
[India: Supreme Court orders closure of a road which threatened the Jarawa's survival](#)

The world has something to celebrate: there is good news for the Jarawa.

This largely uncontacted people who inhabit the Andaman Islands in the Indian ocean and have voluntarily chosen to continue almost completely isolated, have been harassed by encroachment on their lands by British and Indian settlers in the last 150 years.

Pressure from poachers on the coast has driven them inland, and their nomadic and hunter-gatherer way of living has thus been increasingly threatened. Although a few Jarawa, particularly women and children, still come out onto the road or into settlements, they continue to live a self-sufficient life in the forest. They live in groups of 40-50 people, hunting pig and monitor lizard, fishing with bows and arrows, and gathering seeds, berries and honey.

Their survival became more jeopardised in 1970, with the building of a road through their forest, which brought more settlers, poachers and loggers into their land (see WRM Bulletin No. 55). Survival International has been calling for years the closure of the so called Andaman Trunk Road and removal of settlers from tribal reserves. They have been campaigning to have the Jarawa's rights to their land and to self-determination respected.

In 2002 the Indian government accepted to abandon resettlement plans for the Jarawa. And finally, in the face of strong political opposition, on last May 7, the Supreme Court of India accepted the recommendations of commissioner Shekhar Singhs, and issued the order to close the road, withdraw encroachers from the tribes' land, and end logging of their forests. The order was issued in a petition about logging on tribal lands filed by the Society for Andaman and Nicabar Ecology (SANE), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Kalpavriksh.

The order has not yet been implemented, but perspectives look good. However, the campaign goes on trying to make sure that the court's order is implemented properly. Survival International has expressed that it will keep on lobbying for recognition of the Jarawa's right to own their land and to make their own choices about the way of life they want to lead. At least, now the Jarawa and other tribes on the islands have a chance of survival.

Article based on information from: "India's Supreme Court closes isolated Jarawa tribe's 'road of death'",