

From Right -Wing to Riot -Wing : Genocide in Gujarat

There is a history of communal violence in Gujarat and elsewhere in the country and this is well known and equally well documented. But in recent years the character of such violence has changed dramatically. There is a consolidation of the Sangh Parivar and a concerted effort to polarize the majority community against the minorities. The Sangh Parivar organizations are defining the "rights" of minorities in the context of being protected if they behave and pay obeisance to the social norms and mores of the majority community – to put it crudely the identity of Muslims should be "hinduvadi-muslim" as distinct from Muslims elsewhere. What is happening in Gujarat is like a laboratory experiment of the Sangh Parivar to replicate elsewhere, if successful. This is the danger we have to contend with in Gujarat and this is why Gujarat is different from the communal violence, which has taken place until now. Further, what is even more worrisome is that this experiment has been conducted in coalition with the state apparatus. The collusion by the state in a sense is similar to the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in Delhi and elsewhere. One reason why Gujarat 2002 happened was that the perpetrators of that carnage were not even arrested, let alone being convicted. Such inaction was repeated in the case of the riots after the demolition of Babri Masjid. To couple this, invariably arrests and convictions made were and are of those from minority communities. This gives a message to the majority that they can get away with such hate crimes. And the fact that in Gujarat there is the backing of a right wing government adds impetus for a larger participation in such violence.

Another unique feature of communal violence in Gujarat is that it does not occur with an agonizing regularity as in Maharashtra, Bihar or Uttar Pradesh, but when it occurs it has a greater severity and lasts longer. Since Independence this is the third major occurrence – 1969, 1992-93 and 2002, but the worrisome factor is that casualties and injuries are very high. In fact, in the last 50 years deaths due to communal violence have been the highest in Gujarat at a whopping 120 per million persons contrasted with 80 and 42 per million in Bihar and Maharashtra, respectively (*quoted by Bhikhu Parekh in Making Sense in Gujarat, Seminar-513, May 2002, pg 26*).

Further, in Gujarat there is also a specific class character in support of such violence. The middle class, not only the trader class which is the traditional supporter of the Sangh Parivar, but also the Hindu professional classes, including doctors, lawyers and teachers have actively supported the violence and condemned the minority community. Infact, it was not a simple retaliation to the Godhra incident but was seen as an act of patriotism. All this is very reminiscent of the making of Nazi Germany!

The UN convention on genocide states "genocide is a crime under international law contrary to the spirit and aims of the united nations and condemned by the civilized world". It defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
 - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."
- (Convention on the prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Approved and proposed for Signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948 entry into force 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII)*

The collection of media reports, articles and comments from academicians and others in this document bares testimony to the fact that what has transpired in the past few months in Gujarat is not a simple riot in which two groups or communities clash, settle some score and things return to normal. What is happening is a pogrom, genocide and an ethnic cleansing. Livelihoods of the minority community have been systematically destroyed, their properties looted and damaged, and warnings issued that they dare not return to their homes and businesses. All this clearly giving a message that "you better leave or we will not leave you".

The attitude of the government towards addressing the current crisis bears testimony to the fact that they are hand in glove with the perpetrators of violence. The National Human Rights Commission clearly states in its preliminary report that "the recent events have resulted in the violation of the fundamental rights, liberty, equality and the dignity of citizens of India as guaranteed in the Constitution" and that "the apathy on the part of the government has created feelings of insecurity among the people". Though it is the states responsibility to uphold the rights of its people, no proactive steps have been taken to bring the state back to normalcy. The law enforcing machinery in the state –the police has played an active role in perpetuating more violence "adding fuel to the fire". This clearly reflects the deep-rooted bias and partisan conduct of the police. The government has shunned all concerns raised by international human rights organizations over the issue calling it an "internal affair". Unfortunately all political parties in the country who profess to be "secular" have not actively intervened to stop this violence but to the contrary have used this opportunity (sic) to gather political mileage from this situation.

Our concern in the current course of events is the impact of this genocide on the health of all, and especially women. Health is defined as a function of the social, cultural, economic and political environment that exists. We realise the indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights - economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. A rights-based approach to health depends on concrete government obligations towards better health under international human rights law. It encompasses key components including right to equality and non-discrimination, respect for individual autonomy, privacy and physical integrity and places particular emphasis on the empowerment of the vulnerable and marginalized groups. There are two distinct and complex linkages between health and human rights. First, health policies and programmes can promote or violate human rights in the way they are designed and implemented. And secondly, the violations or lack of attention to human rights invariably lead to serious health problems.

The current events in Gujarat are a live example of how the "right to health" has been grossly violated. The continuing violence has had serious effects on the physical and mental health of the community. The state seems to have turned a "blind eye" to this situation and has been reluctant to provide relief and basic facilities. Even the normal provision of medical care through public hospitals and dispensaries is totally disrupted. No measures have been taken to ensure the safety of the health professionals or of the patients seeking care. This apart no body of medical professionals has taken cognizance of the detrimental impact that this situation has had on the health of the community. While a few committed doctors and nurses have consciously upheld the ethics of the profession, and at great risk to their lives, have provided care to affected persons, the various associations of the health professionals have not made even a public statement against the genocide, let alone organize themselves to provide relief and care. On the contrary a section of doctors in Ahmedabad under the banner of Ahmedabad Doctors Forum have called upon their fraternity to discriminate in provision of care – calling Hindu doctors not to provide care to Muslim patients or work in Muslim communities.

In a crisis such as this more often than not women are more adversely affected and their concerns like sexual assault and other abuse is accorded least importance. The *Beijing Declaration of 1995*, of which India is a signatory clearly states the "prevention and elimination all forms of violence against women and girls" and the need to take "necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women." This carnage has seen women being made systematic targets of sexual violence. Children have also witnessed and survived gruesome forms of violence. The Beijing Declaration also talks of ensuring equal access to and equal treatment of women in health care, also the promotion and protection of all human rights of women and girls, ensuring respect for international law, including humanitarian law, for their protection. No FIRs have been lodged nor has any effort been made by the state machinery- health professionals or the police - to record forensic evidence of those who have been killed or to investigate cases, which clearly point towards sexual assault. Obvious signs of sexual assault have been disregarded. As a consequence, there is no medical evidence of sexual assault, on which basis women could seek justice.

It's been nearly three months and there is no evidence of the carnage ending, especially in Ahmedabad. The Gujarat government of the Bharatiya Janata Party continues to actively perpetuate the violence, especially egged on by the fact that the Central government (also led by the BJP) has supported the Chief Minister of Gujarat by not taking any action against his government. The government has openly supported officers who have connived with mobs attacking members of the minority community and punished officers who actively tried to control the situation by transferring them to posts where they cannot be active. This is clear evidence of the rightwing government becoming riot-wing and has instilled a fear in the common citizen that his/her life and livelihood is not safe under their governance. The consequence of the latter is that minorities, especially middle class, in large numbers are moving out of Gujarat.

This compendium attempts to document the carnage in Gujarat and its effect laying special emphasis on its impact on health and women. The first section traces media

reports on the burning of the Sabarmati Express carrying *kar sevaks* in Godhra through the violence that resulted (*dubbed as a 'retaliation'*) to the incident, the social, cultural and economic impact that followed, the political turmoil and a summary of fact finding reports by various bodies. Section II looks at the crisis of public health with the fact-finding report by the Medico Friend Circle and a set of press clippings covering the health concerns emerging from the situation. The last section looks at the abuse of women, which has occurred on a large scale in this carnage. It carries a report brought out by the National Women's panel, sponsored by Citizens' Initiative that investigate the impact of this carnage on women in Gujarat, followed by media reports concerning the issue.

Ravi Duggal
Sumita Menon
Qudsiya Contractor

A Summary of Reports

EVEN in a land not unfamiliar with communal violence, the carnage in Gujarat, still continuing, has shocked people of conscience everywhere. In stark contrast to official apathy and disinformation campaign (events were brought in control in under 72 hours; the situation in Gujarat is fast approaching normalcy), citizen's groups and some official bodies rushed to the state to conduct their own investigations and report to the nation.

It is often claimed that such 'enquiry' reports are both sketchy and partisan, biased against the state administration. It may be noted that a wide range of organisations, official and NGO, from the state and outside, visited the affected areas at different periods. Their narratives, stylistic differences apart, reiterate similar findings and recommendations.

Presented below are brief summaries/extracts of a few reports, detailed texts of which are available. These, uniformly, present a picture both horrifying in the nature of violence perpetrated on victim groups and disturbing in the evidence of official neglect and complicity.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON GUJARAT. National Human Rights Commission, India.

THE NHRC took *suo motu* action on the situation in Gujarat, following the recent communal riots, on 1 March 2002. It was worried about the media reports of 'suggested inaction by the police and the highest functionaries of the state' and wanted to confirm their veracity. It sought a response from the Gujarat government who, after dodging and much persuasion, produced a preliminary report on 8 March. The NHRC's Gujarat cell contradicted the report provided by the state government. Subsequently, NHRC visited Gujarat, following which the Government of Gujarat was compelled to produce a comprehensive report on the situation on 28 March.

The NHRC team visited Gujarat from 19-22 March. The NHRC Chairperson, Justice (retd.) J.S. Verma, led the team, with Justice Sujata Manohar and Mr. Virendra Dayal. The team was accompanied by the Secretary General of the NHRC, P.C. Sen, Special Rapporteur Chaman Lal and Y.S. Murthy. The Commission has published its proceedings, containing some preliminary comments and urgent recommendations which need to be addressed by both the central and state governments. The proceedings have been sent to both the governments for their response and comments.

Preliminary Comments

The Commission begins by observing that it is the state's responsibility, not only to protect the right to life, liberty and equality of its citizens, but also to prevent their violation through abetment, overt acts or negligence.

The Commission observes 'a serious failure of intelligence and action by the state government', leading to the Godhra incident and the subsequent riots in other parts of Gujarat. The state government claims it was unaware of the kar sevaks' travel plans from Ayodhya. The Commission finds it to be a case of *res ipsa loquitur* (the affair speaking for itself), given the communal history in the state and the current 'surcharged' atmosphere surrounding Ayodhya. The burden of responsibility to explain this lapse lies with the state.

The Commission feels that adequate anticipatory and precautionary measures may not have been taken. The government report states that while some districts were brought under control, those which are usually less communal, were difficult to contain. Destruction and carnage took place in front of police stations. Organised groups, with cellular phones and address lists, singled out properties and homes for destruction. The Commission has asked the state government as to 'who the players were in situations that went out of control.'

The state government has said that Godhra was premeditated, but cannot name the culprits. Despite the gruesome nature of the incident, the Western Railway police is investigating the matter. FIRs (First information Reports) are distorted and poorly recorded, while senior politicians are trying to 'influence' police stations. The Commission notes, 'the widespread lack of faith in the integrity of the investigations', and calls for greater transparency and integrity in their execution, while instilling confidence in the minds of people.

The Gujarat government has claimed that it contained the violence in 72 hours and the subsequent riots in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Panchmahals, Sabarkantha and Mehsana were due to the prevalent media coverage. The Commission believes it would be naive to accept this explanation and states that violence continues unabated even during the writing of this report. There is pervasive insecurity among all sections of society, specially the victims. Citing the example of two High Court judges who were compelled to leave their homes, the Commission says, 'There could be no clearer evidence of the failure to control the situation.'

While applauding the courageous role of the media, the Commission informs the press that it should keep in mind that the right to freedom of speech and expression is a restricted freedom and care should be taken that inflammatory remarks are not made public.

The payment of compensation between the Godhra victims and the other riot victims are discriminatory and should be brought at par. Relief and rehabilitation is inadequate and discriminatory. Facilities are insufficient, and prior to the visit of the NHRC Chairperson, officials had not even visited some relief camps like Shah-e-Alam.

Recommendations

I. Law and Order

- i) The following cases are to be entrusted to the CBI: Godhra, Chamanpura (Gulbarga Society), Naroda Patiya, Best Bakery (Vadodara), Sadarpura (Mehsana).
- ii) Special Courts are to be appointed to hear the cases on a day-to-day basis, by judges handpicked by the Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court. Special Prosecutors may be

appointed. Sensitive officers should be deputed, preferably women officers. Care should be taken that the victims are not traumatised further.

iii) For the non-CBI cases, special cells are to be constituted under the District Magistrate and monitored by the Additional Director General (Crime).

iv) Time frames are to be fixed for the expeditious resolution of the cases.

v) Police desks are to be set up at relief camps for lodging complaints and FIRs.

vi) Investigative reports by NGOs should be utilised.

vii) Provocative statements in the media should be examined.

viii) Officers who have failed in their duty to control the violence should be identified.

II. Camps

i) Senior politicians and officials should systematically visit the relief camps. The relief should be conducted in a transparent and accountable manner with the help of NGOs.

ii) The entrusting officers should be given specific responsibilities.

iii) Special provisions to be made for payment of insurance and compensation.

iv) The inmates should not be asked to leave the camps.

III. Rehabilitation

i) Places of worship destroyed during the riots are to be repaired expeditiously with state assistance.

ii) Adequate compensation should be given to the sufferers. Funds should be augmented from various national and international sources, including HUDCO, HDFC, etc.

iii) The private sector should be asked to assist.

iv) The NGOs should be involved.

v) Special care to be taken for destitute women and children and psychiatric help provided for rape and trauma victims.

vi) The media should be asked to cooperate in rehabilitation efforts.

IV. Police Reform

The pending police reforms recommended by the National Police Commission and the NHRC should be implemented immediately.

The NHRC's opinion can be summed up best in its own words:

'The Commission would like to observe that the tragic events that have occurred have serious implications for the country as a whole, affecting both its sense of self-esteem and the esteem in which it is held in the comity of nations. Grave questions arise of fidelity to the Constitution and to treaty obligations. There are obvious implications in respect of the protection of civil and political rights, as well as of economic, social and cultural rights in the state of Gujarat as also the country more widely; there are implications for trade, investment, tourism and employment... But most of all, the recent events have resulted in the violation of the fundamental rights to life, liberty, equality and the dignity of citizens of India as guaranteed in the Constitution.'

(For full text go to <http://nhrc.nic.in>)

ETHNIC CLEANSING IN AHMEDABAD: a preliminary report. SAHMAT, Delhi.

'FOR a preliminary assessment of the Gujarat situation, and as an act of solidarity with the suffering victims,' SAHMAT organised a two-day visit to Ahmedabad on 10-11th March 2002. The team consisting of Kamal Mitra Chenoy, Vishnu Nagar, Prasenjit Bose and Vijoo Krishnan visited several relief camps including two of the biggest in Bapunagar and Shah Alam, and a number of affected localities and prepared this report based on its experiences.

