

STATE OF THE PEOPLES
A Global Human-Rights Report on Societies in Danger
From Cultural Survival

Drawing on Cultural Survival's unique perspective and political analysis, State of the Peoples will focus on actions and highlight strategies that can advance the rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Combining global reviews, analysis, statistics, and documentation, State of the Peoples will differ from other human-rights surveys by dealing with communities and cultures, rather than individuals.

As an integral part of Cultural Survival's Campaign for Indigenous Rights, this investigation of the situation of the world's indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities will illustrate both current conditions and changes over time. Combining global macro issues and trends with local data and cases, it will be a core vehicle in Cultural Survival's strategy for setting national and global agendas for responding to the human-rights needs of indigenous peoples.

For 20 years, we have insisted that cultural difference is inherent in humanity, and protecting this diversity enriches our common earth. Yet in the name of development and progress, native peoples and ethnic minorities lose land, natural resources, and control over their lives. The consequences can be disease, destitution, and despair for them--and war and environmental damage for us all. The destruction is not inevitable.

State of the Peoples will advance the idea that cultural survival, the concept, is a question of a people's ability to determine its own future. Greed and ignorance, not fate, extinguish traditional societies. A state may dispossess cultures simply because they are weak, tempting targets. Development projects can destroy peoples in the name of distorted notions of progress. Instead of accepting the choice between poverty and environmental destruction, State of the Peoples will promote efforts to defend rights, lands, and cultures through offering alternatives to victimization by economic interests and ideological prejudices. Such alternatives foster autonomy and local decision-making power, two prerequisites for survival.

The first State of the Peoples will be released in September 1993 during the UN Year of the World's Indigenous People. Thereafter, the report will be produced annually to reflect changing local and global conditions. This annual approach is necessary: to some peoples, threats to survival are immediate. From the moment danger becomes apparent, a community could disappear in only a few years. Development, disease, famine, and conflict all spread like wildfire unless actively resisted.

Incorporating the information compiled for Cultural Survival's new Peoples Base, State of the Peoples will, over time, yield a quantitative base for measuring human rights. It will provide the means for predicting abuses of rights, seeking to reveal what the triggers and indicators are of rights abuses. For example, we know the factors include smallness of a group, closeness to resources, and shortages of resources. Land issues and discrimination are also key. Statistical analyses prepared for the report will suggest when such factors may place particular indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in jeopardy.

It is a sad fact that most violations of group rights go unnoticed. Most people under attack don't know who to turn to, so they don't get attention or help. This points to the need for standardized, objective reporting, which is hard to do for group rights, in part because groups are isolated and abuses are less visible than they would be in cities. More