

GENERAL STATEMENT MADE BY THE JHARKHANDIS ORGANISATION FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS (JOHAR) AT THE UNWGIP, 28.7.98

Madam Chairperson, Indigenous brothers and sisters, governments, members of support groups and other concerned persons, greetings.

I take this moment to convey my thanks to Madam Chairperson for the opportunity to make this statement.

Early this year our country witnessed the voting into power of the Bharatiya Janata Party ( BJP ) or what is commonly referred to by many as the Hindu Nationalist Party . The last time the BJP was voted into power , it managed to complete only 13 days and then was voted out of power . This time with the support of some regional parties it has completed more than a hundred days in power .

Inspite of the BJP's penchant for a strong centre, in its electoral promises and subsequent pronouncements, it has surprisingly displayed more enthusiasm for decentralisation and autonomy issues than previous governments led by the Congress I or the secular or/and left forces. It has repeatedly on the question of autonomy stressed on the formation of new states within the Indian Union like Vananchal (Jharkhand), Chhatisgarh and Uttaranchal (Uttarakhand). While welcoming these pronouncements of the BJP led government, we never the less claim that the name Vananchal should not be imposed in place of Jharkhand.

Then in the area of village or rural self government for Adivasis in the Fifth Schedule areas, there has been almost none or negligible progress made in the direction of recognising and promoting indigenous self government.

Regarding minor forest produce, which forms the basis of considerable income/wealth, inspite of the new Constitutional mandate that minor forest produce belongs to the village or village people, concrete directions or steps have not been taken to implement this by the Forest Department.

Regarding big projects such as big dams and large military establishments the indigenous peoples or Adivasis in Jharkhand have shown that any big project will be resolutely opposed by the people. However, small and medium projects continue to pose big, if not bigger threats by their cumulative consequences.

Keeping in mind the concerns of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand in the areas of forests and autonomy, it is called upon the Government of India and its states to implement its own Constitutional and legal mandates. On this occasion we also call upon our Government to heed our concerns about small and medium projects.

On concluding, thanking you once again Madam Chairperson for this opportunity to make this statement.

Ratnaker Bhengra

WGIP 98/SAS-IND/12