

LETTER

'DANTEWADA'

We, the undersigned, mourn the death of 74 jawans in Dantewada on April 6, 2010. Regrettably, it is a direct fallout of the government's wrong-headed policy of declaring a war on the poorest sections of its own people. We have been urging the Indian government that the issues arising out of the opposition of adivasis to MoUs signed by the state governments with mining and other industrial conglomerates, resulting in grab of land and common resources like forest and river, and massive forceful displacement and dispossession, leave them in a desperate state, with no possible alternative, thus depriving them of dignified livelihood.

They are our fellow citizens, with as much right to life as any one of us, and the issue has to be resolved through dialogue rather than force of arms. The apparent intelligence failure on the part of the government machinery is a symptom of how little local popular support these aggressive policies of the government, embodied in Operation Green Hunt, enjoy.

We urge the government of India not to pursue further this disastrous option, or fall prey to the illusion that stepping up this war on the people would solve any of the fundamental problems facing the population of this area. It would instead degenerate into an uncontrollable civil war, as more people dispossessed of land and livelihood will be driven to take up arms.

Dialogue and not arms is the only way forward : not an option but a compulsion of the situation. And dialogue can never start merely with abstract discourse on violence versus non-violence, but transparency on immediate issues affecting the lives of millions, such as dispossession and displacement through signing of MoUs, and violation of constitutional rights of adivasis under the Fifth Schedule. This initiative can only come from the government.

**Amit Bhaduri, Mahaswata Devi, Sankho Ghosh, Gautam Navlakha,
Tarun Sanyal, K G Kannabiran, Wilhelm Langthaler, Manas Joardar
and 62 others**