Findings

'The events in Ahmedabad do not fit into any conceivable definition of a communal riot. It was a completely one-sided and targeted carnage of innocent Muslims... closer to a pogrom or an ethnic cleansing. The selective violence was done with remarkable precision suggesting meticulous planning and collation of information over a protracted period, rather than the mob frenzy characteristic of a communal riot.' It indicates the collusion of the state machinery and the ruling political establishment. The Godhra massacre was a trigger, but it could have been anything else. The overwhelming majority of those killed are Muslims, including women and children. The official estimate of deaths is an understatement, the actual figures reaching about 2000, while the casualty in rural areas is completely unrecorded.

The pattern of violence in Ahmedabad was mainly in the form of pogroms led by local VHP and Bajrang Dal members, who organised themselves in huge mobs of 5,000-15,000. They looted, ransacked and destroyed lives and properties. The brutalities were excessive including sexual violence against women and children and burning alive of helpless people. The worst attack was at Naroda Patiya, where a settlement of 25,000 Muslims was completely wiped out. The police opened fire at the victims and refused shelter. Eyewitnesses at relief camps described gory incidents of children being burnt alive and women being raped. 'One expectant woman's belly was cut open, her foetus wrenched out and dashed to the ground.' Trucks were used to carry LPG cylinders, looted goods and to batter down boundary walls. There was a concerted attempt to terrorise, uproot and drive away the Muslims from the ghettoised settlements.

Muslim commercial and residential establishments and individual houses were exclusively selected. The attackers had lists with the aid of which they specifically targeted Muslim

properties. Those that were disguised under Hindu names were singled out, looted and burnt. Hindu establishments were left untouched. The entire purpose was to kill and brutalise an entire community. Thousands of shops and business establishments belonging to the Muslims were ransacked and destroyed. Eyewitness accounts claimed that the Revenue Minister in the Gujarat government Haren Pandya and another minister Ashok Bhatt were personally present during the looting and arson.

This is only a part of a greater economic war the VHP wishes to unleash on the Muslims. A leaflet circulated by the VHP, calls for a total economic boycott of the Muslims in order to 'throttle' them, 'break their backbone', so that 'it will be difficult for them to live in any corner of the country'. Muslims, from slum dwellers to businessmen and white-collar professionals to senior government bureaucrats were targeted in this attack. Upper class Muslim houses in posh localities like Paldi and the Delite and Tarana Apartments were completely gutted and looted by a 5,000 strong mob.

A 'tremendous communalization of society' has taken place in Gujarat where 'hatred towards the Muslim minority has been systematically inculcated in such a manner that violence of barbaric proportions against them is not only widely condoned but even enjoyed by certain sections of the Hindu communities.' The local Gujarati media, especially the vernacular press like *Sandesh* and *Gujarat Samachar*, has directly contributed to incitement and provocation for violence. The collusion of the state, the police and the media was absolute. Had it not been so 'neither would the rioters have such precise information about the residents and business establishments of the Muslims, nor would the RSS-VHP been able to mobilise the enormous machinery that was deployed to play havoc in Ahmedabad during this period.'

It is estimated that more than 70,000 Muslims have been rendered homeless and are staying in relief camps spread across the city. The government has shown total negligence and apathy towards the refugees in these camps, specially the Muslim ones, which have no official support and have not been visited by a single politician or official. They are run by NGOs, missionaries and other private sources and have inadequate food, clothes, blankets, medicines and toilet. 'It seems that the government is deliberately pushing this enormous number of Muslim population to the margins of survival.'

There has been an extensive destruction of mosques, dargahs and historical monuments during the riots. In Ahmedabad alone, 20 mosques were decimated. After destroying them, the rioters placed Hindu idols in these mosques and madrasas, sometimes consuming liquor and burning holy books. A 500 year old masjid at Isanpur, which was an ASI monument, was turned to rubble with the aid of bulldozers and cranes and the famous Sufi saint Wali Gujarati's dargah was razed to the ground, the plot metalled and merged with adjoining road.

'Since the entire purpose of the attacks was to kill and brutalise a particular community, irrevocably damage its economic interests, and force it out of earlier settlements to existing Muslim ghettos, these attacks can only be described as ethnic cleansing. The partisan role of the state, the government, police, civil administration, the ruling party, the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the rest of the Sangh brigade, all point to this ethnic cleansing to be state sponsored. It will take generations for the victims to recover from such a pointed and

vicious communal onslaught. It is of immediate importance to bring the perpetrators to book and prosecute them.'

Recommendations

1. A high level time bound enquiry by a sitting Supreme Court/High Court judge should be instituted.
2. A CBI enquiry into the role of the police.
3. The Press Council must examine the role of the Gujarati press.
4. Proper and adequate relief and rehabilitation should be given to all victims.
5. Compensation should be granted promptly.
6. Civil society organisations must be involved.

(For full text see <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/sahmatreport032002.html>)

AN INTERIM REPORT TO THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. People's Union for Civil Liberties, Gujarat.

THE PUCL report is a detailed account of the 'communal orgy, violence and widespread terrorism inspired, encouraged and supported by the ruling party and the state in the wake of the Godhra Sabarmati Express attack.' The report, which was presented to the NHRC, makes a rapid appraisal of the situation in and around Vadodara in the 22 days following the Godhra incident. In his covering letter to the NHRC chairperson, Kirit Bhat, President, PUCL, Gujarat, writes:

'The state of Gujarat has come under the most severe attack by communal hooligans resulting in an unprecedented damage and destruction to life and property... the nightmarish atmosphere of terror and violence, perpetrated by the ruling party and the government continues to threaten human rights, civil liberties, constitutional guarantee of individual freedom and democratic privileges... life has been hit so hard that we are afraid it will never come back to normal. The state's chief minister has evaded all sense of responsibility and accountability.'

Findings

Poor and middle class Muslim minorities have been rendered shelterless, their houses looted, destroyed or burnt. Muslim families have been attacked en masse, looted, beaten, injured, maimed and killed. They have fled their homes to save their lives while some of their families are in relief camps. 'Over 15 mosques, dargahs and Muslim monuments have been destroyed in Vadodara city alone. At least 100 Muslim shops and establishments have been attacked, destroyed, looted and burnt. Lari gallas, paan shops, restaurants, hotels, big shops, small to big industries, home producing units are destroyed and gutted. This list is far from complete and 22 days were not enough to assess destruction of life and property of this scale and magnitude.'

The events and patterns of violence in Vadodara are the worst to have hit Gujarat. During the day and night of 28 February 2002, Hindu extremists in organised mobs attacked Muslim localities, stoning, stabbing and wielding swords. Gas cylinders, kerosene and petrol bombs were used to destroy mosques, houses and shops. Acid was poured on goats belonging to Muslims. Armed with electoral lists, the groups selectively targeted Muslim lives and properties and installed Hindu idols in their place. After 15th March, the hitherto undamaged Muslim houses were destroyed. 'Today there is practically no Muslim property in non-Muslim areas undamaged by the loot and arson.'

The terror spread to the rural areas of Vadodara district, which for the first time were exposed to large scale and inhuman violence by stoning, burning, smashing and killing of animals.

Elected representatives and persons from the ruling party played a key role in spreading the violence to hitherto peaceful and non-communal areas. The Gujarati electronic and print media aired and published provocative and inflammatory statements. The idea was to make all places unsafe for Muslims.

The distinguishing characteristic of these riots was the widespread appropriation and misuse of Hindu religious symbols and figures including shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' as a battle cry, forcing Muslims to utter the name of Ram, pulling their beards, projecting the Godhra victims as martyrs, organising frenzied chanting and Ram bhajans, mass singing of the Hanuman Chalisa etc.

'The police did not respond to numerous and repeated phone calls by people who were seeking their protection and help.' Incidents often took place near police stations and chowkies and despite complaints and prior information, the police desisted from taking any action. Rather, they stood and watched while shops were looted and burnt, sometimes in front of police stations and control rooms. In many instances, the police took active part in the looting, arson and the killings. They subjected women to verbal, physical and sexual abuse by assaulting and beating them. 'Women were pulled out of their homes by dragging them by their breasts.' The police refused to lodge FIRs and in cases where they did, they were distorted. The police have also been biased in making their arrests.

Most of these attacks were pre-planned. 'Weeks before the attack people were moving around making a list of the all the Muslim residents and establishments in the area.' The Muslims were systematically targeted for looting and arson. The Bajrang Dal and the RSS continuously held meetings in different localities spreading rumours and terror. Pamphlets were used to incite people by encouraging them to boycott Muslims in every possible way, instigating people to rape Muslim women and kill the newborn of the minority community. Psychological terrorism was used for example, when an old Muslim man was shown the head of his beheaded son on a tray before being slain himself or when a woman was made to witness the dismemberment of her son's body after which she was killed.

Recommendation

1. A special court of enquiry, on the lines of a war crimes tribunal, by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court should be constituted. The court should also have the power to punish.

2. A specific committee to be instituted to investigate the negative and dysfunctional role of the police, the other arms of the executive and the media.
3. The NHRC should ask the Police Commissioner for the video clippings from the local television channels and for the details of the combing operations.
4. Prevent the misuse of POTA and selective use of other legal sections.
5. Immediately extend relief and implement rehabilitation measures to all affected.

(For full text go to <http://www.pucl.org/reports/Topics/Religion-Communalism/2002/Gujarat-nhrc-submission.htm>)

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER. Citizen's Initiative, Gujarat.

THE Citizen's Initiative, a Gujarat based collective of secular groups and individuals, met Prime Minister Vajpayee in Ahmedabad on 4 April and submitted a memorandum describing the situation obtaining in the state and recommendations for immediate action. It may be noted that the state government tried to stop representatives of the group from meeting the PM.

The memorandum is based on data collected by a team of lawyers and paralegal workers from 3083 respondents, from four regions of Ahmedabad and victims of the minority community from 17 camps in the city.

Findings

1. 'Words and emotions are insufficient to describe the flagrant violation of citizen's rights, mostly belonging to the minority community. All those who have suffered in the violence are by and large the poor and neglected sections of society.'
2. 'The violation of rights involved by nature being social, political and economic, it would be unfair to view the entire situation from the viewpoint of only "communal riots". Instead, it appears there is a well-planned sinister design to divide the people of the state between Hindus and Muslims.'
3. More than a lakh of people have taken refuge in 102 relief camps across the state. They are living in the most inhuman conditions, afraid to go back home for fear of being attacked again. While most have no home to return to, in a few cases, survivors who returned to salvage the remains were killed.
4. In the initial days, members of the affected community and NGOs (not government) provided basic food items and items like blankets. When the government did start relief, our volunteers reported that the relief was of highly inferior quality. Victims have been so traumatized that they have found it difficult to claim bodies of dead relatives, far less file FIRs with the local police.

5. The role of the state police and administration has been highly partisan. Not only did the police stand by as mute witnesses, in some cases they went further by abetting the crime.
6. Despite talk of intelligence failure, not a single case of negligence has been initiated against any state official. Neither the chief minister nor the governor, in the first 42 hours, made any appeal for peace. When the chief minister did speak he said, 'Five crore people of Gujarat observed restraint under grave provocation.'
7. The total number of dead has crossed the 800 mark, including 97 killed in police firing. 2015 houses, 1934 shops, 963 larigullas, 12 buses, 912 other vehicles were gutted and destroyed. As per official information (7 March) 681 shops were ransacked, 119 persons received stab injuries and 753 had other injuries, Unofficial estimates are much higher.
8. The incidents of burning are alarmingly high. In many cases, people were first murdered and then burnt to destroy evidence.
9. Tensions still prevails and systematic efforts are afoot to terrorize the minority community even in far-flung and scattered rural areas. Private channels have been showing video cassettes in disturbed areas that can incite violence and no effort have been made to stop them. Certain caste communities have reportedly been paid money to attack the minorities. Pamphlets have been distributed calling on all 'nationalist' Hindus to declare economic and social boycott of all Muslims.
10. On the role of the police, 19.33% of respondents say that the police have committed serious actions against them; 24.16% say that the police, though present, did nothing to protect them; 4.48% claim that the police fired on the victims; and only 3.18% say that the police helped them.

Recommendations

1. The KG Shah Commission of Enquiry set up by the Gujarat government should be strengthened by appointing at least two Supreme Court judges. The terms of reference should be defined more sharply, focusing particularly on the role of the state administration and ruling party.
2. Special courts, also deemed human rights courts, should be set up under S.30 and public prosecutors appointed under S.31 of the Human Rights Act, 1993. The trial in these courts should be held on a day to day basis
3. Cases of sexual assault and atrocities on women should be investigated by a special cell assisted by representatives of women's organisations. The compensation for rape victims should be equal to that given to those killed in the riots.
4. Action should be initiated against public servants neglecting the discharge of their duties or supporting perpetrators of violence. The issue of transfer of police officers who had reportedly done good work in preventing violence should be immediately investigated into.

5. People who have been forced out of villages should be provided police protection and reinstated in their original villages. Panchayats should be made responsible for preservation of law and order, and if unwilling, be liquidated.

6. Relief camps should be supported with adequate supplies, and assigned a revenue official to ensure the above and submit a weekly report on progress. Special facilities should be set up for processing insurance and compensation claims.

7. For long term rehabilitation, the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority, assisted by outside experts, should be asked to prepare a comprehensive plan for those who have lost commercial/industrial property, homes, those displaced in rural areas and those completely destitute.

8. Finally, all desecrated or damaged places of worship should be restored; the government should encourage, support, facilitate and announce formation of peace committees; and leaders of the majority community, senior officials and police officers should enter into dialogue with different community leaders to help promote mutual trust.

(For further information: nagrikpahel@hotmail.com)

STATE-SPONSORED CARNAGE IN GUJARAT. Report of a CPI(M)-AIDWA Delegation. Delhi, March 2002.

A CENTRAL delegation of CPI(M) along with representatives of the All India Democratic Women's Association, visited Gujarat from 10-13 March, to express solidarity with the victims of communal violence and get a first hand report of events on and from 27 February 2002. The delegation spoke to over 1000 people – citizens from both communities, victims of communal attacks, administrative officials in Ahmedabad, members of relief committees, citizens initiatives, NGOs and intellectuals.

The delegation visited camps in Shah Alam, Bapunagar, Aman Chowk, Sundaram Nagar, Juhapura, Kankaria Municipal School 7 and 8 and Dariyakhan Ghummar in Ahmedabad and the railway station, Iqbal Relief Camp and the Civil Hospital in Godhra. One member also visited Mehsana district.

Findings

1. That the events were state sponsored and not a communal riot. In Godhra, the administration moved swiftly but elsewhere the 24-hour bandh was used to mobilise supporters.

2. Even mohallas inhabited entirely by Muslims were devastated; the police sealed off the areas and accompanied VHP mobs.

