

# Campaign against Communalism and Terrorism: Beyond the NIC Deliberations

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After a lapse of more than three years the National Integration Council met last week against a backdrop of raging communal violence in several parts of the country punctuated by periodic bomb-blasts in major cities. The response of the state to such a situation conforms to a by now familiar, almost predictable pattern. The NIC deliberations only reflected and reaffirmed this pattern.

In the face of communal violence unleashed by the Sangh parivar, the state withdraws into a shell of inaction, or openly stands by the perpetrators and protagonists of such violence, depending upon whether the reins of the state are in the hands of the Congress/UPA or the BJP/NDA. In the wake of a terrorist incident, the same state however becomes hyperactive. The police swings into action, arrests and encounters follow suit, and we are treated to an official propaganda blitzkrieg with sensational stories as to how the state has just busted some 'terror modules' or killed or arrested some dreaded 'terrorist masterminds'.

While the police establishment reduces the whole question of tackling terrorism to a no-holds-barred battle between 'terrorist masterminds' and 'encounter specialists' in which the courts and constitution must not play spoilsport, the political establishment launches a competitive chorus for a hard state and tough anti-terror laws. The BJP demands re-enactment of POTA, the Congress rules out bringing back any law that has already been exposed and discredited in public experience, promising to introduce tougher new laws instead of the good old TADA or POTA.

In his speech at the NIC, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh delivered all the customary 'secular' and 'democratic' shibboleths that we often hear these days even from his 'counterpart-in-waiting' Mr. LK Advani who however refused to attend the NIC meeting, reportedly peeved that his name figured at the 137<sup>th</sup> position in the list of invitees! The PM called for avoiding any "impression that any community, or sections amongst them, are being targeted, or that some kind of profiling is being attempted". He also reiterated his commitment to the Constitution and the principles of civil liberties and democratic rights: "We should not be provoked to suspend or subvert a democratic process in the search for solutions. A democracy has a special onus in that it has to ensure protection of civil liberties even as it seeks to enforce law and order."

Perhaps all this talk about not subverting the democratic process was meant to justify the UPA government's refusal to take any action against Sangh outfits like the Bajrang Dal, VHP or the Hindu Yuva Vahini. In Delhi, the police versions regarding the Jamia Nagar encounter have raised precisely the kind of questions that Manmohan Singh should be avoided, but the UPA government has refused to set up a judicial enquiry headed by a sitting Supreme Court judge to resolve the issue on the plea that such a step would demoralise the police!

With the government limiting its role to empty phrases and deliberate inaction against the perpetrators of communal violence, NDA constituents were emboldened to offer all kinds of arguments in their own support. Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik attributed the Kandhamal attacks on Christians to 'conflict of interests' between SCs and STs, leaving it to the Centre to decide if Bajrang Dal should be banned. Rajnath Singh condemned any comparison between 'banned terrorist organisations like SIMI' and 'legal nationalist outfits affiliated to the Sangh' while Bajrang Dal functionaries openly dared the Centre to ban the organisation and face the consequences! Sushma Swaraj accused the UPA of failing to distinguish between extremism, which is linked to 'home-grown sentiment', and terrorism, which according to her, is all about secession!

While the NDA speakers boldly advocated their point of view, the CPI(M) said little except reiterating the party's unstinted support to any official campaign against terrorism. The party refrained from demanding a ban on the Sangh outfits; and instead of explaining the context in which India is increasingly internalising the threat of terrorism, Yechury only harped on the anti-national argument to denounce terrorism.

By equating terrorism with secessionism, the propagandists and ideologues of the Sangh brigade are trying to pitch their variety of 'nationalism' as the most powerful anti-terrorist antidote. And this, like most Sangh claims, is based on complete lies. If secessionist sentiment prevails in any part of the country, that too is very much a home-grown sentiment and this recognition is central to any quest for a political solution to secessionist campaigns. Moreover, the terrorist incidents now taking place across the country have little to do with any secessionist sentiment brewing in any part of the country. These incidents are rather a reflection of, and reaction to, the combination of the following three factors: the relentless Sangh campaign of communal violence, the growing involvement of India in the US-led global war, and the increasingly unmistakable communal bias of the Indian state in most of its affairs and actions.

At a time when communalism and terrorism are growing in a dangerous spiral, the campaign against communalism and terrorism must be firmly anchored in the secular, democratic, anti-imperialist agenda of the Indian people.

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### **CPI(ML) Demands Ban on MNS and Shiv Sena**

Strongly condemning the hooliganism and violence on North Indian candidates in railway recruitment exams, the CPI(ML) demanded a ban on the MNS and arrest and stern action against Raj Thackeray and Bal Thackeray.

In a statement issued for the press, the CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya noted that the MNS and Shiv Sena had repeatedly targeted North Indian migrants in Maharashtra - workers, vendors, taxi drivers and students - without facing any stern punishment. This soft treatment by the Congress Government of Maharashtra and the UPA Government at the Centre had emboldened the MNS to intensify its campaign of regional chauvinism and violence.

