

The July 28 Mudigonda massacre in Andhra Pradesh

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Contents

- [Message from Andhra Pradesh](#)
- [CPI\(ML\) holds nationwide \(...\)](#)
- [MEMORANDUM OF PROTEST AGAINST](#)

Message from Andhra Pradesh

The July 28 Mudigonda massacre in Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh has once again drawn the country's attention to the actual state of democracy in rural India. For the last few months, Andhra Pradesh has been witnessing the rise of a statewide popular land struggle. Instead of heeding the demands of the land movement which is led by almost the entire spectrum of Left forces from the CPI and CPI(M) to the CPI(ML), the Rajshekhar Reddy government has responded by framing and arresting activists in large numbers. On July 28 the state was having a united Left-sponsored bandh to demand the setting up of an autonomous land reforms panel and withdrawal of repressive measures unleashed by the state government. The Reddy government chose to meet the bandh with brutal repression, gunning down eight unarmed persons, including a woman, in Mudigonda village of Khammam district.

The Andhra incidents clearly tell us that land remains a central demand for the rural poor and that whenever the landless poor forcefully assert this demand the state sheds all democratic pretensions and answers with cold-blooded murder. Almost all state governments have begun to reverse in practice, if not also overtly in terms of legislation, whatever land reforms had been implemented in the early decades after Independence. While a small house site or an acre of cultivable land remains a distant dream for millions of landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants, the powers that be are busy promoting a new form of corporate landlordism in the name of developing Special Economic Zones. Andhra Pradesh is a tell-tale example of this stark contrast and the Reddy government has opened fire both on Visakhapatnam fisherfolks opposing SEZ and Khammam peasants demanding land redistribution.

The developing land struggle in Andhra has also upheld the real content of Left unity - unity in the field of struggle, unity on the basis of the interests of the toiling masses. Earlier during the TDP regime, a similar kind of unity had begun to develop in the state against the neo-liberal economic reforms. Yet instead of carrying forward the process of unity and raising it to a higher political level, the CPI(M) leadership chose to backtrack and enter into a partnership with the Congress during the elections. Once again prospects of unity are developing in Andhra Pradesh, and the CPI(M) is uncomfortable about it. When the CPI(ML) put forward a proposal for a joint demonstration in Delhi against the Mudigonda massacre, the CPI(M) leadership turned it down citing political differences. The CPI(M) can work together with the Congress in spite of massacres like Mudigonda, but it cannot join hands with the CPI(ML) in the battle for justice for the Mudigonda victims !

The CPI(M)'s sectarianism on the question of any kind of joint action with the CPI(ML) stems perhaps from its own internal dilemma and contradiction. In a state like Andhra where the CPI(M) is not in power, it takes up issues like land reforms and has to face state repression in the process. In West Bengal, where the party has been uninterruptedly in power for three decades, its government is bent upon relaxing and reversing the land ceiling legislation and has no hesitation in massacring anti-SEZ protesters in Nandigram. How does the party now reconcile Mudigonda with Nandigram? The party is perhaps also wary about the future of its relations with the Congress. Just as Nandigram is passé for the CPI(M) leadership, it would also like to treat Mudigonda as a passing aberration and not let it sour its growing partnership with the Congress.

The battle for land and democracy is however too basic and urgent to obey the CPI(M)'s narrow pragmatic calculations. All the forces of the Left who wish to advance the people's movement and develop mutual unity and understanding on the basis of such a shared struggle on a shared agenda will surely draw inspiration and appropriate lessons from the incidents in Andhra Pradesh. Red salute to the peasant martyrs of Mudigonda and to the heroic fighters of Andhra Pradesh.

CPI(ML) holds nationwide protests against Mudigonda massacre

The Communist Party of India (ML) organized protests in all parts of the country on July 30 to condemn the incident of police firing on agitating peasants and agrarian workers at Mudigonda in Khammam district of AP occurred on 28 July and condemned the brutal massacre of rural poor and Left activists in Congress ruled Andhra Pradesh.

In the national capital, Delhi, a protest demonstration was held out from Mandi House to Andhra Bhavan. This was led by Party General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya. On reaching AP Bhavan, angry protestors demanded to submit a memorandum but police, in the most shameful manner, started water cannons without warning and arrested the General Secretary along with hundreds of activists. The protestors arrested include GS Dipankar Bhattacharya, CCMs Rajendra Pratholi, Prabhat Kumar, AISA GS Ravi Rai, AIPWA leader Uma Gupta, AICCTU Secretary Rajiv Dimri and others. A memorandum of protest has also been sent to the Governor of Andhra Pradesh Shri Rameshwar Thakur. AIPWA General Secretary Kumudini Pati was also present in the protest. Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya addressed the protestors and said that this wanton killing of eight innocents, including one woman, is a reflection of the growing intolerance of the state and poses a serious threat to any notion of democracy.

