

### **Save Saranda Mass Meeting - March 2016**

Edited notes by Gladson dungdung and Felix Padel

Adivasi Samelan - or:Adivasi Conference - a big public meeting of more than 3000 people, held just outside Manoharpur town, to one side of Saranda Forest in Jharkhand, on the 10th March 2016. The gathering, aiming at consolidating the movement to save the unique Saranda, the last Sal forest in south-east Asia, was organised by Adivasi Samanvay Samity (Adivasi Coordination Committee), which is leading the Save Saranda campaign.

Among local leaders who attended were Chief Guest and former Minister, Jharkhand Mr. Bandhu Tirkey, Mr. George Tirkey (MLA Odisha), Mr. Mangal Singh Bonbonga (ex-MLA, Jharkhand), Mr. Bahaduro Oraon (Ex-MLA, Jharkhand) and many others. Scholar activist Dr. Felix Padel, who was a keynote speaker asked: - "What is a company?" – and reminded the audience the role played by the East India Company



under British rule in dividing people from forest and setting up the corporate system. At present, over 20 mining companies led by Tata Steel - currently at the centre of controversial close down of the Port Talbot iron works in Wales with considerable loss of local jobs - are trying to divide Saranda, people and forest alike.

The meeting had a very effective programme, massive turnout and good media coverage. So much so that right wing elements tried to disturb it, but failed.

Save Saranda campaign is gathering momentum, monitored nationally and internationally by many individuals and organisations, became a focal point for the way the Indian authorities treat marginalised communities seeking to maintain

sustainable life, their forest and democratic rights, and the state obligation to provide services to all its citizens, including adivasis.

The following day a delegation went through the heart of Saranda Forest, visited Noamundi and met former MLA Mangal Singh Bongbonga, who is exceptional for his consistent opposition to mining takeovers. Like current corporate interventions in state education in the UK, India is following suite: Mr. Mangal Singh Bongbonga accompanied the delegation to a school where a multilingual program for schools using the Ho language is implemented by an NGO funded by Tata Steel, which has been operating in the iron ore rich area for decades. Similar privatisation of schools and anti-democratic push to become "academies", as expressed in Osborne's last budget speech, are strongly opposed now by the unions of teachers and head teachers in the UK.

On the 15th March 2016 a state level consultation on the issue of Forest Rights took place in Ranchi, where Adivasis of Saranda participated and presented their issues. It was decided to hold a two days State Level Public Hearing on the issue of Forest Rights, in June 2016 in Ranchi. The plan is to have a five-member jury consisting of a former Supreme Court of India judge, a former judge of High Court of Jharkhand, a senior lawyer of Supreme Court, a senior Journalist and senior scholar-activist. More than 1000 people are expected to attend this meeting, where the issue of Saranda forest threatened by mining would be center-stage.

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### **Keep Oil in the Ground – The Yasuni ITT Park Initiative in Amazonian Ecuador**

The Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex - 6 December 2015, Paris



Prof. Carlos Larrea was behind the Yasuni ITT Initiative of the Ecuadorian government not to extract oil in the Yasuni Park in Amazonian Ecuador between 2007-2013, and presented the Yasuni case at the Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH on a number of occasion in the past 2 years. He claims that today we know much more about global warming than in 2007, when the Yasuni Initiative started, and that continuing the path of burning fossil fuels and increasing CO2 emissions, which humanity is following in the Anthropocene, will lead to temperature rise of between 4c-7c degrees, with dire consequences for all life on earth as we know it.

Keep Oil in the Ground – a workshop meeting called in Coalition Climate 21-Paris by the Activists and Academia Network CWEH, brought together

international scholar-activists and tapped into a freshwater spring of the Yasunidos movement and Rights of Nature International Tribunal. Prof. Larrea went on saying that we also know much more about the Yasuni biosphere: The Yasuni site – 1 million hectares, or: 2.5 million acres – may owe its unique outstanding bio-diversity to for being a sanctuary for flora and fauna in the last ice age, 10,000 years ago. The Yasuni is home to four indigenous groups of people: One of them - Gloria Ushino, Yasuni indigenous activist - joined our speakers together with Rights of Nature advocate Natalie Greene, who explained the legal framework of the Rights of Nature and protection it offers to forests and people, and young Yasunidos activists, part of an international movement in support of the 755.000 Yasunidos who signed a referendum in support of reinstating the Yasuni in Ecuador.

Links:

<http://sitio.yasunidos.org/en/> (and see also:

<http://sitio.yasunidos.org/en/press/blog/28-prensa/blog-english/225-protect-yasuni-save-the-climate.html>)

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Activists and Academia Network – CWEH autumn 2015 meetings:

**Oil-Spoils-Soil** - On the 3 November we heard about issues of environmental justice and fossil fuel extraction in Bolivarian Latin America, mainly in Bolivia and Ecuador, from an eye witnessed perspective: Maddy Ryle (Democracy Centre, Bolivia and UK) and Stephanie Guthridge (independent scholar-activist, Ecuador and UK).

A recording of the talk is online on Radio Free Brighton through his link: <https://www.mixcloud.com/RadioFreeBrighton/oil-spoils-soil-environmental-justice-and-fossil-fuel-extraction-on-bolivarian-latin-america-1/>

**Contested Realities- Adivasis in the Anthropocene**, 20 November, was a day long workshop focused on Central and Northeastern India, with examples of Resource Curse from Jharkhand, Nagaland, sites of iron ore mining causing large scale land alienation and collapse of social structure. We heard about Adivasi trapped in the crossfire between the Maoists and state repression. The day culminated with the booklaunch of Gladson Dungdung's Mission Saranda, and another successful event in the following day at Brunei Gallery in SOAS, London. Speakers: Vinita Damodaran (Sussex), Debjyoti Das (SOAS), Gladson Dungdung (Jharkhand Activist), Brian Morris (Goldsmiths), Felix Padel (JNU), Peter Satyanand Samuels (Stanford), Zuky Serper (CWEH artist in-residence, Sussex), Robert Wallis (photographer independent researcher) and Geoffery Whitefield (Chaplain Sussex).

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Report and meeting notes from Peoples' Climate Summit at the Coalition Climate 21, 5-6 December 2015, Paris - Zuky Serper

Report and meeting notes from the Saranda Forest, Jharkhand, India during March 2016 – Gladson Dungdung and Felix Padel