The CPI(ML) said that the Railways Minister Laloo Yadav and Steel Minister Ramvilas Paswan were paying lip service to the grave issue - if they were truly critical of the soft-peddling of MNC violence by the Congress-led Governments at State and Centre, they should resign from the Central Government in protest against the inaction and failure to protect North Indian migrants to Maharashtra.

Regional chauvinism was against the Indian constitution and ought to have no place in a democracy. The Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamna had openly declared that “Shiv Sainiks were monitoring the movements of those who arrived in the metropolis throughout the night and beat the candidates.” Raj Thackeray too had made public statements openly inciting violence. The UPA Government should answer why such open violators of the Indian constitution were not being banned, and were instead allowed to boast about beating up innocent youth and students, said Comrade Dipankar.

### **AISA-RYA Protest MNS-Shiv Sena Menace**

The MNS-Shiv Sena assaults on examinees from Northern India has led to the death of a student from Nalanda, Bihar. Another student from Muzaffarpur, also in Bihar is said to be in critical condition. MNS activists beat up the candidates, snatched away their admit cards and even tore up the exam papers. The excuse for the brutal attack was that “outsiders” were usurping jobs that the local unemployed should have had. The Maharashtra state government’s unwillingness to stop the atrocities of the MNS was evident in the initial police denial of the incident.

All India Students’ Association (AISA) has launched a nation-wide campaign against the MNS and its allies. The West Bengal unit of AISA organized a protest rally along with Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA) on 20 October in Kolkata demanding a ban on the MNS and punishment for those involved in the recent atrocity. Protestors marched with placards and festoons decrying the incident from Hazra to the Maharashtra Nivas where they put up a road-blockade for some time. They were led by comrade Apurba Ghosh, RYA state leader, comrade Debalina Ghosh, state president of AISA, comrade Zul Mukherjee, member of AISA national executive and state secretariat, comrade Ranajay Sengupta, member of AISA national council and state secretariat and comrade Nirmalya Chanda, member of AISA state executive. An effigy of Raj Thackeray was burnt amidst loud slogans by the large number of students and youth activists who had gathered to protest.

In Delhi, dozens of students from Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Milia Islamia assembled at Jantar Mantar and burnt an effigy of MNS-Shiv Sena and demanding from the UPA Govt. to impose an immediate ban on MNS-Shiv Sena. Comrade Aslam, AISA leader from Jamia, said that the attempts of the fascistic MNS-Shiv Sena to spread hatred in the country along regional chauvinist lines and weaken the country will not be tolerated by the students and youths of this country and they will be given a fitting reply. Other student leaders who led and addressed the gathering are Arnav, Shreyansh and Rajan from DU and JNU.

In Bihar the AISA, RYA and CPI(ML) activists came out in protest in every district and also stopped train movements to protest the outrageous attacks by MNS on innocent examinees. The State-wide protests were held on 20<sup>th</sup> as well as 21<sup>st</sup> October.

In Uttar Pradesh, the protests were held in Allahabad and Varanasi by AISA cadres and supporters.

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## **Politics Dictated by US is the Source of Terrorism**

(People’s Convention in Azamgarh Against Harassing Muslim People)

In a people’s convention titled “Terrorism, Muslim Harassment and Democracy” on 19<sup>th</sup> October in Azamgarh (UP), CPI(ML) General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya said that root of

terrorism is the politics dictated by the US and not Azamgarh. He said that the communal attacks on the religious minorities in the name of terrorism is in reality an attack on the past and future of India, and this attack can not be resisted and defeated in parts but rather holistically and in novel ways. The convention was organised by the CPI(ML), People's Union for Human Rights (PUHR), Revolutionary Youth Association, All India Students' Association (AISA), Jan Sanskriti Manch, All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and Rajnarayan Vichar Manch.

He further said that there were two types of terrorism in the country – bomb blasts in urban centres, which no human being can accept and there should be thorough and transparent investigations of these blasts. The other is blatantly open terrorism as going on in Orissa, Karnataka and elsewhere. This terrorism is being termed nationalism by Sangh Parivar (RSS). As a matter of fact the Manmohan Singh Govt. sweats in its palms in the name of reining in the forces involved in this. Both the State Apparatus and the Sangh gangs are belligerent upon the minorities of this Country. The politics today has entered a new phase wherein the old model of Sangh sponsored politics of violence was Ayodhya and Advani. In the new phase its Gujarat and Modi. Also new is that Indian economic and foreign policy is directed by the US. The attacks on the minorities in the name of terrorism is basically to subjugate and subvert the people's anger as a result of these policies and to emphasise legislation of draconian laws for this.

Therefore any fight against communalism and state repression cannot be fought without fighting against pro-Americanism and imperialism. Comrade Dipankar also mentioned that Congress and BJP are competing against each other for being the most pro-American. The real face of Samajwadi Party has also been exposed and the BSP has always fostered the politics of Sangh. The CPI(M)-led Left's talk of fighting only the BJP weakens the battle for democracy. If we have to defeat communal fascist forces, challenge state repression in the name of terrorism or any thing else, then we must wage and conduct anti-feudal militant struggles of peasants on the issues of livelihood and dignity and against loot and plunder. Only a multi-pronged struggle can ensure their comprehensive defeat.

