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**UN-HABITAT  
ADVISORY GROUP ON FORCED EVICTIONS**

**INFORMATION ON IMPORTANT CASES**

*Please, try to be analytical: this will help us understanding deeply the situation and the human dimension of the people involved in forced evictions.*

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**Threat of Eviction**

♦ **Issues on the city, communities and families threatened with eviction**

1. Name and location of community threatened with eviction

Porur Lake Area, near Chennai - the lake lying on the border between Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts of Tamil Nadu state, India.

Porur Lake Area slums are divided into Ambedkar Nagar, West Ambedkar Nagar, Samathuva Nagar (comes under the Thiruvallur District) Selvaganapathy Nagar, Anna Nagar (which are come under the Kancheepuram District)

2. Background on the city (size, location, etc.)

Chennai, [formerly known as](#) Madras, is the [capital](#) of the [state](#) of [Tamil Nadu](#) and is [India's fourth largest](#) metropolitan [city](#). It is located on the [Coromandel Coast](#) of the [Bay of Bengal](#). With an estimated population of 6.96 million (2006), the 368-year-old city is the 34th largest [metropolitan area](#) in the world

Porur is a small township that lies in the extended region of Chennai city. It is primarily one of the residential areas of Chennai metropolitan area. The region features a number of residential colonies and small localities inhabited by the metropolitan population.

Porur Lake is one of the primary water resources for people residing in [Chennai](#).

For more details - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porur>

The satellite picture of Porur Lake - <http://wikimapia.org/211118/>

The satellite picture of the evicted area (south side of the Porur lake) -

<http://wikimapia.org/#y=13034464&x=80149394&z=17&l=0&m=a&v=2>

3. Estimated number of families affected

Estimated number of affected families 6,000 and the total population could be around 30,000.

A further million evictions are waiting to happen all over the state of Tamil Nadu to clear all encroachments on Government land.

4. Brief description of families background

The families mostly migrated from the near by districts like Cuddalore, Villupuram, Kancheepuram, Thiruvallur, Thiruvannamalai and Vellore Districts and Ponducheri (Pondicherry) State. They have come and settled down here for searching jobs and so on. They are working as lorry cleaners, masons, hotel servers, coolies, sweepers and scavengers.

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Almost all of them are engaged in the unorganized sector. Almost all of them live under poverty line. One third of the population are tenants.

Their children are studying in various schools and colleges nearby their houses at this location. About 5,000 students reportedly affected by the eviction.

♦ **The case**

5. Background and history to the case

Since fifteen years and more these families were settled around this lake. According to law they are illegal encroachers. These 'so-called' encroachments begin in a uniform manner. First, usually land grabbers in connivance with political parties encourage landless people to "book" their plots of choice after a nominal payment. Once there is enough number of "bookings," construction of thatched huts begins with the blessings of lower level staff of the Revenue department.

The necessary 'No Objection Certificates' are obtained to apply for necessary amenities. Local bodies grant their approval for formation of new residential localities, despite being fully aware of the violations. Revenue officials issue 'B' memo and it is only a receipt for the sum received from encroachers as fine for illegally occupying government property. Using the ignorance of most dwellers in such places, land grabbers convince people that such memos were only indicators of ownership of land.

Between 23 and 25 November, 2006 they were displaced by a forced eviction drive launched by the Kancheepuram Collectorate and Thiruvallur Collectorate (i.e. District Authorities).

6. Minimum information on the legal grounds of the case

As per the law, the Porur Lake area slums are illegal encroachments. The State Government had imposed a total ban on any form of construction on any water resource in 2002.

There is no specific court order against the Porur Lake area slums, but many court orders support eviction. For example, in an August 26, 2006 order of the Madras High Court notes "It is needless to say that there is no necessity of issuing notice for the removal and demolition of the encroachment in public streets and roads, as such encroachment shall be liable to be removed forthwith. So also the electricity connection or sewerage connection facilities shall be liable to be disconnected forthwith."

It also says "the violations in Open Space Reservation (OSR) or illegal buildings put up on lake-beds, water catchments, flood plains, CRZ areas, etc. have ecological repercussions and must not be condoned and violations in such cases must be demolished"

In June 2005, the Madras High Court directed the Government to "identify all natural resources in different parts of the State and, wherever illegal encroachments were found, to initiate appropriate steps in accordance with the relevant provisions of law for restoring such natural water storage resources which have been classified as such in the revenue records to its original position, so that the suffering of the people of the State due to water shortage is ameliorated."

