

A Black Day - Rajya Sabha Passes Afforestation Bill

Friends,

Today was a black day for forest dwellers' rights.

The Rajya Sabha has passed the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, 2016. This Bill essentially gives *carte blanche* to forest officials to spend gigantic amounts of money (over 40,000 crores) without [any accountability to the people whose forests, lands and lives will be damaged or destroyed by their activities](#).

The Congress moved an amendment (see [here for the text](#)) that would have been the bare minimum necessary to protect the rights of millions of people - our country's poorest communities.

The government said [we won't do any of that](#). We respect forest rights so much that we think that we should make an Act that doesn't say a single word about them. Our officials will continue to [facilitate corporates grabbing people's forest rights](#). We'll just give you a paper assurance that we "will deal with it in the Rules." Much of the opposition lined up for this sham; the Congress [dithered and flip-flopped on its own amendment](#). And, driven by the greed of State and Central bureaucracies, the Bill was passed.

But this issue will not be settled with this. For 150 years the forest dwellers of this country have [fought a criminal and oppressive colonial system](#) for their rights. It was their democratic struggle that resulted in the Forest Rights Act. It is their struggle that will halt the forest bureaucracy in its tracks - no matter how much the NDA government tries to bend over backwards to please its bureaucrat allies and its corporate masters. The Environment Ministry will be held to its assurance today.

Campaign for Survival and Dignity

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