3. There is prima facie evidence to show complicity of top ruling party leaders, including ministers.

4. There is evidence of careful planning: (a) in the guise of collecting census data, house checks had been carried out recently, (b) cranes, shovels, trucks were used to attack and

bring down buildings owned by Muslims and their shrines, mosques etc., (c) state complicity can be seen in the immediate tarring over of the desecrated shrine of Wali Gujarati. Symbols of religious identity – masjids, graves – were attacked with the help of trucks and perhaps, bulldozers. Madrasas that were attacked were left with offensive slogans written on the walls.

5. In contrast to the 1984 Sikh riots, the Gujarat carnage is the result of 'systematic spread of communal poison' by the Sangh Parivar against minorities (Christian and Muslim) in the name of Hindu Rashtra.

'The above can be inferred from the following: In 1999 a inter-communal marriage was opposed and a vicious campaign launched against the Muslims which forced 300 families to leave. This was followed by an attack on Christians by 5000 VHP followers (also in 1999). Inflammatory pamphlets have been circulated by the Sangh Parivar over the years which should have been banned by any secular state. Such pamphlets have been used by the kar sevaks to mobilise people – one such pamphlet dated August 2001 was found in the burned carriage in Godhra. The above indicates that the Gujarat carnage is an ongoing project of the Hindutva forces.'

6. Eye witnesses report that middle class and educated people were involved in the looting and displayed the looted goods as trophies. The Hindutva platform appears to encourage criminal acts against the 'other'.

7. The economic assets of the minority community were targeted. An estimated 700 shops/hotels owned by members of the minority community were burnt. It was reported that the arsonists carried a list of these hotels with them, which explains how they were identified.

8. Tribals were used to attack Muslims and there seems to have been cynical manipulation of their feelings against Muslim moneylenders to excite them. Earlier the vanvasi movement amongst Hindu tribals was used to rouse them against Christians.

9. The delegation also commented on the extreme savagery of the attacks, the large number of women and children who were killed. Rods, swords, etc were used to inflict injury. One victim had a rod pushed down his throat and women had cuts on their breasts.

10. People came well prepared. In the Bapunagar attack in Ahmedabad, mobs moved about freely and police were seen directing them. The conditions in camps were horrible; there was paucity of medical help, presence only of voluntary doctors, no lady doctors, very limited food supplies, appalling provision of water and sanitation contributing to the trauma and insecurity of the victims.

11. State figures on the numbers killed are a gross underestimate. The issue of compensation is critical but no effort is being made to register FIRs. Camp inmates fear that the empty spaces of destroyed property will be taken over.

12. The delegation recorded heartening instances where neighbours saved Muslims and Hindus fled and Muslims protected their property. Many people expressed horror at what had happened.

Recommendations

1. That the state and Central government should act swiftly to identify and arrest the guilty. Also to investigate the Godhra incident quickly as evidence has already been allowed to be destroyed. The individual appointed to head the inquiry is not suitable as his pro-Hindutva sentiments are known and his judgement has been commented on by the Supreme Court saying that he 'relies more on imagination than fact.'
2. The army must continue its presence in Gujarat till end of the month and increase its presence in rural areas.
3. A fundamentally different political situation is required in Gujarat before Muslims can be rehabilitated and feel secure enough to return to their homes. The Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, must be removed.

(For full text go to <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/CPMAIDWA2002gujaratreport.html>)

GUJARAT CARNAGE 2002: A Report to the Nation. Independent Fact Finding Mission.

THIS report is prepared by an independent fact-finding team comprising Kamal Mitra Chenoy, (JNU), S.P. Shukla (Former Finance Secretary and former Member, Planning Commission), K.S. Subramanian (former Director General, Police, Tripura) and Achin Vanaik (Jamia Millia Islamia). The team visited Godhra and Ahmedabad from March 22-26 and interviewed victims, eyewitnesses, officials, judges, lawyers, journalists, NGOs, activists and relief camp managers. The objective was to establish the truth about Godhra and the subsequent riots and to verify the allegations of state complicity. The findings of the mission are to be presented to the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal set up in Gujarat.

Findings

'The events in Gujarat do not constitute a communal riot.' Barring Godhra, the carnage that followed was a 'state-backed and one-sided violence against Muslims tantamount to a deliberate pogrom.' Communal violence in Gujarat has assumed a 'comprehensive state-wide dimension', including large rural areas, 'marked by attacks by tribal people on the Muslim minority.' The casualties are very high, with unofficial estimate of deaths at around 2,000 or even higher. Deaths in rural areas have not been adequately reported as entire settlements have been wiped out with none left to report the deaths. As the administration was bent upon understating the violence, the official record of death is 800, with the police reluctant to lodge FIRs.

The Godhra incident is the result of extreme provocation of the Muslims by the karsevaks. In the days preceding the incident of the burning of the Sabarmati Express, karsevaks travelling back from Ayodhya repeatedly provoked and harassed Muslim passengers, hitting them with iron rods, forcing them to shout 'Jai Shri Ram', pulling their beards and pushing them off the train if they did not comply to their demands and even abducting Muslim women. This occurred in Ahmedabad and Godhra too, despite the communal history of Gujarat and the prevalence of a charged atmosphere. This escalated to a fracas with Muslim vendors at Godhra station followed by an exchange of stone pelting, finally

leading to the burning of coach S6 of the Sabarmati Express. The 2,000 odd Muslims who participated belonged to the Ghanchi community living in the nearby basti of Singal Falia, an area prone to communal violence. It was easy to quickly gather so many people and it was a spontaneous and heinous reaction to the provocation.

The government accused the Muslims of Singal Falia of acting as ISI agents and publicised the transportation of the charred bodies to Ahmedabad for a public funeral, fomenting communal tension and hysteria, which fuelled the attacks that followed. A blind eye was turned to the provocative propaganda by the Gujarati media like *Sandesh*, Sangh Parivar affiliates like the VHP and state functionaries. 'The suborning of large sections of the administration and the police to permit... and to facilitate the Hindutva agenda, was critical for the spread, intensity and persistence of the communal violence.' The state government sanctioned and supported the bandh that followed and signalled to the bureaucracy and the police to minimise their intervention. 'Since then the government has systematically tried to cover-up, minimise and even justify the extent of violence, while protecting the guilty and those guilty of dereliction of duty. This is why the events of February-March 2002 can only be called a state-sponsored pogrom.'

This pogrom required systematic planning well in advance of the Godhra incident. 'The lists the rioters possessed and used must have been compiled over time. The targeting of Muslim homes, institutions, establishments and shrines was very precise and accurate. Even when there was only one Muslim shop or home in a congested Hindu-dominated area, it was attacked, ransacked and burnt. Businesses that had Hindu and non-Muslim names were identified and targeted along with others in which Muslims were a minority or sleeping partners. The mobs were huge, at times several thousand strong brought in buses and trucks.' Vehicles were used to ferry thousands of gas cylinders and transport looted goods. In the weeks before the outbreak, Ahmedabad was experiencing a widely reported shortage of cylinders. 'There must have been official connivance to release such large quantities of LPG gas cylinders.'

'The breakdown of law and order in Ahmedabad, Vadodara and elsewhere was a consequence of the politicisation of the administration and the police.' 'The BJP, RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and associated organisations had allegedly penetrated state institutions during the BJP rule in Gujarat.' The RSS and the VHP also control key functionaries of the state. There was a virtual breakdown of large areas of police functioning or the above-mentioned preparations should not have gone unnoticed. This mass movement of men, materials and vehicles could easily have been curbed by decisive police action. No preventive arrests were made, and those made were largely that of Muslims. In Kutch, Surat and Amreli where decisive action was taken by the police and the administration, the situation was kept under control. The Gujarat government functioned not as a constitutionally bound, non-partisan and independent body, but one controlled by and answerable to the Sangh Parivar.

The Central government chose to minimise the seriousness of what has happened. 'Without their sustained and consistent support, the Modi government could not have been emboldened to continue with its bloody, anti-Constitutional and anti-national activities.'

Since the defence of the Constitutional order is its primary duty, the Union government has failed to uphold its oath of office.'

The primary responsibility for the communal conflagration rests with the Sangh Parivar. It provided the ideological, political and administrative leadership and backbone for the tragic events. What has happened in Gujarat is a gruesome tragedy that will have 'severe consequences for the continuation of India as a secular, multicultural democracy. If minorities, along with those who disagree with the Hindutva fanatics can be attacked in this manner, then a secular India cannot survive.'

Recommendations

1. In view of the Constitutional breakdown in Gujarat, under the obligations enjoined on it under Article 355, the Union Government should impose President's Rule under Article 356.
2. Stringent and extensive measures must be undertaken to depoliticise and decommunalise the bureaucracy and the police.
3. The K.G. Shah Commission of Inquiry should be replaced by a Commission of Inquiry headed by a sitting Supreme Court judge and including one or more sitting High Court judge with more extensive terms of reference.
4. Special courts should be set up to try the guilty, including leading politicians. CBI inquiries be instituted against senior police officers and bureaucrats.
5. Recommendations of the National Police Commission should be accepted and implemented immediately.
6. Immediate measures for relief and rehabilitation should be taken. Peace committees should be set up in each locality to facilitate the smooth rehabilitation of the victims.
7. Free medical and psychiatric help should be given to traumatised victims, especially women and children, including a large number of women and girl children who have been raped.
8. The Press Council should investigate the role of the media specially the Gujarati language press.

(For full text go to <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/GujCarnage.html>)

Source: Society under Siege, *Seminar* 513, May 2002

"WE HAVE NO ORDERS TO SAVE YOU"
State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat

Thirty-eight-year-old Mehboob Mansoori lost eighteen family members in the massacre of Muslims in the neighborhood of Gulmarg Society, Ahmedabad. He was interviewed by Human Rights Watch three weeks after the attack. His story is representative of many testimonies contained in this report.

They burnt my whole family.

On February 28, we went to Ehsan Jaffrey's home for safety. He is an ex-member of parliament.... At 10:30 a.m. the stone throwing started. First there were 200 people then 500 from all over, then more. We were 200-250 people. We threw stones in self-defense. They had swords, pipes, soda-lemon bottles, sharp weapons, petrol, kerosene, and gas cylinders. They began shouting, "Maro, kato," ["Kill them, cut them"] and "Mian ko maro," ["Kill the Muslims"]. I hid on the third floor.

Early in the day at 10:30 the police commissioner came over and said don't worry. He spoke to Jaffrey and said something would work out, then left. The wall in front of the house was broken at 11:30 a.m. When they entered the hall we had lost our spirit, we had no weapons, we couldn't fight back. Other people also came there for safety. When the gas cylinder exploded I jumped from the third floor. This was around 1:30 p.m.

At 3:30 p.m. they started cutting people up, and by 4:30 p.m. it was game over. Ehsan Jaffrey was also killed. He was holding the door closed. Then the door broke down. They pulled him out and hit him with a sword across the forehead, then across the stomach, then on his legs.... They then took him on the road, poured kerosene on him and burned him. There was no police at all. If they were there then this wouldn't have happened.

Eighteen people from my family died. All the women died. My brother, my three sons, one girl, my wife's mother, they all died. My boys were aged ten, eight, and six. My girl was twelve years old. The bodies were piled up. I recognized them from parts of their clothes used for identification. They first cut them and then burned them. Other girls were raped, cut, and burned. First they took their jewelry. I was watching from upstairs. I saw it with my own eyes. If I had come outside, I would also have been killed. Four or five girls were treated this way. Two married women also were raped and cut. Some on the hand, some on the neck.

At 5:30 p.m. a car came, it was the assistant commissioner. They brought us out slowly; some were hiding in the water tank underground. Some tried to get out but were attacked. Sixty-five to seventy people were killed inside. After the police came we told them to take us somewhere safe. They brought us to the camp. We didn't go to the police station. Three patients were admitted in the civil hospital. On March 3 and 4 the police came here to file complaints, but only after camp organizers called them.

I. SUMMARY

Indian government officials have acknowledged that since February 27, 2002, more than 850 people have been killed in communal violence in the state of Gujarat, most of them Muslims. Unofficial estimates put the death toll as high as 2,000. At this writing, murders are continuing, with violence spreading to rural areas fanned by ongoing hate campaigns and economic boycotts against Muslims. The attacks against Muslims in Gujarat have been actively supported by state government officials and by the police.

The violence in Gujarat began after a Muslim mob in the town of Godhra attacked and set fire to two carriages of a train carrying Hindu activists. Fifty-eight people were killed, many of them women and children. The activists were returning from Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, where they supported a campaign led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP) to construct a temple to the Hindu god Ram on the site of a sixteenth century mosque destroyed by Hindu militants in 1992. The Ayodhya campaign continues to raise the spectre of further violence in the country—Hindu-Muslim violence following the destruction of the mosque claimed thousands of lives in the city of Bombay and elsewhere in 1992 and 1993. The VHP claims that the mosque was built on a site that was the birthplace of Ram.

Between February 28 and March 2, 2002, a three-day retaliatory killing spree by Hindus left hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless and dispossessed, marking the country's worst religious bloodletting in a decade. The looting and burning of Muslim homes, shops, restaurants, and places of worship was also widespread. Tragically consistent with the longstanding pattern of attacks on minorities and Dalits (or so-called untouchables) in India, and with previous episodes of large-scale communal violence in India, scores of Muslim girls and women were brutally raped in Gujarat before being mutilated and burnt to death. Attacks on women and girls, including sexual violence, are detailed throughout this report.

The Gujarat government chose to characterize the violence as a "spontaneous reaction" to the incidents in Godhra. Human Rights Watch's findings, and those of numerous Indian human rights and civil liberties organizations, and most of the Indian press indicate that the attacks on Muslims throughout the state were planned, well in advance of the Godhra incident, and organized with extensive police participation and in close cooperation with officials of the Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) state government.

The attacks on Muslims are part of a concerted campaign of Hindu nationalist organizations to promote and exploit communal tensions to further the BJP's political rule—a movement that is supported at the local level by militant groups that operate with impunity and under the patronage of the state. The groups most directly responsible for violence against Muslims in Gujarat include the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, the ruling BJP, and the umbrella organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps, RSS), all of whom collectively form the *sangh parivar* (or "family" of Hindu nationalist groups). These organizations, although different in many respects, have all promoted the argument that because Hindus constitute the majority of Indians, India should be a Hindu state.

Nationwide violence against India's Muslim community in 1992 and 1993 and against India's Christian community since 1998, including in the state of Gujarat, have also stemmed from the violent activities and hate propaganda of these groups. Human Rights Watch and Indian human rights groups have long warned of the potential scale of death and destruction resulting

from the sangh parivar's Hindu nationalist agenda.¹ If the activities of these groups remain unchecked, violence may continue to engulf the state, and may spread to other parts of the country.

