



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS  
TREATY BODIES**

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
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REFERENCE: CERD/EWUAP/2026/CS/BJ/ks

5 May 2026

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the impacts of the Great Nicobar Island Project on the Indigenous Shompen tribe.

According to the information received:

- The Shompen tribe are a small Indigenous tribe of about 300 Indigenous Peoples, classified by the State Party as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, living exclusively on the island of Great Nicobar in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands archipelago of India. With ancestors believed to have arrived over 10,000 years ago, they are central to the stewardship of the island, which is largely covered by tropical rainforest and rich in endemic biodiversity. As nomadic hunter-gatherers, the Shompen live in small family groups with a few semi-permanent settlements, some located within or near a proposed development area. Their subsistence depends almost entirely on natural resources, especially pandanus fruit from the lowlands. Shompen social identity and survival are closely tied to the island’s river systems, which shape their tribes, movement, marriages, and food sources. Nearly two third of the Indigenous Shompen tribe live in voluntary isolation which entails not maintaining sustained contact with the non-Indigenous population and by rejecting any type of contact with others.
- Under the Great Nicobar Island Project, the State Party plans to develop major infrastructure on Great Nicobar Island, including a port, an international airport, a liquefied natural gas facility, a defence base, an industrial park, and designated tourism zones. The project would cover more than 244 square kilometres, encompassing approximately 130 square kilometres of tropical rainforest. It would also drastically increase the population of the island by settling around 600,000 new inhabitants in the island.
- The proposed Great Nicobar Island project would cause irreversible harm to the territories and natural resources of the Indigenous Shompen tribe who live in voluntary isolation and depend on natural resources for food, drinking water and medicine. The implementation of the project and the increase in the island population

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would also expose them to diseases to which they have no immunity. According to the environmental assessment study, conducted in 2022, any disturbance or alteration of the natural environment in which the Indigenous Shompen tribe live poses a grave threat to their survival, as the spread of infections within their community could place the entire tribe at risk of extinction.

- There has been no consultation with the members belonging to the Indigenous Shompen tribe living in isolation, to obtain their free, prior and informed consent regarding the project. Furthermore, there has been no prior consultation with the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, in accordance with the domestic legislative framework.

The Committee is concerned that the allegations regarding the situation of the Indigenous Shompen tribe, if verified, would infringe their rights protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned about the reported adverse impacts of the Great Nicobar Island Project on the Indigenous Peoples' rights to life, to health, to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, to self-determination, as well as to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources. Moreover, the Committee is concerned about the reported lack of effective and meaningful consultation with the Indigenous Shompen tribe or measures to obtain their free, prior and informed consent regarding mining projects on their territories.

In this regard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations concerning India ([CERD/C/IND/CO/19, para. 19](#)) and its General Recommendation [No. 23 \(1997\) on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as well as its General Recommendation [No. 37 \(2024\) on the equality and freedom from racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to health](#).

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 66 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee kindly requests the State Party to provide detailed information on the above-mentioned allegations and measures to protect the human rights of the Indigenous Shompen tribe during the presentation of its combined twentieth and twenty-first periodic reports periodic reports, during the 118th session (10–25 August 2026).

Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of India with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Gün Kut  
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination