

Burnt in oil: A fact-finding report on operation Green hunt in Dantewada in September-October 2009



October 21 2009. A report from PUCL (Chhattisgarh) , PUDR (Delhi), Vanvasi Chetna Ashram (Dantewada), Human Rights Law Network (Chhattisgarh) , ActionAid (Orissa), Manna Adhikar (Malkangiri) and Zilla Adivasi Ekta Sangh (Malkangiri).

Woman killed by Salwajudum -file picture

Till now, no substantive information has been given in the media regarding the Gachanpalli killings of 17th September 2009 (during Operation Green Hunt) and 1st October killings at Gompad and Chintagufa villages by security forces. Nor

have any reports appeared regarding detentions and arrests of several young men on 1st October.

Information regarding looting, burning and torture which accompanied these operations have also remained unknown. Also, that people have fled their villages, are living in make shift sheds in the forest has gone unnoticed. The fact that on both these days, security forces (Cobra, local police and SPOs and Salwa Judum leaders such as Boddu Raja) went on a rampage stabbing and killing people, looting, burning houses and forcibly picking up young men is the other side of Operation Green Hunt which has been carefully kept away from public scrutiny. In order to

ascertain these facts, a 15 member fact-finding team visited Dantewada area between 10th and 12th October 2009. The team comprised members from PUCL (Chhattisgarh) , PUDR (Delhi), Vanvasi Chetna Ashram (Dantewada), Human Rights Law Network (Chhattisgarh) , ActionAid (Orissa), Manna Adhikar (Malkangiri) and Zilla Adivasi Ekta Sangh (Malkangiri).



Adivasi women raped by police personnel hold a protest - File picture

The team was initially denied permission and was repeatedly questioned and interrogated at Dornapal and Errabore

police camps on the way. The team spent a night in Nendra village (a rehabilitated village) and met witnesses and victims from several villages and gathered testimonies from them. Subsequently, the team spoke to District Collector and Superintendent of Police, Dantewada. While a detailed report is in the making, some of the important and significant issues are given below

17th September 2009

1. Gachanpalli murders: In the early hours of 17th September, 6 villagers were murdered by security forces in this village. Dudhi Muye (70 yrs) who could hardly walk was murdered after her breasts were cut off. Family members who had fled the scene on seeing the security forces, found her lying dead in a pool of blood. Similarly, Kawasi Ganga (70 yrs) who could barely see was stabbed and murdered in his bed. He too was found by his family members who had fled from the house and had taken shelter in the forest. Madvi Deva (25 yrs) was tied to a tree and shot at three times and then beheaded. His grandfather who was accompanying him back to the village was a witness to this. The family hasn't found his body. Three other villagers, Madvi Joga (60 yrs), Madvi Hadma (35 yrs) and Madkam Sulla were stabbed and murdered. The last two were killed in front of one witness, the wife of Madkam Sulla. Madvi Joga was killed after being stripped naked while ploughing his little plot of land. All the houses were ransacked, broken and burnt down. Family members are either living in sheds in the forests or have taken shelter with relatives. Many others have also taken similar shelter as their houses were burnt down by the security forces.

2. The case of Madvi Deva: This young man was a resident of Singanpalli village and had gone out in the morning of 17th for some family work. When he did not return his family searched for him. Two days later, a Patel from another village informed the family that he had been shot and killed by the security forces and his body was buried in the compound of Chintagufa PS. The Patel was asked to supervise the burial in the PS.

3. Burnt in hot oil: Muchaki Deva (60 yrs) of Onderpara was grazing cattle on the morning of 17th September. He was caught, beaten and dragged into the village by security forces. He was hanged upside down from a tree and a pot of hot oil was lit below and he was dropped into it. He was then pulled out and poured over with water. As a result, the upper part of his body is severely burnt and he has developed maggots in his wounds. He is still gravely ill and has no access to medical aid. Needless to say, he is afraid to leave his village.

4. Tied and paraded: 6 villagers, including 3 women were tied and paraded through Gachanpalli and other villages where the security forces went. Fortunately, they escaped as timely rains made it possible for them to flee.

5. Forced displacement and terror: families of those who were murdered by security forces and those whose houses have been burnt down vengefully, have fled the village and are living in make shift sheds in the forest. The condition of the others is no better as the entire village has been terrorized by security forces.



1st October 2009

Grief-stricken Villagers who retrieved the bodies the next day said the women were half-naked- (file)

1. Gompad “encounter”: SP Dantewada described the operations in Gompad village on 1st October as an ‘encounter’. An encounter with a difference: while 9 villagers were killed by security forces in the village and their bodies were left there,

no casualties were inflicted on security forces. This too the SP confirmed. 4 members of one family, Madvi Bajar, his wife, Madvi Subbi, their married daughter, Kartam Kanni and their young daughter, Madvi Mutti were stabbed and killed inside house. So too were two other villagers from Bhandarpadar, Muchaki Handa and Madkam Deva, who were staying the night over at Madvi Bajar’s house on their way home from Andhra Pradesh where they had been working. Another couple, Soyam Subba and Soyam Jogi were stabbed and killed inside their house. Yet another villager, Madvi Enka was stabbed inside the house and then dragged all over the village. Before leaving the village, the security forces shot him and left his body. All 9 deaths, like the ones on 17th September, were preceded by stabbing and the bodies were left in the village. When the team asked the SP about recovery of bodies from the encounter site, the SP stated that Naxalites had “taken them away”.

