sup>

### **Case 13: Burning down huts and eviction of tribals in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu**

On August 3, 2021, *The New Indian Express* reported that huts of tribals were burnt down by the forest department in Chinnoor in Palampattu hills under Amirthi Forest Range in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. After the applications of 34 tribal families were rejected under the FRA 2006 in Chinnoor atop Palampattu hills, the Forest department personnel belonging to Amirthi Range visited the hamlet and issued them notices against farming/cultivation without patta. B Sivaraj, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Tribal People Welfare Association, alleged that the forest department personnel torched huts belonging to the tribal families in order to forcibly evict them from the forest land. These tribal families have been residing and cultivating the land in the Palampattu hills for generations.<sup>41</sup>

### **Case 14: Burning down of tribal huts in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh**

On September, 24 2021, forest officials allegedly burnt down tribal huts to evict them at Charguwan village in Gaurjhamar forest range under Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh.

The forest officials accused the tribals of encroaching forest lands at Charguwan village in Gaurjhamar forest range in Sagar district. On 24 September, a group of forest officials led by deputy forest ranger Nirbhan Singh reached the village to remove the alleged encroachment and set all huts afire to evict the tribal families. The tribal victims have alleged that the forest officials even didn't give time to huts' owners to rescue their belongings.<sup>42</sup>

## **3. Other cases of eviction**

The IRAC has also documented two cases of eviction of indigenous peoples by the Revenue department and municipal corporations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Case 1: Eviction of 20 tribal families from footpath in Mumbai, Maharashtra**

In March 2020, police officials forcibly removed 20 homeless tribal families of the Pardhi community from the footpath outside Bahar cinema in Ville Parle in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The drive was carried out at 3.00 AM allegedly to 'clean' the streets. Reportedly, the police beat up children, men, and women while evicting them from the site.<sup>43</sup>

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Dhansingh Kale, one of the victims, stated that they were sleeping when the police from the Ville Parel police station began beating up old and young alike. Even toddlers were roughed up.<sup>44</sup>

### **Case 2: Eviction of 11 Irular tribals in Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu**

On September 30, 2021, 11 tribal families belonging to Irular tribe were evicted by the Revenue department near Murugan temple in Peranamallur municipality in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu. They were evicted without giving a prior notice or providing an alternate accommodation, thus making them homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is grave human rights violation of the tribals. The poor tribal families were not given time to salvage their belongings.<sup>45</sup>

**[ENDS]**

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<sup>1</sup>. 'PM Modi declares lockdown: 'Crossing your home's lakshmanrekha will invite COVID-19 inside', *The Indian Express*, March 25, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/pm-modi-declares-lockdown-crossing-your-homes-lakshmanrekha-will-invite-covid-19-inside-6330017/>

<sup>2</sup>. 'PM Modi declares lockdown: 'Crossing your home's lakshmanrekha will invite COVID-19 inside', *The Indian Express*, March 25, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/pm-modi-declares-lockdown-crossing-your-homes-lakshmanrekha-will-invite-covid-19-inside-6330017/>

<sup>3</sup>. 'COVID-19 Guidance Note: Prohibition of evictions', Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, April 28, 2020, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/SR\\_housing\\_COVID-19\\_guidance\\_evictions.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/SR_housing_COVID-19_guidance_evictions.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>. Ban evictions during COVID-19 pandemic, UN expert urges, OHCHR, August 18, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26170&LangID=E>

<sup>5</sup>. NHRC press release, "No tribal should be evicted without the settlement of his/her claim on land rights, says NHRC Chairperson, Mr. Justice A.K. Mishra while chairing a webinar with HRDs", July 29, 2021, <https://nhrc.nic.in/media/press-release/no-tribal-should-be-evicted-without-settlement-hisher-claim-land-rights-says>

<sup>6</sup>. The cases could overlap. For example, demolition of house and destruction of standing crop/agricultural land might have taken place in a single incident

<sup>7</sup>. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is available at [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>. Reply of Smt Renuka Singh Saruta, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs in response to Unstarred Question No. 1249 in the Rajya Sabha on 11 February 2021

<sup>9</sup>. Under Section 3(1) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, one of the offences of atrocities is "(v) wrongfully dispossesses a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe

from his land or premises or interferes with the enjoyment of his rights over any land, premises or water.”. The text of the Act is available at

<https://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/The%20Scheduled%20Castes%20and%20Scheduled%20Tribes.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>. The cases could overlap, meaning, for example, demolition of house and destruction of standing crop/agricultural land might have taken place both separately or in a single incident

<sup>11</sup>. COVID-19: Gujarat forest dept officials allegedly torched huts, fields, *Down to Earth*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/environment/amp/covid-19-gujarat-forest-dept-officials-allegedlytorched-huts-fields-70426>

<sup>12</sup>. COVID-19: Gujarat forest dept officials allegedly torched huts, fields, *Down to Earth*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/environment/amp/covid-19-gujarat-forest-dept-officials-allegedlytorched-huts-fields-70426>

<sup>13</sup>. The Odisha Forest Department demolishes homes of 32 tribal families amid the lockdown, *Goan Connection*, April 28, 2020, <https://en.gaonconnection.com/the-odisha-forest-department-demolishes-homes-of-32-tribal-families-in-kalahandi-amid-the-nationwide-lockdown/#:~:text=On%20April%2024%2C%20homes%20of,go%20amid%20the%20nationwide%20lockdown>

<sup>14</sup>. The Odisha Forest Department demolishes homes of 32 tribal families amid the lockdown, *Goan Connection*, April 28, 2020, <https://en.gaonconnection.com/the-odisha-forest-department-demolishes-homes-of-32-tribal-families-in-kalahandi-amid-the-nationwide-lockdown/#:~:text=On%20April%2024%2C%20homes%20of,go%20amid%20the%20nationwide%20lockdown>

<sup>15</sup>. ATSUM, RNCM Jiribam condemn eviction drive at Macheng village, *E-Pao.net*, May 4, 2020, <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=7..050520.may20>

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