



## Press Release (2) Jan Satyagraha – March for Justice (India) (October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

### Jan Satyagraha – victory for the poor and landless: The Indian Government agreed to commit to major land reform

Today marked a memorable day in the history of land rights in India. The agreement reached between Jan Satyagraha and the Indian government is expected to result in a major policy change on land rights and land distribution, benefitting the poorest population segments in this country, adivasis, dalits and many other marginalised groups. The Minister of Rural Development, Mr. Jairam Ramesh handed over a signed agreement and voiced a strong personal commitment to push for the implementation of the agreed upon road map and institutional arrangements.



The Minister of Rural Development Jairam Ramesh and P.V. Rajagopal, leader of Jan Satyagraha, show the signed agreement, COD Ground, Agra, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012

The thousands of Jan Satyagraha marchers assembled in an expecting mood mid morning today under the large tent at COD ground in Agra. Following a musical introduction by the Ekta Kala Manch – the cultural wing of Ekta Parishad – Ramesh Sharma, a senior negotiator on the Jan Satyagraha team referred to the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011 as a historical day in a historical city. As Amitabh Beher, another member of the negotiation team read the ten agreed upon policy points making up the road map toward a major land reform in favour of poor and landless rural people, copies of the agreements were handed out to all the marchers.

The two major points of the agreement are:

- ◆ the establishment of a draft national land reforms policy in the next 6 months, which should be finalised soon thereafter.
- ◆ the adoption of a legal provision to provide agriculture land to landless people and homestead land to homeless people.

The agreement also mentions mechanisms and recommendations to ensure implementation of these new policies, such as fast land tribunals, to solve the numerous pending cases, or the setting-up of a task force on land reforms headed by the Minister of Rural Development and including civil society organisations, in charge of implementing the points of the agreement. This task force will hold its first meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> in Delhi.

P.V. Rajagopal, the leader of Ekta Parishad and Jan Satyagraha recounted the struggle that had begun with the first large march, Janadesh, 5 years ago. He talked about his experiences during his past year's samwad yatra, in which he had toured the country and encountered first hand the miserable realities of so many marginalized groups in India. He called them "invisible groups", many of them with no access to any rights, as they have no papers to identify themselves and thus have no claims. Asked where the power of the struggle came from, he noted that it was the power of the poor who had transcended their weakness into strength. What happened today, he added, should happen in the whole country, a struggle without violence leading to victory. He cautioned, however, that if the milestones of the road map would not be achieved within six months, the government could be sure to expect 100'000 marchers to complete the Jan Satyagraha leg from Agra to Delhi.

In his speech, the Minister of Rural Development, M. Jairam Ramesh, made a personal commitment to do whatever is in his power to pursue the road map on land reforms. He encouraged the organisations of civil society to continue to put pressure on governments, especially on state governments as they have the prerogative on land, to ensure a proper implementation of the recommendations included in the agreement. He suggested that if indeed the road map would not be followed, and expected progress in six months would not be there, Jan Satyagrahis would be right to come again.

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[www.ektaparishad.com](http://www.ektaparishad.com) / [www.ektaeurope.org](http://www.ektaeurope.org) / <http://js2012.wordpress.com/>

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