

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > India > Fundamentalism, communalism, extreme right, secularism (India) > **Gujarat riot victims living in “sub-human conditions”**

Gujarat riot victims living in “sub-human conditions”

State not facilitating their return: National Commission for Minorities

Thursday 26 October 2006, by [The Hindu](#) (Date first published: 24 October 2006).

Inmates do not have rudimentary civic amenities

“Overwhelming” number without ration cards

Special Correspondent,

NEW DELHI: Four-and-a-half years after the carnage of 2002, over 5,000 displaced families belonging to the minority community continue to live in camps in “sub-human conditions” because the Gujarat Government “is not fulfilling its constitutional responsibility” to create an atmosphere that would enable them to return home.

This is the key finding of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) after a five-day visit to 17 of the 46 camps that are now the makeshift homes of the families. While the State Government stated that the inmates of the camps were living there voluntarily, the NCM in its report said: “In view of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Commission finds this viewpoint untenable and evasive of a government’s basic responsibility.”

According to NCM member Zoya Hasan, the abdication of State responsibility in the post-violence situation is just as bad if not worse than its turning a Nelson’s eye to the carnage in 2002. “While the Gujarat Government is refusing to recognise their displacement, it also seems that the nation has forgotten what happened in 2002.”

Acting on a complaint from an Ahmedabad-based non-government organisation about the condition of 5,307 families displaced in the 2002 riots, the NCM team visited the camps between October 13 and 17.

During their visits, members found that inmates lived without the most rudimentary civic amenities like potable water, sanitation, streetlights, schools, primary health centres and approach roads.

Besides, "an overwhelming" number of families did not have ration cards. Requests for below poverty line cards have been repeatedly turned down.

As a result, many families were unable to obtain foodgrains, cereals and kerosene at subsidised rates. The Commission found this had increased their hardship, as most displaced families were reduced to working for daily wages after losing their means of livelihood.

Though State Government officials escorted the Commission members to these camps, the establishment remained unmoved by the living conditions there.

Most of the camps were located on land bought by NGOs or donated by wealthy Muslims. Many inmates were key witnesses in major legal cases.

"They live in constant fear and terrible deprivation, yet they have not lost their faith in the State," the report said.

P.S.

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