2. More killings: In Chintagufa, a 45yr old man, Tomra Mutta was stabbed and shot inside his house. On seeing the sudden arrival of the security forces, Tomra Mutta ran to protect his family. He was shot in the process. The team confirmed 10 murders that had taken place that day but there is apprehension that the total number of killings may be much higher as many villages could not be contacted or accessed. The SP confirmed that two sets of raid parties set off that day comprising of Cobras and local police. Hence, the details with the team do not give the entire and exact picture of how many villages were attacked and targeted.

Old woman sitting inside a hut at singaram village, On 8th jan 2009, 18 villagers were killed in a fake encounter. Her granddaughter (sitika) also killed by police & spos

3. Travails of a 2yr old: Madvi Bajar’s grandson was not spared. He is all of two and yet the security forces beat him, cut four of his fingers, broke his teeth and cut off part of his tongue.



4. 8 arrested and 2 missing: Ten young men between 18-32 years were beaten and picked up by security forces from Mukudtong and Jinitong villages on 1st October. Eight have been shown as arrested in a case that was registered on 3/10 at Konta PS under various sections of IPC, Arms Act and Explosives Act. They are currently lodged in Dantewada jail. However, two still remain missing. Female relatives who went in search of those missing at the Konta PS were harassed, made to affix their thumb impression on blank documents and driven away. When they returned two days later, they were abused, told not to return and informed that the men had been taken to an unknown place.

5. Looting and Burning of property and houses: As many as 9 instances of looting and burning by security forces were reported to the team. Unlike the 17th September killings which were followed by arson and burning of the houses of those murdered, security forces on 1st October looted homes. They took away paddy, pulses, brass pots and poultry from many homes. Money, ranging from 300/- to 10,000/- was stolen from these houses. Destruction of property, particularly burning down of houses was carried out in as many as seven instances.

6. Harassment and torture: Witnesses reported several instances of harassment at the hands of the security forces. In Gompad, one villager was caught and interrogated and then shot at in his



leg. He managed to run away but still has the bullet injury and has had no medical treatment. In Chintagufa, security forces tied another man and made him walk to Injaram PS. They severely beat him and also attacked him on his toe with a knife. He was finally let off in the evening.

Singaram village, On 8th Jan 2009, 18 villagers were killed by police & SPOs

7. Presence of SPOs and Salwa Judum leader with security forces: Residents of Mukudtong village confirmed that the 'raid' party was accompanied by known Salwa Judum leader, Boddu Raja of Injaram camp and they recognised SPOs Pande Soma of Phandeguda village and Ganga of Asarguda village. Residents of Gompad village were able to recognize SPO Madvi Buchcha who belongs to their own village.

8. Forced displacement and terror: Several families are living in makeshift sheds in the forest area as their houses have been burnt down. Those who are unable to run and flee are living in terror in the villages and residents and relatives have helped them to repair their houses and have given them other support.

Conclusion:

While the team could only meet residents of some of the villages, there is apprehension that a much larger number of people were killed on both days in other villages. The same is true for instances of torture, loot and detentions. The clamp down on information makes it impossible to know what exactly is happening in distant and far flung villages. However, what is clear is that the operations security forces have to leave their the forests and/or relatives in other



The condition of residing in their precarious and that the government with the Supreme rehabilitation of (families which

the earlier phase of Salwa Judum violence), the new and current phase of violence by security forces has added to the crisis in these remote and inaccessible villages. Instead of rehabilitating people, the government, in the name of combating Maoism, is bent upon unleashing its lethal paramilitary forces and evicting people from their villages. It is imperative to immediately end to this policy of eviction and terror and enable people to settle in their villages.

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those who are villages is vulnerable. Given has not complied Court order on displaced families were displaced in

Salwajudam atrocities: The ravaged remains of Gothi Koya lives, after forest rangers burnt down their houses. (File)

Demands

1. That the government must accept responsibility for murders committed on 17th September and 1st October by security forces and file FIRs against those responsible. Further, the government must acknowledge all instances of torture, illegal detention and destruction of property. FIRs must be lodged in each case and compensation given in each instance.
2. That an impartial inquiry (comprising civil society representatives and representatives of organizations working in the area) be conducted into the incidents of murder and acts of arson, loot and torture on 17th September and 1st October by security forces. The focus should be to bring out the truth behind these killings and also investigate the extent of the operations carried out on both days.

3. That the government must immediately take steps and show its conviction in the Supreme Court order on rehabilitation of villages and implement it immediately. The above described incidents of 17th September and 1st October have created fear and panic and compelled villagers to flee. Unless the government implements the SC order, villagers will not be able to live in their villages.

4. That along with the implementation of the above mentioned order, there be an immediate end to cordon and search operation carried out by security forces in these areas. Lack of rehabilitation coupled with an ever increasing size of the paramilitary forces in such backward areas with low population density raises fears of repeated incidents, such as the ones described above.

Signed by

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On behalf of fact-finding team.