



## WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY?

### EL DORADO AND THE FOREST TRIBES OF JÖRD

The Republic of El Dorado is located in the continent of Skógar, a land widely known for its heavy forest cover, mineral rich mountains and valleys and ecological diversity. The Republic is also home to 16 indigenous tribes living in the forest of Jörd (pronounced Yord and comprising of 2/5th of El Dorado's area), with their livelihoods dependent upon the forest resources, agriculture and exchange of handmade local commodities. The forest of Jörd has been home to the tribes since centuries before the Republic of El Dorado was established. They worship the Greater Gods of the Forest and share the resources of the forest within themselves. They are self-sufficient and their way of life is based on the system of community sustenance.

Eight varieties of major minerals can be found in forest of Jörd. It has one-fifth of the world's iron ore deposits, which is exported worldwide by the republic of El Dorado and has a high demand all across. The forest also has large deposits of Bauxite and Tin Ore, with the deposits being the sole ones in the entire continent. In the initial few decades after the establishment of the Republic, the Government of El Dorado and the 16 indigenous tribal communities in the country thrived together, with the Constitution of the country having guaranteed their forest areas protection. The Forest-Dwelling Communities (FDCs) had autonomy in the matters of local governance in the areas of Jörd. For the Government of El Dorado to set up any enterprise or carry out work in the forest area, they had to receive an assent of a 2/3rd majority of the communities with all stakeholders considered. Private entities were not allowed within the forests for any commercial purposes.

However, with the race for industrialization, globalization and opening up of world markets, and rampant poverty in the mainlands of El Dorado, the Government of El Dorado decided to set up mining plants in the Jörd forest area. They wanted to "urbanize" the area to meet the rising demand of exports and gain income, much to the regret and without consideration of the Constitutional provisions and tribes staying in the area. The Government, by amending the Constitution added an exception of eminent domain for acquiring forest territories of the Jörd, wherein they could acquire forest territory from the communities without the approval of a 2/3rd majority when it pertained to matters of industrialization, mining, and development of the Republic. Over the years, as a result of the industrialization policy and opening up of the forests, the communities had become discontent with the Government of El Dorado. With the El Dorado State Mineral Policy,



the Government had concluded deals with several steel and power companies to establish extraction plants in the mineral rich ranges of the Jörd. The Government now started entering into Public-Private Partnership (PPP) ventures with private corporate entities to increase cost-efficiency of the plants. Each set up was a 60-40 split, with the Government owning 60% of the shares and the private entities 40%, thus making it a State entity. This had invariably led to entry of private players for commercial mining through the veil of the Government. There was a brewing discontent among all the tribes in the Jörd.

### **MIDGARD AND THE BAUXITE MINING PLANT**

The tribe of Midgard, one of 16 tribes in the Jörd, resided in the heart of the forest upon the bauxite rich deposits of the Midgard Hill Ranges. They received a notification from the Government which stated that the tribe was to be “relocated” to another mountain hamlet 20kms away, as their tribe was residing on an area with a rich presence of the mineral bauxite, the only deposits in the whole continent of Skógar. The Government had entered into a PPP with an industrialist Mr.Badani to set up a 3 Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) Bauxite Mining Plant. The Government assured the Midgardians an electricity supply line and one public school for the community as well as a house to everyone who would be relocating in the new area. The Government also pitched to them that development in the region would help the tribes to adjust slowly to the ‘new pace’ of the industrializing world by teaching new world skills. However, the tribe was outraged by the way in which the Government had come down upon them – without having any discussion with them in this regard, but by having sent them a mere notice ordering them to do so. The brewing discontent had reached a toppling point for the tribes and there were protests in the mountain areas where neighbouring tribes had also come out in large numbers to support them. They were protesting against what they claimed were arbitrary and forceful actions by the Government of El Dorado by discriminating against and undermining the Midgard tribe and the tribal communities as a whole. They also protested and spoke out against matters of rehabilitation and employment in these mining plants, and criticizing El Dorado’s “mineral-hungry and forest-stripping economy”.

The constant subversion of tribal rights and arbitrary land acquisition procedures led to an outcrop of people from the tribes of the Jörd organizing and militarily rising against the Government of El Dorado. They called themselves ‘The Resistance.’ They released a pamphlet laying down why they have taken up arms against the Government. They claimed that the current actions of the Government were “a clear and persistent bias of the State towards corporate entities at the cost of



its own people under the name of modernizing “backward” communities and civilizing the ‘less civilized’ indigenous people. It is destroying our communities and deforesting the mighty Jörd, upon whom we pray and where we have lived for centuries. The current form of development is creating wealth for the governing elites and corporate moguls at the cost of the livelihood, resources and the lives of the indigenous people in these areas. We demand equality for the tribes of the Jörd.”

### **CONSENSUS FOR MEDIATION**

The Tribe Federation of the Jörd (TFJ), an official body comprising of representatives of all the tribes in the Jörd was protesting peacefully, independent of The Resistance. However, the Government was vary of the fact that both the bodies had the same set of demands and the rebels may back the TFJ militarily if ever need be. They did not wish to start an all out conflict in the ecologically sensitive region and wished to deal peacefully with the tribes by entering into dialogue with the TFJ. The TFJ however had conveyed to them how another tribe from the Jörd was displaced some years ago, and no promises were kept up with. They were infuriated and needed written assurances from the Government that they would implement the outcome of the discussions, and not shoot blank promises as they had done earlier. Only then were they willing to co-operate and discuss the details and nitty-gritties of the mining plant, employment, community benefits, rehabilitation and the like. The Government, after giving such written assurance, was willing to mediate with the TFJ. The TFJ has agreed to the Mediation session to discuss the issues at hand and have the tribes heard. They have also ensured to the Government that The Resistance shall drop the arms against them as long as the mediation process is complied with and the outcome implemented.

The Government will be represented by a two-person delegation dispatched by the President of El Dorado - Mr. Lazarus, the Minister of Home Affairs and Ms. Samara Artemis, the head of the El Dorado Internal Defense Organization (IDO). The Tribe Federation of Jörd will be represented by their President, Ms. Valkyrie and the head of the Midgard Tribe Mr. Vidar. The representatives of both the parties have full authority to settle the final terms of the negotiation, which would be binding on both parties.