And an other High Court order of June 6, 2002 had asked for the setting up of a State-level committee headed by the Minister of Revenue and Law to monitor the works related to removal of encroachments

The Government simply claims that court orders removal of encroachments anywhere in the state. Therefore, a further million evictions are waiting to happen all over the state of Tamil Nadu to clear all encroachments on Government land.

The bulldozing began after the Supreme Court upheld the Madras High Court's order to remove 32,000 illegal and unauthorized constructions in the city. (There is no detail whether the Porur Lake area slums are included in the 32,000 unauthorized constructions in Chennai)

#### 7. Reasons given for the eviction (official and other)

The people have been told that they have illegally occupied the lake area which is the water reservoir for the Chennai city and this place belongs to the public work department of the state government and also to Highways department. It is to say that the city gets flooded during rainy season because of the encroachment on the lake and the lake area has been reduced to one fourth of the original surface land. The lake has been cut in to small size because of the encroachments. The officials say that the eviction is inevitable and unavoidable. And it is to be carried out in the interest of the general public.

#### 8. The main events that have taken place so far (with dates)

The people who were living in the Porur lake area have been evicted forcefully without any prior notification or any announcement (but the officials claim that they gave notice). Between 23 and 25 of November 2006, Thursday and Saturday, police personals came in large number with the earth movers and bulldozers to demolish all the settlements.

It was a shock for the people over there that such a thing would happen when all the government officials had promised them of all the facilities and in fact they had been given heavy electricity supply, sub post office facility, and public call offices in the area itself.

The people have their main complaint that the eviction has been carried out without any prior notification. The people had no time to remove their valuables from their houses. They have lost all the household materials which they have saved for many years. Some people have said that they could not even remove the certificates of their children.

#### 9. Names of authorities implementing the eviction.

This forced eviction was implemented and carried out in the presence of the two district collectors of Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram, Deputy Collectors of both districts, Revenue inspectors, Ambathur Thasildar, Mr. Palani the voters registration administration officer was present at the incident.

#### ♦ **The answer to the eviction**

#### 10. Level of organisation of the affected community (including names of organisations, their approach, strengths and weaknesses)

The affected community is not well organised, since they are all working in the non formal sector there organising capacity also not very much.

There are some self help groups in this area which is working for the economic reasons. The residential welfare association is not very strong and it is not recognised by the community, since one third of the population are tenants.

Since they are not organised the government is escaping from its fundamental duties.

#### 11. Names of supporting agencies working in alliance with the affected community

Pasumai Thaayagam (Green Motherland)  
Centre for social work and research (CSWR)

#### 12. Actions taken so far by the community and/or supporting agencies to resist the eviction and / or to develop creative, alternative solutions

Since the evetion was taken place within three days, and the entire government mechanism has been involved in this process the local community is not able to resist the event. The supporting agencies (Pasumai Thaayagam and CSWR) were come to know in the middle of the evetion. After the eviction a Video documentation has been done, and the supporting agency is documenting all the information's available with the community to get the rehabilitation.

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Views against the forced eviction were published in print media by Pasumai Thaayagam.

13. Consultations held and alternative housing and/or compensation offered by the authorities to the affected community (if any)

Now, every day the affected people are going here and there to collect the token (which can be reference number for the rehabilitation) for their house. The government officials are asking to come to different government offices. And most of the population did not get the token too.

Government shows some places for rehabilitation which is located more than 20 kms from the eviction location. Many people sold their minimum belongings for their day-to-day survival. Since the people are working in the near by areas and most of them depending on the city they are not willing to go to the new place.

♦ **Follow up**

14. Strategies for future action discussed / developed / proposed to deal with the threatened eviction

We are collecting and documenting all the information from the community, like, which are the evidence they are having for them.

We are also planning for a fact finding mission, based on that we will plan for the next action.

15. Important events anticipated (e.g. dates set for eviction, planned actions, court cases, development of alternatives, etc.)

On December 2, 2006, the State Government has formed panels at the State and district level to initiate time-bound action for removal of encroachments on Government land.

So, lots of forced evictions are waiting to happen all over the state of Tamil Nadu.

16. Reasons why this is a good focus case for the Advisory Group. Ideas on what the Advisory Group could do to contribute to the successful resolution of the case.

Since this case is a clear violation of the human rights and more than 30,000 people are forcefully evicted from this area and 5,000 School going children are affected by this case. And so far there is no clear rehabilitation has been planned by the government. So we have to force the government to make the rehabilitation massers. It will help us to prevent future evictions.

17. Full address contact person

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\* NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).