The state of Gujarat and the central government of India initially blamed Pakistan for the train massacre, which it called a "pre-meditated" "terrorist" attack against Hindus in Godhra. The recent revival of the Ram temple campaign, and heightened fears of terrorism since September 11 were exploited by local Hindu nationalist groups and the local press which printed reports of a "deadly conspiracy" against Hindus by Muslims in the state. On February 28, one local language paper headline read: "Avenge blood for blood." Muslim survivors of the attacks repeatedly told Human Rights Watch that they were told to "go back to Pakistan." Anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim sentiments had been building up in Gujarat long before the revival of the Ayodhya Ram temple campaign. Human Rights Watch was unable to verify conflicting accounts of what led to the mob attack on the Sabarmati Express in Godhra though local police investigations have ruled out the notion that it was either organized or planned.

The state government initially charged those arrested in relation to the attack on the Godhra train under the controversial and draconian Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO, now the Prevention of Terrorism Act), but filed ordinary criminal charges against those accused of attacks on Muslims. Bowing to criticism from political leaders and civil society across the country, the chief minister dropped the POTO charges but stated that the terms of POTO may be applied at a later date.

Three weeks after the attacks began, Human Rights Watch visited the city of Ahmedabad, a site of large-scale destruction, murder, and several massacres, and spoke to both Hindu and Muslim survivors of the attacks. The details of the massacres of Muslims in the neighborhoods of Naroda Patia and Gulmarg Society and of retaliatory attacks against Hindus in Jamalpur are included in this report. Human Rights Watch was able to document patterns in Ahmedabad that echo those of previous episodes of anti-Muslim violence throughout the state and of anti-minority violence over the years in many parts of the country—most notably the Bombay riots in 1992 and 1993, and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984.² These include the role of sangh parivar organizations, political parties, and the local media in promoting anti-minority propaganda, the exploitation of communal differences to mask political and economic motives underlying the attacks, local and state government complicity in the attacks, and the failure of the government to meet its constitutional and international obligations to protect minorities.

Between February 28 and March 2 the attackers descended with militia-like precision on Ahmedabad by the thousands, arriving in trucks and clad in saffron scarves and khaki shorts, the signature uniform of Hindu nationalist—Hindutva—groups.³ Chanting slogans of incitement to kill, they came armed with swords, *trishuls* (three-pronged spears associated with Hindu mythology), sophisticated explosives, and gas cylinders. They were guided by computer printouts listing the addresses of Muslim families and their properties, information obtained from the Ahmedabad municipal corporation among other sources, and embarked on a murderous rampage confident that the police was with them. In many cases, the police led the charge, using

¹ See for example, Human Rights Watch, "Politics By Other Means: Attacks Against Christians in India," *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol. 11, no. 6, September 1999; and Smita Narula, "India's Minorities Are Targets of Government-Abetted Violence," *International Herald Tribune*, March 20, 2000.

² The then-ruling Congress (I) party was charged with complicity in the killing of over 2,000 Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 following the assassination of Congress party president Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard.

³ Hindutwa, Hindutva, or Hinduvata refers to a movement for Hindu awakening.

gunfire to kill Muslims who got in the mobs' way. A key BJP state minister is reported to have taken over police control rooms in Ahmedabad on the first day of the carnage, issuing orders to disregard pleas for assistance from Muslims. Portions of the Gujarati language press meanwhile printed fabricated stories and statements openly calling on Hindus to avenge the Godhra attacks.

In almost all of the incidents documented by Human Rights Watch the police were directly implicated in the attacks. At best they were passive observers, and at worse they acted in concert with murderous mobs and participated directly in the burning and looting of Muslim shops and homes and the killing and mutilation of Muslims. In many cases, under the guise of offering assistance, the police led the victims directly into the hands of their killers. Many of the attacks on Muslim homes and places of business also took place in close proximity to police posts. Panicked phone calls made to the police, fire brigades, and even ambulance services generally proved futile. Many witnesses testified that their calls either went unanswered or that they were met with responses such as: "We don't have any orders to save you"; "We cannot help you, we have orders from above"; "If you wish to live in Hindustan, learn to protect yourself"; "How come you are alive? You should have died too"; "Whose house is on fire? Hindus' or Muslims'?" In some cases phone lines were eventually cut to make it impossible to call for help.

Surviving family members have faced the added trauma of having to fend for themselves in recovering and identifying the bodies of their loved ones. The bodies have been buried in mass gravesites throughout Ahmedabad. Gravediggers testified that most bodies that had arrived—many were still missing—were burned and butchered beyond recognition. Many were missing body parts—arms, legs, and even heads. The elderly and the handicapped were not spared. In some cases, pregnant women had their bellies cut open and their fetuses pulled out and hacked or burned before the women were killed.

Muslims in Gujarat have been denied equal protection under the law. Even as attacks continue, the Gujarat state administration has been engaged in a massive cover-up of the state's role in the massacres and that of the sangh parivar. Eyewitnesses filed numerous police First Information Reports (FIRs), the initial reports of a crime recorded by the police, that named local VHP, BJP, and Bajrang Dal leaders as instigators or participants in the attacks. Few if any of these leaders have been arrested as the police, reportedly under instructions from the state, face continuous pressure not to arrest them or to reduce the severity of the charges filed. In many instances, the police have also refused to include in FIRs the names of perpetrators identified by the victims. Police have, however, filed false charges against Muslim youth arbitrarily detained during combing operations in Muslim neighborhoods that have been largely destroyed. The state government has entrusted a criminal probe into the deadliest of attacks in Ahmedabad, in the Naroda Patia and Gulmarg Society neighborhoods, to an officer handpicked by the VHP, the organization implicated in organizing and perpetrating these massacres.

On April 3, India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) released the preliminary findings of its report on the violence, a strong indictment of the failure of the Gujarat government to contain the violence. As the commission awaited a response from the state government before releasing a comprehensive report, its very authority to intervene in the matter was being challenged in the state's High Court based on the fact that a state-appointed judicial commission of inquiry was already in place. Following the trail of other commissions of inquiry appointed by the state in the wake of communal riots in 1969 and 1985—whose recommendations have yet to be implemented—the current state commission inspires little hope of justice. One lawyer noted, "The state government is involved and is a party to what happened. How can a party appoint a judge? We cannot expect him to give justice." India's National

Commission for Minorities (NCM) and National Commission for Women (NCW) have also been severely critical of the Gujarat government's response to the violence and its aftermath.

Government figures indicate that more than 98,000 people are residing in over one hundred newly created relief camps throughout the state, an overwhelming majority of them Muslim. They hold little hope for justice and remain largely unprotected by the police and local authorities. One relief camp resident asked: "The same people who shot at us are now supposed to protect us? There is no faith in the police." A lack of faith has also kept many camp residents from approaching the police to file complaints. Fearing for their lives, or fearing arrest, many have also been unable to leave the camps to return to what is left of their homes.

The state government has failed to provide adequate and timely humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons in Gujarat. Problems documented in this report include serious delays in government assistance reaching relief camps, inadequate state provision of medical and food supplies and sanitation facilities, and lack of access and protection for nongovernmental (NGO) relief workers seeking to assist victims of violence. Muslims have also been denied equal access to relief assistance. Government authorities are also reported to be absent from many Muslim camps. In sharp contrast to the international and Indian community's response following a massive earthquake in the state in January 2001—when millions of dollars in aid from the international community and civil society poured into the state—the onus for providing food, medical support, and other supplies for victims of violence rests largely on local NGO and Muslim voluntary groups.

The relief camps visited by Human Rights Watch were desperately lacking in government and international assistance. One camp with 6,000 residents was located on the site of a Muslim graveyard. Residents were literally sleeping in the open, between the graves. One resident remarked: "Usually the dead sleep here, now the living are sleeping here."

The disbursement of financial compensation and the process of rehabilitation for victims of the violence has been painstakingly slow and has failed to include all of those affected. Initially compensation was disbursed on a communal basis: the state government announced that the families of Hindus killed in Godhra would receive Rs. 200,000 (U.S.\$4,094)⁴ while the families of Muslims killed in retaliatory attacks would receive Rs. 100,000—a statement that was later retracted, in part due to widespread criticism from nongovernmental organizations and Indian officials outside the state of Gujarat.

In the wake of the massive earthquake in January 2001 that, according to government reports, claimed close to 14,000 lives and left over one million homeless, the state of Gujarat also faces economic devastation. The economic impact is felt acutely by both Hindu and Muslim survivors of the attacks whose homes and personal belongings have been destroyed, and whose businesses have been burnt to the ground. Others reside in neighborhoods where curfews have yet to be lifted, limiting their mobility. Thousands are also unable to leave the relief camps to go to work for fear of further attacks. Many Muslims do not have jobs to which to return—their employers have hired Hindus in their place. An economic boycott against Muslims in certain parts of the state has helped to ensure their continued and long-term impoverishment. Acute food shortages resulting in starvation have been reported in areas of Ahmedabad where Muslim communities are forced into isolation, afraid to leave their enclaves to get more supplies. Children's education has also been severely disrupted while the threat of measles and other outbreaks looms large in Ahmedabad camps.

⁴ At this writing, one U.S. dollar was equivalent to 48.85 Indian rupees.

On April 4, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Gujarat and announced a federal relief package for riot victims. Vajpayee, who earlier described the burning alive of men, women, and children, as a "blot on the country's face," stated that the Godhra attack was "condemnable" but what followed was "madness." His comments stood in deep contrast to those of the state's chief minister, Narendra Modi, formerly a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh volunteer and propagandist, who at the height of the carnage declared that, "The five crore [fifty million] people of Gujarat have shown remarkable restraint under grave provocation," referring to the Godhra attacks.

On April 12, the BJP proposed early elections in Gujarat soon after rejecting Chief Minister Narendra Modi's offer to resign. Early elections in the aftermath of the attacks may favor the Hindu nationalist vote in the state—a primary objective of the sangh parivar nationwide—and Narendra Modi's continued tenure as chief minister. As this report was going to press, national political parties were pressing to remove Modi, leading the BJP to set aside the early election option. The upper and lower houses of the Indian parliament were preparing for parliamentary debates on the violence in Gujarat while opposition parties were pushing for a vote to censure the national government.

This report is by no means a comprehensive account of the violence that began on February 27. Ahmedabad was only one of many cities affected. Reports from other areas indicate that the violence was statewide, affecting at least twenty-one cities and sixty-eight provinces. Information from these areas also suggest a consistent pattern in the methods used, undermining government assertions that these were "spontaneous" "communal riots." As one activist noted, "no riot lasts for three days without the active connivance of the state."

Gujarat is only one of several Indian states to have experienced post-Godhra violence, though elsewhere incidents have been sporadic and were often immediately contained. Events were unfolding every day as this report went to press including developments related to the political future of the Gujarat government.

Both the Godhra incident and the attacks that ensued throughout Gujarat have been documented in meticulous detail by Indian human rights and civil liberties groups and by the Indian press. Their painstaking documentation of the attacks, often under grave security conditions, has been cited throughout this report. In some cases, the names of victims have been changed or withheld for their protection. Names of human rights activists have also been withheld to ensure their ability to continue their important work, an unfortunate indicator of the volatility surrounding the issue of communal violence in Gujarat and beyond.

All of the communities affected continue to live with a deep sense of insecurity, fearing further attacks and a cycle of retaliation. Not included in this report are many heroic accounts of individual police and of Hindu and Muslim civilians who risked their lives and livelihoods to rescue and shelter one another, and the many peace activities that have been organized by citizens amidst the ruins of the state.

The violence in Gujarat has triggered widespread outrage in India. Civil society groups from across the world have also mobilized to condemn the attacks and appeal for justice and intervention. Responding to growing international scrutiny into the violence, however, the Indian government has stated that it "does not appreciate interference in [its] internal affairs."⁵ Human

⁵ "India warns against criticism over Gujarat," Agence France-Presse, April 22, 2002.

Rights Watch calls on the Indian government to prevent further attacks and prosecute those found responsible for the violence in Gujarat, including state government and police officials complicit in the attacks. We call on the international community to put pressure on the Indian government to comply with international human rights and Indian constitutional law and end impunity for current and past campaigns to generate communal violence against Indian minorities.

Assistance from international humanitarian and United Nations agencies is sorely needed for Hindus and Muslims in relief camps. Human Rights Watch urges the Indian government to actively seek the assistance of these groups and to invite United Nations human rights experts to investigate state participation and complicity in the violence in Gujarat.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

To bring itself into compliance with domestic and international law, the government of India must act immediately to restore security, prevent further attacks, and end the environment of impunity in Gujarat. Those responsible for the attacks in Godhra and its violent aftermath must be prosecuted, including police and state officials complicit in the attacks. Specifically, Human Rights Watch makes the following recommendations:

To the State Government of Gujarat:

Improve security in violence-affected areas and relief camps by increasing the number of police officers—including officers from minority communities—and the number of outposts where needed. Where necessary, army units should continue to be deployed to keep the peace.

- Suspend all police officers implicated in the attacks, pending investigation.
- The government should act without delay to implement the recommendations of the NHRC on the violence in Gujarat (see appendix), including that:
 - The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) take over investigations of certain critical incidents in Gujarat, including the attacks in Godhra, Naroda Patia, and Gulmarg Society.⁶
 - The chief justice of the High Court of Gujarat establish courts expressly to try the cases investigated by the CBI.
 - The government set up police desks in temporary camps, to receive and record complaints, and forward them to police stations having jurisdiction.
- Turn over investigations implicating state and police officials to external agencies such as the CBI. Ensure that these investigations address the conduct of state officials, including police and Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, who incited, took part in, or were complicit in the attacks. The investigations should also focus on:
 - Instances in which government documents noting the religious affiliation of persons were given to groups responsible for inciting violence or conducting abuses.
 - Malfeasance in investigating and arresting leaders involved in attacks.
 - Excessive use of police force, including executions of Muslims.
 - The arbitrary detention and filing of false charges against Muslims.
- Ensure that state police register and investigate all cases of communal violence regardless of the religious background of the victim. Police posts should be set up in relief camps expressly for this purpose. The national government and government of Gujarat should establish civilian review boards or civilian ombudsman committees composed of judges and lawyers to examine whether cases are being adequately investigated. Police found to have violated their duties should be dismissed and prosecuted where appropriate.
- Collect and preserve forensic evidence for use in the identification of the dead and to support criminal prosecutions.
- Members of the media and media organizations responsible for the incitement of specific acts of violence should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.
- Take decisive steps to ensure that police use deadly force only as a last resort to protect life. Police agents should act in accordance with international standards on use of force. The U.N. Basic Principles on the Use of Force or Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials emphasize that the use of force and firearms should be in consonance with respect for human rights and that deadly force should not be used against persons unless "strictly unavoidable in order to protect life."
- Launch public awareness campaigns in Gujarat and other states aimed at preventing future communal violence. This campaign should reaffirm legal provisions, explain what resources are available to minorities, and publicize the procedures for filing a First Information Report (FIR).