Human rights activist and Supreme Court lawyer Nandita Haksar said that Human Rights Organisations should premise themselves upon anti-imperialism. She also said that many human rights groups are working for US interests. The Convention demanded an enquiry into Batla House encounter by a Supreme Court Judge, banning of VHP and Bajrang Dal for attacking and killing the Christians, preventing the attempts to divide the Hindus and Muslims by calling Muslim community terrorists and abrogating Indo-US nuclear deal and implementing the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. The Convention was presided over by a 4-member presidium of Jayprakash Narayan, Vijay Bahadur Rai, Manoj and Dr. Salahuddin and it was conducted by managing editor of Samkalin Janmat K.K. Pandey. The Convention was also addressed by JSM's General Secretary Pranay Krishna, Tahira Hasan- National Vice President of AIPWA, PUHR President Manoj Singh, Advocate Wasiuddin, Aslam from Jamia Milia Islamia University, RYA National President Mohammad Salim and Liberation editor Kavita Krishnan among others.

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## **Report of the CPI(ML) Fact Finding Team on Anti-Christian Violence in Kandhamal (Orissa)**

(abridged version)

A Fact Finding Team constituted by CPI(ML) visited Orissa's Kandhamal District on 15-16 October, 2008, and went to different villages and relief camps after making way through interrogations and

checking by Orissa Police and the CRPF. The fact finding team also met District Magistrate and various police officials of Kandhamal District. The Team comprised of CPI(ML) CC members Comrades Rajaram and Bahadur Oraon, Orissa State Committee members Comrades Yudhistir Mahapatra and Radhakant Sethi, AICCTU's national councilor Com. Mahendra Parida, Jharkhand State Committee member Com. J.P. Minz, Hills Party Committee (Assam) members Comrades Samuel Roghang and Daniel Teron.

District magistrate's Statement: DM informed that there has been no violence since ten days. Earlier there were fifteen relief camps, and now only seven were operational having 12641 people. He informed that breakfast, meals, compliment food for children is available in these camps as well as doctor is available 24 hours. Also, iron and calcium tablets for pregnant women and books for children and they are made to read. Blankets, sarees, buckets and mugs and similar essential necessities have also been provided.

Condition of the Relief Camp: The Fact Finding Team visited Phulbani, Tikabali, Ji Udaygiri and Rakiya relief camps and found that the inmates of the camp are living in extremely vulnerable condition. In the name of breakfast they get only fifty grams of chura (beaten rice) and rice-dal for meals which is not enough to satisfy the hunger. In the name of compliment food, the children are occasionally given biscuits. Bathing soaps have been given just once in the camps. The doctors do come but the patients are told that there is no medicine. There is no arrangement for pregnant women. The camp inmates sleep on the plastic mat on the ground. They have to go in the open to defecate where there is no security and hence the life is always in danger. One inmate of Ji Udaygiri camp was killed when he had gone to defecate.

Role of the VHP and Bajrang Dal: The victims in all the relief camps unanimously told the fact finding team that it's the VHP and Bajrang Dal cadres who have sowed the seeds of communal division in the villages. They used to organize meetings of the Kandh tribes and incite them to attack the Christian hamlets and also provided funds for doing this.

Conclusion:- (1) This violence was anti-Christian and in no way was it a struggle between Tribals and the Dalits (2) This violence which had full support from the Biju Janta Dal Government was planned and executed by VHP and Bajrang dal (3) The Sangh's propaganda about "indiscriminate religious conversion" is far away from any fact as the Christian population of Orissa is only 2.5 per cent of the total population. It is to be noted that Christian missionaries began working in Orissa 150 years back (4) The factual data used by Sangh parivar to incite the Kandh Tribals are far from any truth. Dalits have far less proportion of land in comparison to the Tribals. In Kandhamal 90 per cent land is government land, 5.5 percent belongs to Tribals and rest 4.5 per cent belongs to Dalits, Ogissi and Oriya (businessmen). There is not much difference in the economic conditions of the Tribals and the Dalits. The Dalits are slightly better as they engage in petty businesses.

Our Demands: (1) The VHP and Bajrang Dal should be banned (2) Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik responsible for the violence should tender his resignation immediately (3) The accused for the riots be immediately arrested (4) The orissa Govt. must reconstruct all houses, Churches, Schools, hostels, hospitals and other social-religious structures demolished during the pogrom and for other damages adequate compensation be granted after a proper survey (5) The relief camps be run for another six months and proper civic arrangements for food, medicine and sanitation be made in these camps (6) Arrangements be made for registering FIRs at all police stations (7) Peace process be initiated and guarantees be made for reopening and running of schools, hospitals and other institutes run by the Christian missionaries.

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**P.S.**

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