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NGO asks Himachal Government to stop encroachment eviction drive



Posted by [Neha Chandok](#) on Nov 16th, 2009 and filed under [General](#), [Latest News](#), [RSS 2.0](#).

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Shimla: Holding the government encroachment eviction drive as arbitrary, Himalaya Nithi Abhiyan, a NGO, has opposed the action as confrontational as farmers struggling for livelihood on low yield farms had been duped into confessing the illegality on affidavit after the governments assurance about regularizing encroached lands.

Ghuman Singh, convener Himalaya Nithi Abhiyan has asked the government to desist from evicting the about 3.50 lakhs farmers from what has been classified as encroached lands.

Mentioning the governments regularization policy of 2002-03, Singh says, that farmers taken in by the governments assurance over regularizing encroachments had obtained affidavits from over 1.60 lakh farmers. An additional 70,000 people have been charged with encroaching upon forest lands, besides there were others also in the net. In all about 3.5 lakh families were threatened with eviction, claimed Ghuman Singh.

Seeking implementation of the Forests Rights Act, 2006, the NGO says that unless the government is able to settle issues related to traditional forests rights of people under the new act, issue of making evictions should not be taken up.

Nand Lal Sharma, president of Bhakra Outsees Welfare committee says that dam uprooted families who were rehabilitated on government lands have been served eviction notices by the forest department.

Large parts of the state have been classified as forest lands, says Sharma, and famers after being promised ownerships of small land encroachments were now rendered defenseless against law enforcing authorities on the very basis of the document sought for handing out the promised land.

The NGO has also asked for handing over ownership of common forests to the community for management, conservation and usage under the new forests rights act as the forest department by denying people their rights was pitching the people against the authorities.



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1. *Devinder K.Sharma* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 6:33 am](#)

Vacation of encroachments all over has been a contentious issue. The number of encroachers increases as the time goes by. Various utterances by the governments from time to time have only led to a spurt in encroachments as the law enforcement machinery sits on the fence watching the action rather than getting into action. In Himachal Pradesh, the encroachments on the forest lands, and fairly often on the reserve and protected forests, have led to depletion of the forest cover and made a mockery of the forest department’s commitment to punish the guilty.

The number of encroachments brought out in the story tells that 3.50 lakh families are involved in some or other kind of encroachment of government or forest lands. This number probably makes Himachal Pradesh a State of encroachers! Nearly one third of all families are violators of trespass and illegal acquisition of public property. It certainly paints this State and its docile people in bad light.

The State Government should without any further delay come to a finality in this matter and get appropriate court directions to vacate encroachments and subsequently see if it has sufficient surplus land for allotment to the most deserving and eligible landless people. Having implemented the land reform laws effectively once in the early 1970’s, the State has the historical capability to deal with the issue.

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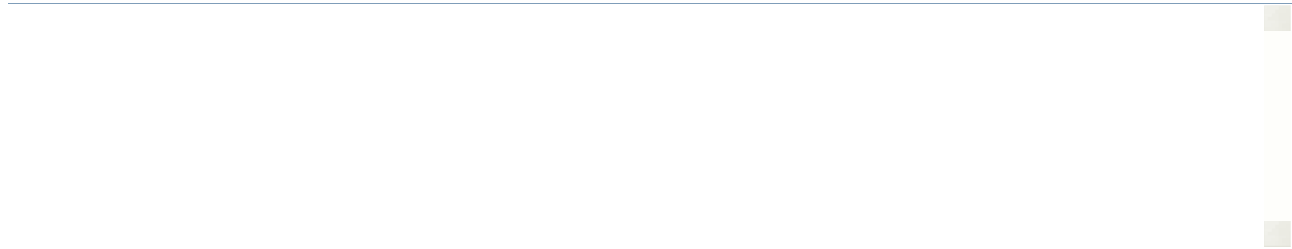
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