⁶ CBI is a federal investigative agency that handles cases of corruption and cases of interstate and other crimes of national importance. CBI inquiries are often demanded in cases where local or state investigations are perceived to be biased.

This campaign should also include public service announcements aimed at educating the population through efforts to raise awareness of minority rights and condemnation of religious violence and extremism.

- Implement state and federal relief packages for victims of communal violence—including disbursement of compensation for family members of victims killed in the violence, the reconstruction of homes and places of business, and the provision of food rations and other relief supplies for all persons displaced or dispossessed by the communal violence in a nondiscriminatory manner and in accordance with international human rights law and the U.N. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- Restore without delay all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of legal rights that were lost or destroyed in the course of the communal violence. These include passports, personal identification documents, and birth, marriage, and education certificates.

To the Government of India:

The government of India should ensure that the government of Gujarat investigates and prosecutes perpetrators of violence and where necessary, cooperates with external agencies such as the CBI in doing so. The government should also take appropriate measures to ensure the security and safety of all citizens of Gujarat, including assistance to those who have been displaced or dispossessed by the violence. In addition, Human Rights Watch recommends that:

- Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which stands in violation of international due process norms. The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), that preceded POTA, has been discriminatorily applied against Muslims in the state of Gujarat and elsewhere.
- Establish state branches of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), and the National Commission for Women (NCW) in Gujarat, with adequate financial resources and powers to initiate prosecution where appropriate. The 1993 Protection of Human Rights Act should also be amended so that the NHRC is not excluded from inquiring into matters already pending before state commissions.
- Implement recommendations on police reform made by the National Police Commission in 1980.
- End impunity for past campaigns of violence against minorities. That is, prosecute and punish those found responsible for serious offenses during the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi in 1984 and the post-Ayodhya violence of December 1992 and January 1993. The recommendations of the Srikrishna Commission on the post-Ayodhya violence in Bombay should be implemented without delay. Police responsible for excessive use of force should be prosecuted; those who having the power and duty to stop the violence but did not intervene should be punished accordingly.
- Request and encourage United Nations relief agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as international humanitarian organizations to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to all those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence, without discrimination.
- Provide U.N., international humanitarian organizations, and local nongovernmental relief agencies full, free, and unimpeded access to all those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence.
- United Nations human rights bodies and experts should be invited and encouraged to visit India:
 - The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.
 - The special rapporteur on torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
 - The special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions.
 - The special rapporteur on violence against women.
 - The special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
 - The Special Representative of the United Nations secretary-general on internally displaced persons.

- Include information on the recent communal violence in India's future periodic reports to human rights treaty bodies established for the:
 - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (submission due August 8, 2002)
 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (overdue as of December 31, 2001).

To India's Donors and Trading Partners:

- Urge the Indian government to make an official request to U.N. relief agencies and international humanitarian organizations to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence, and ensure that the U.N. and international relief agencies are allowed full, free and unimpeded access to all those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence.
- Provide funding to the government of India to deliver relief and rehabilitation assistance to those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence and take steps to ensure that such assistance is delivered in a nondiscriminatory manner and in accordance with international human rights law and the U.N. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- Provide funding for preventative measures to ensure that communal outbreaks are prevented in the future. Such measures can include community education programs on communal issues and the establishment of independent review boards to act as checks on the functioning of the police and other state and local governmental institutions during communal outbreaks.
- Urge the Indian government to prosecute those responsible for the violence in Gujarat, including state government and police officials, and demand that the government invite relevant U.N. human rights experts and commissions to monitor the ongoing situation.
- Urge the Indian government to implement the recommendations of the NHRC concerning the violence in Gujarat; the Srikrishna Commission on the 1992-1993 Bombay riots; and the 1980 recommendations of the National Police Commission on national police reform.

To International Lending Institutions:

- Ensure that anti-discrimination measures built into World Bank and Asian Development Bank-funded projects are thoroughly implemented in areas where the problems of communal violence and religious discrimination are severe. As part of its commitment to good governance, the World Bank, as well as other international lending institutions, should establish ongoing dialogue with NGOs at all stages of the decision-making process -- before a loan is released, while the project is being implemented, and in the course of any post-project evaluation.
- Prior to approval of projects, and in consultation with NGOs, investigate the effect of proposed policies and programs on religious violence and discrimination, and explore ways in which programs could help alleviate these ills.
- Assistance to state authorities should be conditioned on concrete actions to assist internally displaced persons who seek to return to their homes and ongoing provisions for monitoring programs to this end.

To International Humanitarian Organizations:

- Explore with the Indian government ways to expand existing relief programs to address the humanitarian needs of those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence in Gujarat, without discrimination and in accordance with international human rights law and the U.N. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Assistance should focus on health and sanitation, food and nutrition, social and psychological support, shelter, and educational needs of the internally displaced, as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance to facilitate the safe return of internally displaced persons to their own homes and communities.
- Maintain close contact with local and international human rights organizations and develop procedures for regular consultation and information sharing.

To United Nations Agencies:

- The UNDP should immediately deploy a U.N. inter-agency assessment mission to Gujarat state to determine the assistance and protection needs of those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence. Such a mission should include experts on health and sanitation, food and nutrition, shelter, social and psychological support, education, and protection drawn from U.N. agencies that have programs in India, such as UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Particular attention should be paid to the protection and assistance needs of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled.
- Based on the findings of the inter-agency assessment mission, U.N. agencies should seek to provide emergency relief to those displaced and dispossessed by the communal violence in Gujarat on a nondiscriminatory basis and in full accordance with international human rights law and the U.N. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Special attention should be paid to the health, nutritional, medical, educational, and psychosocial needs of those affected by the violence.

Source: Human Rights Watch

Godhra revisited

By Jyoti Punwani

Godhra's Muslims and Hindus tread the middle ground privately... The challenge lies in getting them to acknowledge this in public.

WHEN WILL the Gujarat fire burn out? A first step can be for both communities to apologise to each other. Believe it or not, the religious head of the Muslims in Godhra, here the conflagration began, has already done this more than once at peace meetings called by the Collector.

But no one in Godhra knows about Maulana Hussein Umerji's courageous act. The Hindus who heard his apology made on behalf of his community did not spread the word. Nor, unforgivably, did the Collector. The local press did not even carry the condemnation of the burning of the Sabarmati Express by a senior Muslim of Godhra, though it was faxed to newspapers on March 4.

That is one reason why, if you ask Godhra's residents why Coach S/6 of the Sabarmati Express was burnt on February 27, the answer will depend on the community you belong to. If you are a Hindu, chances are that you will declare it was a Muslim conspiracy aimed at derailing the Ram Mandir movement, and that not only the much-reviled Chanchi Muslims, but every Muslim railway employee played his role. Two such Muslim employees have already been transferred out of Godhra while a third stoically waits his turn.

If you are a Chanchi Muslim (the community which stays near the railway tracks), you will declare that since all eyewitnesses say the fire started inside the coach, it was a conspiracy aimed at creating a BJP wave after the party's electoral defeats and decimating Muslims in the State.

A middle ground does exist, which is probably closest to the truth: that the act was a gross over-reaction to provocations by the VHP/Bajrang Dal at Godhra station itself. But the local press has done its best to prevent this theory from being accepted, by not reporting these provocations despite eyewitness accounts available in the town.

There are Hindus and Muslims who saw bearded tea vendor Siddiq Bakr being assaulted on Platform No 1 by a Bajrang Dal passenger (identifiable by his saffron headband). (Incidentally, Hindu railway employees had only good things to say about this particular vendor.) The two bearded Bohras watching the scene from the overbridge, who ran for their lives after some Bajrang Dal passengers rushed towards them from the platform, are locals. The Godhra press admits to knowing that 17-year-old Sophiya Khan was pulled towards the train by a passenger who grabbed her from behind and put his hand over her mouth, only to release her when she screamed 'Mummy'.

But it has not, and will not report these provocations. What it does report constantly are unconfirmed reports of plans to blow up Hindu schools in the town, the so-called confession of an alleged SIMI member on how the Godhra burning was planned, the discovery of mutilated bodies of Hindu women from a mosque near the station. The Chief Minister himself has denied this last rumour, but Godhra's Hindus see his denial as a statesmanlike move to prevent further trouble. Neither the SP nor the Collector of Godhra, who maintain that these are false stories, have gone out of their way to announce this to the public.

So low is the credibility of the English press and of private TV news channels among the majority of Hindus, that even when you tell them that you have met Sophiya Khan and her story is true, they refuse to believe it. For them, she is as much a plant as the children in refugee camps who speak into TV mikes of their parents being killed in front of them. They are all part of the grand jihad conspiracy.

The Hindu, April 13

mention those who perished in the fire were unconnected with the Ayodhya campaign. Nor do they seem regretful about being responsible for the ghastly end of so many religious-minded women and children, many of whom were new to the VHP.

For them, the Godhra carnage is primarily a weapon of propaganda which has been so effective that no local Hindu has donated anything for the over 3,000 Muslim refugees from nearby villages, housed in two camps in the town. However, despite the deep resentment among them, Godhra itself has not seen any retaliatory killings, though a lot of Muslim property was destroyed. A major reason is the interdependence of the two sections of Hindus and Muslims who have normally fought each other: the Sindhis who settled here after Partition, and the Chanchis. After two major riots in 1965 and 1980, the Sindhis have managed to rebuild and prosper, and are not interested in becoming cannon fodder for the VHP. Already, the destruction of Bohra shops in the villages has meant massive losses for them as wholesale suppliers. Hence, it was they who took the initiative just this week, to invite Muslim traders into their area with a guarantee of safety. This at a time when old friends refuse to visit each other's areas, and Hindu and Muslim children go to the same school in separate buses under police escort.

But despite the seemingly unbridgeable divide, spend some time with them, and Godhra's Muslims and Hindus tread the middle ground — privately. The Hindus ask how right it is in a democracy to thrust your religious views on a minority. The Muslims mutter that there's a limit to the amount of religious provocation that can be tolerated. When you are pushed too hard, the Devil can take over, and that should not have happened.

The challenge lies in getting them to acknowledge this in public.

What went wrong? — I

By Gail Omvedt

REVULSION SEEMS to be the predominant mood among most Indians following the Gujarat holocaust. Calm in most cities and States and now the anti-BJP vote in the Delhi municipal elections appear to indicate, at the very least, a pervasive uncertainty about the goals and means of Hindutva. Ram, after all, had been depicted as a noble hero, a fighter against injustice; not a deity whose name needed to be written in blood and fire on the bodies of the country's Muslim citizens.

It is important at this stage to look very seriously at how such pogroms could happen. It was not simply a matter of riots, of backlash against the brutal killings of Godhra: all evidence shows that it was pre-planned; that Muslim homes, Muslim places of worship and Muslim businesses were identified, pinpointed and destroyed without mercy. Children were burned to death in front of their parents; foetuses were ripped from wombs. Vicious looting and killing were led by the middle classes, while directionless OBC and sometimes tribal youth were pressed into service as mercenaries. The police stood aside, that this was a matter of policy was made clear after the slaughter subsided and the few police officers who had tried to take action were transferred. Even in the refugee camps, nothing has been done so far to show the terrified people huddling there that they are welcome back in their homes. Low-key but highly targeted attacks on businesses and individuals have continued for weeks after the main outburst. No wonder that the thousands in refugee camps are refusing to go home, that Muslims from outside employed in the State are leaving their jobs. The atmosphere of terror continues.

How could all this happen? The question needs to be taken seriously. India stands at a turning point: one

path, still proclaimed by the forces behind the Government in power at the Centre, leads to a "Hindu Rashtra" in which all Muslims, Christians will exist at the will of the proclaimed majority, in which "Aryan" continues to be a banner of racial pride, in which history and education will be pressed into the service of self-justification. Gujarat may in many ways be

Jainism had some bases of strength, but it rather early became an enclave religion, content to accept the political hegemony of Brahmanism. Rajputs — the "agnikula" kshatriyas whose duty was to destroy the mlechha, the barbarians, and uphold the *varnashrama dharma* — became a powerful force. The State's economic prosperity, then, was surrounded by

No one should have any illusions that the forces that ravage Gujarat are absent elsewhere.

an exception within India, but no one should have any illusions that the forces that ravage the State are absent elsewhere.

There are several ways in which Gujarat has been unique. First, it has been the only State where the BJP has been in power by itself for a significant length of time. The importance of political power in not only endorsing but intensifying and spreading religious hatred here becomes clear. The infiltration of the RSS into the bureaucracy and the police; the opportunities for Hindutva forces to tighten their grip on educational and other institutions of civil society, and the powerful support for a murderous goondaism are all founded in the elected political regime of the State.

Second, Gujarat has not been, on the whole, a very progressive State. The pervasiveness of the caste system here is perhaps more longstanding than in many other parts of India, the first Sanskrit inscriptions of India, for instance — those of the early Kshatriya ruler Rudraman in the 1st century — are found in Gujarat. Most other rulers of this time were still using Prakrit. Sanskrit is identified with the support of Brahmanism and *varnashrama dharma*; Prakrit, in most cases, meant a support of Buddhism and other *shramana* religions. Buddhism had very little hold in Gujarat,

military and social orthodoxy.

During the colonial period, there was no strong upsurge of Untouchables, and in contrast to neighbouring Maharashtra, the non-Brahmins (or former Shudras) appeared ready enough to accept the hegemony of the upper castes. Patels identified as Vaishyas. There was no broad democratic movement of the sort that took place under the leadership of Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, or Pandit Jyothee Thass and Periyar in Tamil Nadu. Among other things, this meant that little positive action was taken for ending untouchability. Dalit students, for instance, did not get entry into hostels until decades after they did in Maharashtra.

Even the ferment in places such as Uttar Pradesh, where OBCs and Dalits are now posed against each other, did not take place in Gujarat. Instead, in the post-independence period, Gujarati OBCs got absorbed as lower "Kshatriyas" in the "KHAM" alliance of Kshatriyas, Harijans, Advaitas and Muslims. This gave a foundation for Congress political power, but it provided no moral or ideological force for anti-caste social transformation. A third factor is undoubtedly the unbalanced, inequalitarian and even faltering development Gujarat has undergone in the years of liberalisation — rampant commercialism on

the one hand, and pervasive drought and rural neglect on the other.

Finally, Gujarat has been the State of Mahatma Gandhi. The closed gates of the Sabarmati Ashram signal the failure of Gandhism in India. Gandhi had envisaged "Ram Raj" as a harmonious, morally ordered village-based alternative to what he saw as the evils of western industrial civilisation.