In Andhra Pradesh, dozens of Party activists were arrested in Kakinada while burning the effigy of YSR during the protest march on July 30. Demonstrations were also held at Anantpur, Visannapeta, Kuttukudi, Jagadampeta, NS Puram, and many other places. The CPI(ML) has called for the week-long protests in Andhra Pradesh and will further intensify the movement if adequate action was not taken by the govt. in the state.

Party's Uttar Pradesh unit observed the statewide protest day on July 29. A protest was organised in front of the State Assembly in Lucknow. Demonstrations were held in Varanasi, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Gazipur, Moradabad, Mau, Ambedkarnagar, Jalaun, Sitapur, Sonbhadra, and many other places. Party activists burnt the effigy of YSR Govt. at all places and demanded the Chief Minister's resignation.

In Jharkhand, Protests were held at almost all the district headquarters in the state and resignation of Rajshekhar Reddy was demanded. A demonstration was held out in Ranchi jointly by CPI(ML) and RYA and an effigy of Andhra CM was burnt at Albert Ekka Chowk. Protests were held at different places in other districts including Dhanbad, Bokaro, Latehar, etc. Protests were organised in

Rajasthan at places including Jaipur, Udaypur and Jhunjhunu. The demonstrators burnt the effigies and sent memorandum of protest to the Governor of AP.

The memorandum of protest were also sent from Gurgaon in Haryana and Diphu in Karbi Anglong of Assam. Protests were also held in other parts of Assam. In Tripura, protests were held in Agartala, Udaipur and some other towns.

Demonstrations were organised in all parts of Bihar, including the capital Patna. Similar protests were organised in West Bengal. While in Orissa, many towns including Rayagada, Gunupur and Bhubaneswar witnessed such protests. The effigy burning was also observed in Gwalior of Madhya Pradesh.

In Tamil Nadu, Party activists held protest demonstrations at various places. AICCTU, AIALA, RYA, and AIPWA leaders and activists participated in these demonstrations. In Kanyakumari demonstration was held at Nagarcoil in front of the Collectorate. CPI(ML) and AICCTU activists including a considerable number of women participated in this protest. Demonstrations were also held in Erode, Kumbakonam, Sirkazhi, Dindigul, Virudhachalam, and Tirunelveli. In Erode more than 500 participated. After submitting the mass memorandum with the demand of the resignation of the AP Chief Minister, they also met the DC on the issue of house-site pattas for themselves. Protest memoranda were also sent to the Andhra Pradesh Governor from other places. The protest demonstrations were also observed in various other states where effigy burnings were carried out and memoranda were sent to the Governor of AP.

MEMORANDUM OF PROTEST AGAINST MUDIGONDA MASSACRE

To Hon'ble Sri Rameshwar Thakur Governor, Andhra Pradesh

Sir, We strongly condemn the incident of police firing on agitating peasants and agrarian workers at Mudigonda in Khammam district of AP on 28 July. This wanton killing of eight unarmed persons, including one woman, who were staging a demonstration demanding implementation of land reforms and protesting the framing and incarceration of peasant activists and leaders of the ongoing land struggle, is a reflection of the growing intolerance of the state and poses a serious threat to any notion of democracy. We urge you to convey to the government of Andhra Pradesh our strong resentment and the popular feeling of outrage over the Modigonda massacre and see that adequate action is taken at the earliest to punish the guilty.

In particular we would like to draw your attention to the following specific demands :

1. The Chief Minister must own moral and political responsibility for the massacre and tender his resignation ;
2. The State Government must set up an autonomous Land Reforms Commission in the state and ensure immediate implementation of all pending land reforms measures ;
3. The DM and SP of Khammam must be suspended forthwith and cases filed against them for the unprovoked firing that killed 8 people and injured many ;
4. False cases lodged against the protesting people must be withdrawn and all activists and peasants arrested in connection with the land struggle released unconditionally and immediately.
5. Rs. 10 lakh must be paid as compensation to the family of every person killed and Rs. 2 lakh to the

family of every injured.

We hope you will appreciate the popular outrage caused by the Modigonda massacre and do all you can to ensure that justice and democracy are not allowed to be murdered in Andhra Pradesh by the wanton exercise of state power by the YSR government.

P.S.

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