He had generally refused to condemn *varnashrama dharma*, and instead tried to reinterpret it in a way that would allow the removal of untouchability and other excrescences of the caste system. In his 1936 confrontation with Ambedkar, who had called for a radical revolt against the shastras, smritis and other religious texts of Hinduism, Gandhi said that "caste has nothing to do with religion... *Varna* and *Ashrama* are institutions which have nothing to do with castes. The law of *Varna* teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high. All are good, lawful and absolutely equal in status."

The callings of a Brahman — spiritual teacher — and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man... And there is nothing in the law of *Varna* to warrant a belief in untouchability. (The essence of Hinduism is contained in its enunciation of the one and only God as Truth and its bold acceptance of Ahimsa as the law of the human family.)

Underlying and giving meaning to this position of Gandhi was the general framework of elite thinking during the colonial period — the "Hinduism" was the national religion of India. It is this basic theme which has to be re-examined today.

What went wrong? — II

By Gail Omvedt

AMBEDKAR'S ARGUMENT against Gandhi was simple. In 1936, he had written, "You must destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested. In the last analysis, this means you must destroy the authority of the Shastras and the Vedas... You must take the stand that Buddha took. You must take the stand which Guru Nanak took... You must have courage to tell the Hindus that what is wrong with them is their religion — the religion which has produced in them this notion of the sacredness of caste." (Ambedkar, 1979: 69).

Pre-British India had seen a flourishing of religions and philosophies. From the first millennium BC, though Brahmins taking the authority of the Vedas had worked to establish a society functioning according to the laws of varna, other darshanas — Buddhism, Jainism, Lokayata — had challenged this with more egalitarian and rationalistic ideals. The coming of Islam meant another momentous civilisational encounter, one seen in newly flourishing artistic, architectural and music traditions. Bhakti saints also challenged caste and Brahman domination, posing new ideals of a society of equality.

Ravidas had written:

"The regal realm with the sorrowless name they call it Queen City, a place with no pain, no taxes or cares, none owns property there, no wrongdoing, worry, terror, or torture.

Oh my brother, I've come to take it as my own, my distant home, where everything is right.

They do this or that, they walk where they wish, they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.

Oh, says Ravidas, a tanner now set free, those who walk beside me are my friends."

This expressed both "class" and

"caste" utopias — no taxes or property, and the right of even the lowest toilers to walk freely everywhere, so important for those classified as Untouchables and relegated to live and work away from the main areas of a city. Within the context of a Brahman-dominated medieval order, this was a dream. The coming of a new industrial society and the rise of science and technology should have made possible a life of prosperity for all such bold dreams could have shaped a new national society in In-

thana Samaj — proclaimed this acceptance of Vedic-Brahman hegemony within Hinduism in their very names.

A Hindu, according to Savarkar, was one who accepted India as his "holy land" and "fatherland". This was linked also to European notions of the nation-state, as a solidary society based on a people with a common religion and culture. The word "Hindu", which had once had a simple territorial meaning, was redefined in terms of religious nationality.

The coming of a new industrial society and the rise of science and technology should have made possible a life of prosperity for all... But this did not happen.

dia. But this did not happen. Industrialism, science and rationality came to India as an appendage to colonial rule. By the end of the 19th century, the early openness of the British became closed, and racist ideologies began to pervade their rule. The discovery of a relationship between Sanskrit and

European languages led to the formation of the "Aryan theory" — which expressed on the one hand a racial kinship between Europeans and high-caste Indians, and on the other hand defined the Shudras, Dalits and Adivasis as descendants of more primitive, dark-skinned indigenous peoples. The Indian elite accepted this racist interpretation readily enough: they were Aryans, the noble ones, possessors of ancient religious scriptures and high philosophical knowledge. Theirs was a spiritual heritage; the low castes could be seen as subordinate parts of this, incorporated within a hierarchy of "Hinduism" which possessed a unique social system that could incorporate inferior elements without destroying them. Varnashrama dharma was thus given a new justification. All the elite "reform" organisations of the 19th century — the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Prar-

It was seen as incorporating all the diverse traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, Veerasaivism, Sikhism, and other movements which had opposed Vedic-Brahman hegemony and the varna-jati system.

Thus, the reality of India as a plurality of cultures and philosophies was replaced by one divided into two major communities — "Hindus" and "Muslims". The more liberal of the nationalists saw the need to create a "secular" state uniting both communities. But the idea of "two communities" very easily gave birth to that of "two nations". The way of envisioning the major social-religious division of India itself laid the groundwork for Partition.

Gandhi accepted these ideas. He also saw "Aryans" as his ancestors. As against what he saw as the evils of industrialism, he wanted to go back to an idealised, harmonious village society in which tradition ruled. This he called "Ram Rajya" — appealing to an ideal of a divine king and his subordinate family members, who had enforced varna dharma at the cost of the life of the Shudra ascetic Shambuk. As against Ambedkar at the Round Table conference, he proclaimed that he himself was the leader of Untouchables because they

were part of "Hindu" society. They should not leave "their" religion but should instead reform it. Gandhi was ready to conciliate Muslims whose separate religious-cultural identity was undeniable; but he could never admit that the Untouchables had a separate religious and cultural identity. Thus his major fast was a fast against Ambedkar himself, undertaken against the award of separate electorates to Untouchables.

In contrast to Gandhi's romantic, anti-industrialism, Ambedkar, Phule, Periyar, Iyothee Thass and other great social radicals of the Dalit-Bahujan masses stood for science, education, industrialisation, seeking to give a concrete base to the ideals expressed by Ravidas and other saints of the medieval period. They refused to admit that the essence of Indian/Hindu identity lay in the spiritual realm; rather it had to be realised with a concrete achievement of equality. Phule had expressed this as "Bali Rajya" — the realm of the mythical peasant king Bali, considered a rakshasa in orthodox Brahmanic tradition. Ambedkar, though he urged a revival of Buddhism to provide a moral foundation for the new society, saw it consistently in terms of the great French revolutionary values of "liberty, equality and fraternity".

Where Gandhi had idealised traditional society, Ambedkar was a modernist who called villages "cesspools" and laid the basis for planning in fields of irrigation and energy policy. The confrontation between Ambedkar and Gandhi was a defining event of 20th century Indian history. It was a confrontation between conservative romanticism and a rationalistic, egalitarian modernism.

Gandhi, who spent so much of his life trying to achieve Hindu-Muslim amity, would have been appalled at the slaughter in Gujarat. Yet, in many ways, his own ideals paved the way for the growth of Hindutva and the transformation of Ram-Rajya into the regime of terror that has made Gujarat a name of shame today.

(Concluded)

The Hindu, April 9

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

Reflections on the Gujarat massacre

By
Harsh Mander

Numbed with disgust and horror, I return from Gujarat ten days after the terror and massacre that convulsed the state. My heart is sickened, my soul wearied, my shoulders aching with the burdens of guilt and shame.

As you walk through the camps of riot survivors in Ahmadabad, in which an estimated 53,000 women, men, and children are huddled in 29 temporary settlements, displays of overt grief are unusual. People clutch small bundles of relief materials, all that they now own in the world, with dry and glassy eyes. Some talk in low voices, others busy themselves with the tasks of everyday living in these most basic of shelters, looking for food and milk for children, tending the wounds of the injured.

But once you sit anywhere in these camps, people begin to speak and their words are like masses of pus released by slitting large festering wounds. The horrors that they speak of are so macabre, that my pen falters in the writing. The pitiless brutality against women and small children by organised bands of armed young men is more savage than anything witnessed in the riots that have shamed this nation from time to time during the past century.

I force myself to write a small fraction of all that I heard and saw, because it is important that we all know. Or maybe also because I need to share my own burdens.

What can you say about a woman eight months pregnant who begged to be spared. Her assailants instead slit open her stomach, pulled out her foetus and slaughtered it before her eyes. What can you say about a family of nineteen being killed by flooding their house with water and then electrocuting them with high-tension electricity. What can you say?

A small boy of six in Juhapara camp described how his mother and six brothers and sisters were battered to death before his eyes. He survived only because he fell unconscious, and was taken for dead. A family escaping from Naroda-Patiya, one of the worst-hit settlements in Ahmedabad, spoke of losing a young woman and her three month old son, because a police constable directed her to 'safety' and she found herself instead surrounded by a mob which doused her with kerosene and set her and her baby on fire.

I have never known a riot, which has used the sexual subjugation of women so widely as an instrument of violence in the recent mass barbarity in Gujarat. There are reports every where of gang-rape, of young girls and women, often in the presence of members of their families, followed by their murder by burning alive, or by bludgeoning with a hammer and in one case with a screw driver. Women in the Aman Chowk shelter told appalling stories about how armed men disrobed themselves in front of a group of terrified women to cower them down further.

In Ahmedabad, most people I met - social workers, journalists, survivors - agree that what Gujarat witnessed was not a riot, but a terrorist attack followed by a systematic, planned massacre, a pogrom. Everyone spoke of the pillage and plunder, being organised like a military operation against an external armed enemy. An initial truck would arrive broadcasting inflammatory slogans, soon followed by more trucks, which disgorged young men, mostly in khaki shorts and saffron sashes. They were armed with sophisticated explosive materials, country weapons, daggers and trishuls. They also carried water bottles, to sustain them in their exertions. The leaders were seen communicating on mobile telephones from the riot venues, receiving instructions from and reporting back to a co-ordinating centre. Some were seen with documents and computer sheets listing Muslim families and their properties. They had detailed precise knowledge about buildings and businesses held by members of the minority community, such as who were partners say in a restaurant business, or which Muslim homes had Hindu spouses were married who should be spared in the violence. This was not a spontaneous upsurge of mass anger. It was a carefully planned pogrom.

The trucks carried quantities of gas cylinders. Rich Muslim homes and business establishments were first systematically looted, stripped down of all their valuables, then cooking gas was released from cylinders into the buildings for several minutes. A trained member of the group then lit the flame which efficiently engulfed the building. In some cases, acetylene gas, which is used for welding steel, was employed to explode large concrete buildings. Mosques and dargahs were razed, and were replaced by statues of Hanuman and saffron flags. Some dargahs in Ahmedabad city crossings have overnight been demolished and their sites covered with road building material, and bulldozed so efficiently that these spots are indistinguishable from the rest of the road. Traffic now plies over these former dargahs, as though they never existed.

The unconscionable failures and active connivance of the state police and administrative machinery is also now widely acknowledged. The police is known to have misguided people straight into the hands of rioting mobs. They provided protective shields to crowds bent on pillage, arson, rape and murder, and were deaf to the pleas of the desperate Muslim victims, many of them women and children. There have been many reports of police firing directly mostly at the minority community, which was the target of most of the mob violence. The large majority of arrests are also from the same community which was the main victim of the pogrom.

As one who has served in the Indian Administrative Service for over two decades, I feel great shame at the abdication of duty of my peers in the civil and police administration. The law did not require any of them to await orders from their political supervisors before they organised the decisive use of force to prevent the brutal escalation of violence, and to protect vulnerable women and children from the organised, murderous mobs. The law instead required them to act independently, fearlessly, impartially, decisively, with courage and compassion. If even one official had so acted in Ahmedabad, she or he could have deployed the police forces and called in the army to halt the violence and protect the people in a matter of hours. No riot can continue beyond a few hours without the active connivance of the local police and magistracy. The blood of hundreds of innocents are on the hands of the police and civil authorities of Gujarat, and by sharing in a conspiracy of silence, on the entire higher bureaucracy of the country.

I have heard senior officials blame also the communalism of the police constabulary for their connivance in the violence. This too is a thin and disgraceful alibi. The same forces have been known to act with impartiality and courage when led by officers of professionalism and integrity. The failure

is clearly of the leadership of the police and civil services, not of the subordinate men and women in khaki who are trained to obey their orders.

Where also, amidst this savagery, injustice, and human suffering is the 'civil society', the Gandhians, the development workers, the NGOs, the fabled spontaneous Gujarathi philanthropy which was so much in evidence in the earthquake in Kutch and Ahmedabad? The newspapers reported that at the peak of the pogrom, the gates of Sabarmati Asram were closed to protect its properties, it should instead have been the city's major sanctuary. Which Gandhian leaders, or NGO managers, staked their lives to halt the death-dealing throngs? It is one more shame that we as citizens of this country must carry on our already burdened backs, that the camps for the Muslim riot victims in Ahmedabad are being run almost exclusively by Muslim organisations. It is as though the monumental pain, loss, betrayal and injustice suffered by the Muslim people is the concern only of other Muslim people, and the rest of us have no share in the responsibility to assuage, to heal and rebuild. The state, which bears the primary responsibility to extend both protection and relief to its vulnerable citizens, was nowhere in evidence in any of the camps, to manage, organise the security, or even to provide the resources that are required to feed the tens of thousands of defenceless women, men and children huddled in these camps for safety.

The only passing moments of pride and hope that I experienced in Gujarat, were when I saw men like Mujid Ahmed and women like Roshan Bahen who served in these camps with tireless, dogged humanism amidst the ruins around them. In the Aman Chowk camp, women blessed the young band of volunteers who worked from four in the morning until after midnight to ensure that none of their children went without food or milk, or that their wounds remained untended. Their leader Mujid Ahmed is a graduate, his small chemical dyes factory has been burnt down, but he has had no time to worry about his own loss. Each day he has to find 1600 kilograms of foodgrain to feed some 5000 people who have taken shelter in the camp. The challenge is even greater for Roshan Bahen, almost 60, who wipes her eyes each time she hears the stories of horror by the residents in Juapara camp. But she too has no time for the luxuries of grief or anger. She barely sleeps, as her volunteers, mainly working class Muslim women and men from the humble tenements around the camp, provide temporary toilets, food and solace to the hundreds who have gathered in the grounds of a primary school to escape the ferocity of merciless mobs.

As I walked through the camps, I wondered what Gandhiji would have done in these dark hours. I recall the story of the Calcutta riots, when Gandhi was fasting for peace. A Hindu man came to him, to speak of his young boy who had been killed by Muslim mobs, and of the depth of his anger and longing for revenge. And Gandhi is said to have replied: If you really wish to overcome your pain, find a young boy, just as young as your son, a Muslim boy whose parents have been killed by Hindu mobs. Bring up that boy like you would your own son, but bring him up with the Muslim faith to which he was born. Only then will you find that you can heal your pain, your anger, and your longing for retribution.

There are no voices like Gandhi's that we hear today. Only discourses on Newtonian physics, to justify vengeance on innocents. We need to find these voices within our own hearts, we need to believe enough in justice, love, tolerance.

There is much that the murdering mobs in Gujarat have robbed from me. One of them is a song I often sang with pride and conviction. The words of the song are:

Sare jahan se achha
Hindustan hamara...

It is a song I will never be able to sing again.

(Harsh Mander, the writer, is a serving IAS Officer,
who is working on deputation with a development organisation)

Source: Mainstream Dated 6 April, 2002

Flashpoint at Godhra

Get the VHP out of Ayodhya: Gujarat attack underlines this

THE Narendra Modi government in Gujarat must ensure the perpetrators of the sordid attack on passengers of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra are immediately brought to book. There can be no provocation, no possible reason, for such an act of wanton violence. But this is also the moment to acknowledge that Wednesday's black morning at Godhra demands more. Even as the government in Gujarat reaches out to all those who lost their loved ones, and rushes succour to those who suffered injuries in the hellish ordeal, this is a challenge not for the Narendra Modi government alone. What happened at Godhra also flings a challenge at the NDA government at the Centre and at all of us who have a stake in our life together as a nation. The onus is on each of us to contain the fallout of the violence at Godhra, and to counter it with sobriety.

The attack on the 'Ram sevaks' returning from Ayodhya comes at a very precarious moment. On February 24, after a prolonged period of threat-making, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad inaugurated the countdown to March 15, the appointed date for temple construction to begin at Ayodhya. Ever since, responsible entities and institutions — including this newspaper — have been warning that tensions may be inexorably building up, that the VHP may have stoked something that could spin out of its — and the government's — control. It has been pointed out that the VHP's programme threatens the rule of law, not just on and after March 14, and not merely within the narrow confines of the disputed area at Ayodhya. The slogans

and trishuls gathering at Ayodhya threaten the often fragile peace between communities in other parts of the country as well. Many cautioned that the VHP's hate-filled campaign could provide latitude to other practitioners of a similarly bad and bigoted politics. The ghastly violence at Godhra would appear to be the embodiment of the worst of those fears coming true.

But the nightmare cannot continue. The situation in and around Godhra must be calmed; the local administration must ensure there is no room for rumours and fear-mongering in a state that has, in the all too recent past, seemed especially vulnerable to communal tensions. At the same time, the Centre must call an immediate halt to the VHP's exertions at Ayodhya. "I appeal to the VHP to postpone their agitation and help the government in the maintenance of peace and brotherhood in the country," said Prime Minister Vajpayee after the attack in Gujarat. This is not enough. The time to appeal to the VHP is long past. The VHP-sponsored assemblage of sadhus and saints must be instantly, summarily dispersed. Its paraphernalia must be firmly, even forcibly, packed off from Ayodhya and its leading lights told that they can no longer force their way into a matter that must be decided either by the courts or by consensus. The crime at Godhra has brought home the fact that the maintenance of 'rule of law' demands more than a legal framework. It demands a constant and alert commitment and watchfulness, from the government as well as its citizens.

The Indian Express, February 28

STAY BACK AND BE BURNT ALIVE, JUMP AND RISK THE WRATH OF THE MOB

Godhra survivor recounts horror of burning train

By Raja Bose
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: 'Back from the jaws of death' is not a cliché for Debashis Bhattacharya. The 60-year-old, who boarded the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express in Lucknow on that terrifying Wednesday last week, escaped a fiery death by the skin of his teeth.

Recuperating at a relative's home in Nava Wadaj here and still shattered by his experience, Mr Bhattacharya, probably one of the few survivors of the ill-fated coach, recalls how he had to make a decision on how to die—whether to stay back in the compartment and be burnt alive or to crawl out of the coach through a broken window and face a stone-pelting, weapon-wielding mob.

A retired employee of a private firm in Lucknow, Mr Bhattacharya knew the journey wasn't going to be comfortable, what with a large number of Ram sevaks boarding the train at Lucknow station. "At Rudiya, near Lucknow, we had our first brush with pelting," he says. Luck soon ran out for the ill-fated Sabarmati Express at Godhra station.

"As at every other station, the Ram sevaks

alighted onto the platform on Wednesday morning, shouting Jai Shri Ram slogans, and even breaking into an impromptu dance." But he soon realised that all was not well when he



BLACK WEDNESDAY

saw the Ram sevaks scurrying in and barking at fellow passengers to pull down the shutters as the train pulled out of the station.

"I realised that there must have been some trouble on the platform. The people getting in

appeared to be tense," says Mr Bhattacharya. The train came to a screeching halt about a kilometre from the station. And then began a deafening cacophony of stones against the steel body of the coach.

"It went on without any stopping. Very soon, as the people outside broke open the windows, stones were flying in. I managed to crawl under my berth and used my suitcase as a shield. I could hear deafening roars of 'Mar dalo sabko' (kill them all) and 'Ek ko bachne nahi denge' (we won't let anyone be saved)," says Mr Bhattacharya.

He then recalls smelling something burning and saw smoke curling upwards. He choked. "I saw a broken window. Its metal bars had been twisted apart." Mr Bhattacharya did not miss the irony. "The attack had actually opened up a way for me," he said.

"At that moment, it was a choice between the devil and the deep sea. The flames were leaping up close to me. I would have been engulfed in them or asphyxiated if I stayed back. The other choice was to climb out of the window and face the rampaging mob. I chose the latter," he says.

The Times of India, March 6

Survivor recalls Godhra horror



16-year-old Gayatri Panchal whose parents and two sisters died at Godhra relating her tragedy at her Ahmedabad home — Javed Raja

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
RAMOL, FEBRUARY 27

"I was pulled out of the broken window grill but I saw my father and sisters inside the bogie. I saw them burning," says 16-year-old Gayatri Panchal, still shaken by the horror of what had befallen the passengers on the train to Ayodhya on Wednesday. The girl's parents and two sisters, who were in the ill-fated bogie, were among those burnt to death.

Hours later, Ramol — almost 20 kilometres from Ahmedabad — has still not come to terms with reality. Almost 150 people from this village had gone to Ayodhya and almost 10 of them are feared dead. It seems like a nightmare from which there's no escape.

Hours later, Ramol — almost 20 kilometres from Ahmedabad — has still not come to terms with reality. Almost 150 people from this village had gone to Ayodhya and almost 10 of them are feared dead

"Around half a km from Godhra railway station, a mob gheraoed the train. All of them, in-

cluding the women, were carrying swords, sickles and pointed weapons," says a passenger who was on the next bogie.

According to eyewitnesses, the mob entered the driver's cabin, beat him up and forced the train to stop. "As soon as that happened, we downed shutters and locked doors of our compartments," says Gayatri, adding the attackers broke window panes while shouting abuses. "They began pelting stones at the train and kept at it for almost half an hour. One of my sisters Pratiksha was seriously injured," says Gayatri. Pratiksha and another of Gayatri's sisters, Chhaya, later succumbed to their injuries. Gayatri returned home to share her grief with her three other sisters in the evening.

"After pelting stones, they started pouring kerosene on our compartments and set them afire. Only a few of us managed to come out of the broken windows. The adults and old people were stuck inside. The older women were pleading 'don't kill us' but they just didn't listen," says Gayatri, who says that three to four men ran after her as soon as she jumped off the train.

"I ducked under the rail," she narrates. By then, passengers from other compartments had got down due to which the attackers fled. "There were around 2,000 people and they fled after we all got down," says a passenger. "There was so much blood all around," adds Gayatri.

Her three sisters still haven't been told about the deaths. "We haven't told them that our parents and two sisters died because they will not be able to take it," says Gayatri, adding that, "I feel like telling them but then try to stop my tears as they will go into shock," says the girl who lives in Jantanagar in Ramol. Her father, who was a carpenter, was on his way to Ayodhya to participate in the *havan*.

"It seems that the attack was planned. The way they came, stopped the train and attacked us makes it look like it was thoroughly planned," says Yoginaben, Gayatri's aunt who was in the adjacent compartment.

The Indian Express, February 28

The image of India's future?

By Radhika Desai

ONCE AGAIN, Gujarat will take the monstrous distinction of experiencing the worst communal violence in a nationwide campaign of the Sangh Parivar. Indeed, it promises to be a lot worse this time around with a BJP Government in Gandhinagar, the structures of the State, including the police forces, highly communalised, and with a BJP-led Government in power in New Delhi apparently unrestrained by its allies, and certainly pulled by the bloodthirsty forces it has nurtured for so long. The widely publicised image of a young Muslim begging for mercy haunts the mind relentlessly.

Gujarat has become a byword for casteism and communalism. Violence against lower castes, tribals, Muslims and Christians has become routine over the past two decades, during which an entire generation has grown to maturity, ignorant of the civility which Gujarat once boasted. Expressions of contempt for the lower castes, Muslims, Christians, the poor and the tribals, hitherto beyond the pale of polite conversation, have become the common currency of drawing room conversations of the Gujarati well-to-do. Even the "I'm a liberal secularist, but..." type of qualifiers are dispensed with. As a Gujarati, it is tempting to just hang one's head in grief, shame and silence.

But surely it might be a little more useful to dwell on the underlying structures out of which this savage distinction springs. For, it may well be that this is where the country as a whole is rapidly heading. Gujarat is simply ahead in the form of capitalist development combined with upper and middle caste and class Hindu assertion which has become so widely accepted as the way for India. While the first large scale post-Independence communal riots took place in 1969, it was not until the 1980s that frequently violent political assertion of the upper castes and classes became routine in Gujarati politics. For, the 1970s had been a decade during which this assertion found more peaceful and "respectable" outlets:

Gujarat has become a byword for casteism and communalism. Violence against lower castes, tribals, Muslims and Christians has become routine over the past two decades, during which an entire generation has grown to maturity.

Gujarat was, after all, the western wing of the politically ambiguous JP movement and elected the country's first Janata Morcha Ministry under Babubhai Jashbhai Patel as the apogee of the non-Congressism of the upper and middle castes and classes which had been gathering force even before Indira Gandhi's populist phase, which they so came to hate, properly began.

The 1980s witnessed an acute caste polarisation as some of the worst anti-reservation riots in the country occurred in Gujarat. The OBC/SC/Tribal/Muslim-based (the famous KHAM strategy, remember?) Congress(I) Government under Madhavsinh Solanki, and other Congress (I) Governments which followed, foundered on the impossibility of a Government in contradiction with civil society: political power that did not reflect social and economic power was unsustainable. The upper and middle castes and classes registered their frustrations on the streets. As riots and agitations became the stuff of Gujarati politics, the Sangh Parivar and the BJP made accelerated gains. Gujarat shows few signs of looking back now. Its minorities are regularly cowed by violence. Its urban geography, reconfigured by riots with blatant connections with real estate transactions, now features "borders" between communities. As I write, Muslims, who managed to weather 1992-93 but for whom this has been the last straw (how much can anyone be expected to take?) are leaving the State, with wounds of betrayal. This horrifying reality is made up of certain traits of Gujarati society which set it apart from the rest of the country by degree, not fundamental difference. Gujarat is highly industrialised to the extent that the agrarian propertied have made some of the deepest in-

roads into urban sectors of the economy. More than in most States, the divides between the agrarian and industrial propertied have been blurred with the propertied groups sporting fairly uniform, if also competing, interests. The control of labour is chief among them and much of the worst "communal" violence occurs in south Gujarat. Among the 9 per cent Muslims of Gujarat, there is also a bourgeoisie and riots present their Hindu counterparts with plum opportunities to settle business scores.

Like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat has a disproportionately high upper caste population, just under 15 per cent. Unlike Uttar Pradesh, however, over the last century the technically middle-caste patidars, who constitute 12 per cent of the population, have experienced a rise in their socio-economic position, such that in the late 20th century, no part of upper class/caste society could condescend to them. While, until recently, an important axis of Gujarati politics revolved around the political competition between upper castes and Patidars, the BJP succeeded in more or less uniting them. With the high rate of development, these upper and middle caste and class groups represent an immense concentration of socio-economic and political power.

A final factor contributing to the political dominance of Hindutva in Gujarat is the large numbers of emigres. In many ways Gujarat has long been something of a decapitated society — many of its most economically, socially and culturally advanced members living in Mumbai or Kolkata or other parts of the world. Today these emigres constitute a central bulwark of the NRI community, particularly in the U.S. and the U.K., and provide many of the chief person-

nel of the overseas organisations of the Sangh Parivar.

Gujarat may be merely in the vanguard of the overall trend of the development of the rest of the country. This is the reason why the problem of the hegemony of Hindutva in Gujarat needs to be taken very seriously. Pointing to the roots of Hindutva in our current model of development is not to say that it is an unstoppable force. Few things in history are inevitable, no matter how much they look like that in retrospect. Deepest among the political tragedies in India is that lower castes and classes who have the deepest investment in secularism as well as egalitarian economic development have only ever been offered populist and opportunistic forms of political mobilisation.

This cycle has surely run its course in Gujarat where the Congress(I)'s lamentable record in the 1980s seems to have more or less extinguished it as anything other than a protest vote repository. Even as the Congress(I), where it is successful today, is necessarily based among the lower socio-economic class/caste strata in the country, it is evading its vocation of being their authentic party, still hankering after being the party of the upper strata of the country.

The powerful can no longer be shamed into demonstrating a modicum of liberalism and secularism. It is only when secularism becomes more than the profession of one's good breeding, becomes the true property of those who could not care less about such snobbish distinctions, who are able to question the roots of communalism in inequality, that it can become the political force this country now badly needs. Only then will Indians have earned the privilege of looking back on Gujarat of the turn of the century as a horrific but also now past, peculiarity in the van of a road which the rest of India mercifully did not take. If this does not happen, Gujarat could well be the image of the country's future.

(The writer is Reader in Political Science, University of Victoria, British Columbia.)

The Hindu, March 6

Flames of hatred

AHMEDABAD as it recovered slowly from its riots was full of hot, thick, dusty air. Not many ordinary people were out on the streets, but there was a heavy population of police and army trucks lumbered ponderously around. In this dull, contained, atmosphere, the aftermath of violence, the Sarabhai house looked almost inappropriate, secluded as it is amidst gardens and trees. It is an open, airy sort of house and on my first day in the city several people had come to lunch: Mallika Sarabhai and her distinguished mother were there, as well as the children and a guest, Tanveer Kureishi. "I had to flee from my home," she said. "These last few days I have been living like a refugee." But she seemed quite happy. Her recent close acquaintance with violence had not shadowed her eyes.

All the women present, including Mrinalini Sarabhai, seemed to be busy with citizen's committees and with the camps that had sprouted up all over the city. Ten of these camps now existed, with about 37,000 people in them. "That's only in Ahmedabad," Mallika said. "There are about 20,000 more people in camps in other parts of the State. Most of them have lost their houses and property. They have nowhere to go. We can only maintain the camps for a short while more. The Government isn't even trying to pretend that it will help." She was very angry, but kept herself under control, as if holding some delicate part of her mind in check. "This has all been very carefully orchestrated," she said, "and everyone has known for years that a catastrophe like this was on the way."

In spite of the tension in the air, the house was peaceful. It was only when I left it that I felt the tension. I met two young Muslim businessmen, A.A. Sayed, a lawyer, and Iqbal Tadha, "It is all over here," Tadha told me. "The Hindus have done whatever they wanted. The Muslims are finished. They have lost all that they had." They wanted to show me the worst affected areas of the city, and a camp they had started, but were anxious that we should acquire press stickers for our cars. "Otherwise the police will harass us." Their faces were haunted. The *Times of India* very kindly provided the stickers. Bharat, its Chief Reporter, was an old friend I had met in Patna a couple of years ago. "I don't really think you'll need the stickers," he said. "But your friends have reason to feel nervous."

I've been posted in five different States and nowhere else have I felt that such a deliberate polarisation had been created between the communities. Gujarat was turned into a laboratory for Hindutva. The Muslims are com-



Trapped in a cage not of their making.

'All around us, injured people were lying on the floor ... Those without physical scars had obviously been wounded in their minds, which might never properly heal.' DOM MORAES records his impressions of Ahmedabad after the riots.

pletely finished here."

His words echoed those of my companions. They drove me to some parts of the town. Several houses here were gutted, the interiors blackened with flame. Wrecked and burned cars still lay around. The houses had been looted before they were burned.

"The looters weren't poor people," Sayyed said. "They were quite rich, but they plundered the houses of wealthy Muslims. See, hardly anything is left. There is a famous lawyer, A.V. Divcha. He has powerful friends. When he knew the mobs were coming he phoned them for help. But nobody would help him. The police stood by and did not interfere."

Hotels in the city were extensively burnt, "because traditionally the hotel industry was run by Muslims". As we trudged through the ruined houses under an unfriendly afternoon sun, we met several of the former occupants who had come to see if anything was left. Some of them had been beaten and suffered burns and each had terrible memories. They were unanimous that the police had been present all through the riots, but had not helped. "At best they warned the people to leave before they were killed. It was the same everywhere." At one house Tadha pointed to the burned car outside. "This gentleman is on government committees. They gave him that car for government work." He laughed harshly. "The police stood by while the mob burned it, attacked his family, and looted his house."

Next day it was once more sultry and oppressive. We drove to the *dargah* where a camp had been set up. The courtyard and buildings were full of people, who mostly had pathetic bundles of possessions. "There are nearly 4000 here," Tadha said. "Most of them will have nowhere to go when they have to leave here. We cannot keep this place running indefinitely. Several people had bandages and burn marks. In one of the buildings a young man lay on a crowded platform, his eyes empty. His arms and legs were heavily bandaged. They beat me," he whispered. "Then they burned me." A doctor was attempting to help him. "I can't treat you properly here," he explained. "You must go to a hospital." The young man said, "No. No, how can I go outside? Outside there are many Hindus."

Nearby an older, bearded man sat with his daughter in his lap. The child lay face down, trembling and whimpering in small continuous bursts. She was about five years old and wore a torn, stained yellow

dress. The father pulled it up to show her back, covered with weals where she had been beaten and apparently sexually abused. She had an angelic face and looked utterly stunned. "I can't make her speak," her father said. "She won't speak any more." Nearby a woman in her thirties, called Amina, listened. "I saw a woman with a beautiful daughter about 20," she said. "She offered the Hindus money not to rape the girl. They took the money and then 10 of them raped her, one after another. She also stopped speaking afterwards. I don't know what happened to her in the end."

Tadha said, "These are the poor people. We are able to manage our lives somehow. We have money in the banks. But these are the ones who have really been finished. They will never be able to recover from this." He rubbed his hand over his forehead. Neither Sayyed nor he looked as though they had smiled for several days. All around us injured people were lying on the floor, not asleep but staring blankly at the plastered walls, which afforded them no possibilities. Those without physical scars had obviously been wounded in their minds, deep and severe wounds which might never properly heal. "Do you like Narendra Modi," Amina anxiously asked me. "I don't like him. But I like Sonia Gandhi. She says she will come and help us. Do you think she will come before they kill us all?"

For this question, I, unfortunately, had no answer.

Dom Moraes is a writer, poet and columnist based in Mumbai.

IN THE GHETTO

Gujaratis Live In A Segregated Society

By SAJEDA MOMIN

Headmasters of English medium schools in Ahmedabad are being terrorised so that they throw Muslim pupils out of their institutions. Militant VHP workers have been marching into the headmaster's offices of posh English schools demanding a list of their Muslim students. When headmasters have refused, veiled threats have been made suggesting it would be in their interest if at the end of this academic year Muslim students were given their transfer certificates. Worried headmasters have called Muslim parents and quietly urged them to remove their wards as they can no longer guarantee their safety. As if to drive the point home, gangs of VHP hoodlums ominously hang around school gates hoping to identify Muslims. These are the latest tactics in the RSS/VHP bag of tricks that are being tested out in their laboratory — Gujarat.

Housing

The VHP's long-term agenda has been to segregate Hindus and Muslims; their conduct in the last 15 years proves it. Once there is no contact between the two communities, the seeds of distrust can mushroom into hatred whenever required as it was done during the anti-Muslim pogrom last month. Lack of association between the two communities means that VHP propaganda can be swallowed without any point of referral, there would be none to counter it. This invokes memories of Adolf Hitler's storm troopers who acted out the belief that Jews were the root of all evil. The commonly used caricatures of Muslims with four wives and therefore more children who would soon outnumber Hindus; Muslims are terrorists and anti-nationals supporting Pakistan, will be believed more readily by the average Hindu if he has no contact with the average Muslim.

It is just over a month since the gruesome Godhra incident and Gujarat is nowhere near back to normal; if the VHP have their way, it never will be. Narendra Modi can well pat himself on the back for a job well done; by his lights, he has achieved what he set out to do — he has polarised the state along religious lines in such a way that the damage done to hearts and minds will take years to repair, if at all. The fact that this was his aim all the while is proven by the triumphant wave he now rides and hopes to encash at the next polls. At what cost?

Gujarat since the mid-'80s has been a VHP stronghold. In fact it was the same Narendra Modi who was sent by the RSS as a pracharak to Gujarat to spread the

The author is Assistant Editor, The Statesman.

word, and he seems to have done his job well. Methodic penetration has meant that there is a unit of the RSS/VHP in almost every village and town of the state, with cadres who can be called to service at a moment's notice. By the late '80s the BJP had already started reaping the political benefits of this infiltration by wresting control of many of the local bodies and municipal corporations.

The growth of the VHP was coupled with more and more incidents of communal riots, particularly in the larger cities like Ahmedabad where there was a

Muslim apartment blocks and housing colonies in the expensive Hindu localities were systematically targeted and destroyed. Even an apartment block in which a sitting High Court Judge lived was not spared. Those Hindus who could afford to move out of the old city shifted to the suburbs, completing the ghettoisation process. This suited the RSS/VHP as it meant that their rumour mills could work overtime and the schism between the two communities could be widened with disinformation.

Gujarati Muslims like their Hindu



substantial minority population. The noting led to feelings of distrust between the two communities, which was then fed by RSS/VHP disinformation campaigns. For security reasons the new housing colonies in the expanding cities belonged to one or the other community. Gujarat is the one state in India where real estate developers actually designate blocks of apartments meant only for Hindus or only for Muslims. There are very few mixed societies like the Gulmarg in Ahmedabad, established by secular people like former MP Ehsan Jafri who did not approve of ghettoisation. Jafri paid for his beliefs with his life when he with his family members was brutally killed in February.

Business

By the early '90s many of the more affluent Muslims who had moved out of the old city into the posh areas hoping to give their families a better standard of living were forced to move back into Muslim ghettos out of fear. During the Feb-March massacres the remaining few

brethren are essentially traders. The Bohra, Agha Khanis and Khoja communities, all Gujarati Muslims, are trading communities, inherently timid by nature but industrious and enterprising; they are found all over India and abroad. Many Gujarati markets and business are dominated by these communities. The VHP has been systematically trying to break their economic strength in the last two decades. The current pogrom was aimed at breaking their very backbone. The manner in which shops, restaurants and businesses belonging to Muslims have been looted and burnt down proves the point. The CII has put a rough estimate of the loss incurred in the five days of violence at Rs 2,000 crores. Pedantic identification of Muslim shops and businesses and their systematic burning, particularly in the more upmarket localities, has ensured that a Muslim businessman, even if he has the money, will think twice before he restarts his business in non-Muslim areas. To put a final nail in the coffin, the VHP has been circulating leaflets urging Hindus to

boycott Muslims economically. Do not buy from them (Muslims), or sell to them, or buy products made by them and so forth, so that the RSS/VHP aim of economic segregation can be fulfilled.

Administration

In the state administration and other public sector organisations once the BJP came into power both in local bodies and in the state government, the unstated policy was to not employ minorities. Of those already present in the system Muslim officers were sidelined to insignificant postings. At the time of the March pogrom none of the 8 Muslim IPS officers of Gujarat were in a field post, and of the 65 minority inspectors only two were handling field jobs. The massacres of Muslims were only possible because of the partisan behaviour of the police. At the lower level, the Gujarat police has been completely communalised with minorities simply not recruited. The state has more than 10,000 home guards most of whom are VHP or Bajrang Dal members.

So now in a situation where Hindus and Muslims do not live together, work together, trade together there is only one area of life where there is still some contact — education. The middle and upper classes, irrespective of their religion, aspire to send their children to English medium school so as to give them a better start in life.

It is here that the future generation of the country's intelligentsia is created, and it is here that the RSS/VHP wants to strike next. Rewriting textbooks to alter history has already been achieved in Gujarat. The aim is to segregate educational institutions so that Muslim children are forced to study only in local government schools or Muslim-run institutions, and so hinder their chances of achieving higher educational standards and brighter prospects.

The government's partisan policy is obvious from the fact that in previous years when there have been communal riots, board exams for standards X and XII have been postponed. This year when the state is hit by the worst violence since partition, with about 2 lakh people taking shelter in relief camps and with relatives, exams are on schedule. Why? Because it is only Muslim students who have been affected by the violence, insecurity and curfew — and it doesn't matter!

Now with headmasters unable to guarantee the safety of their pupils, because of VHP threats, how many Muslim parents will take the risk of sending their children to mixed schools? For any parent the child's safety is paramount. What next?

Major Priorities

Religion Cannot Hijack the Polity

By KANCHA ILAIAH

THE Vishwa Hindu Parishad has been saying that it would not be bound by any court judgment on the question of building the Ram mandir at the disputed site in Ayodhya. It has also rejected the insistence of the BJP-led Central government that it should abide by the verdict of the judiciary. It is no secret that the VHP is part of the BJP and RSS and all of them draw sustenance from Hindu spiritual-political thought. How can an organisation that operates within India publicly say that it does not have to respect the authority of the state? Second, how and why can it so easily declare that it will not comply with a judicial decision if it goes against its faith?

In the recent past, particularly since the Mandal judgment which drew a *laxman rekha* of 50 per cent for positive discrimination — all court judgments are viewed as binding and no organisation can publicly undermine the judiciary. If the Dalits and OBCs were to declare that they were not bound by the Mandal judgment, such a statement would have been treated as contempt of court. We have seen how the court has dealt with Arundhati Roy and Medha Patkar on the Narmada issue. There is no reason why the apex court or high courts should not charge those who are calling for a negation of judicial norms with contempt of court.

In effect, by these actions, the Hindu religion, in the context of the existence of many religions in India, is not only majoritarian but has also declared itself to be above the state. There is a historical tradition of Brahminic hegemony claiming a spiritual-political status that is above the state. The Hindu temple as an institution has never subordinated its functioning to the authority of the state.

Neither the state nor the judiciary prohibited the practice of casteism in temples. Whether in the case of Indira Gandhi, as prime minister, being barred from entering the Puri temple or the Krishna temple in Guruvayoor, Kerala, openly prohibiting sudras and Dalits from entering it, the state has been a mute witness.

Though the Indian Constitution abolished untouchability, within temples and among the priestly class, this abhorrent practice has continued. Again the courts have never stepped in to ban such discriminatory practices suggesting that its perpetrators were somehow beyond reproach. In a democratic and secular state, no temple,

mosque or church should be allowed a privileged status. But, unfortunately, the situation is different in India because the Hindu religion has always claimed an exclusive position and has dominated the socio-spiritual space. As a result, the state and judiciary have not really felt too discomfited by the Hindu religion's relative autonomy.

It is a similar trend that has gradually undermined the authority of the state in Pakistan. In fact, many elements in the Central government are encouraging this trend. The co-existence of political democracy and a sort of socio-spiritual 'castocracy' seems on the face of it a contradiction in terms. But, in fact, Hinduism has internalised the systemic contradictions that sustain inequalities. If these inequalities are abolished, many proponents of the supremacy of Hinduism fear that it could well collapse like a house of cards. The inability or unwillingness of the state to resolve

today, there are people in crucial public positions who seem to owe their allegiance more to their religion than to the various institutions of a secular and democratic state. In this atmosphere, there are increased fears among minority religions and suppressed castes. The very state which is supposed to ensure equal treatment to all its citizens is being seen as succumbing to partisanship.

Similarly, in Pakistan, the state's inaction emboldened, indeed empowered, certain religious elements to such an extent that the jihadis among them have wreaked havoc both within Pakistan and in other parts of the world. In fact, Pakistan has been the focus of international opprobrium because of this. If the Pakistani state introspects today, it will find that it did nothing to stem the propaganda emanating from madrassas which existed parallel to state-run schools precisely because they were seen as propagating Islamic thought and traditions.

The Indian state and judiciary have never been too bothered by the nature of education imparted in Hindu religious schools or in RSS training camps. In fact, many of our elected representatives and crucial policy-makers are deeply religious people and to them there is no contradiction in state complicity in promoting religion. Much has also to do with public, mainly middle class, perceptions that all religious organisations are necessarily pious and engaged in 'good' works. This is why they have flourished and unless we are more vigilant there is nothing to prevent us going the Pakistan way.

Faith must revert to its original place in the personal domain, it must never assume greater importance in the public realm than the state and judiciary.

A part of this problem began during the nation's formative years when spiritualised nationalism became a normative ideology of many nationalist leaders. Tilak, Gandhi and Jinnah centred the nationalist discourse on religion. Only two top influential leaders, Ambedkar and Nehru, tried to oppose the infusion of religion into the heart of nationalism. But the brand of politics that both the BJP and RSS espouse have given religion such a pre-eminent position in public discourse that today it threatens to overwhelm almost all other democratic institutions through which the Indian state functions. This could damage irreversibly our very secular fabric.

IN BRIEF

- The Hindu religion has enjoyed an exclusive status in India
- In Pakistan, Islam's privileged position has led various religious bodies to challenge the authority of the state
- Many in India see little wrong with state complicity in promoting religion

such contradictions suggests an institutionalised belief that it is in the natural order of things for Hinduism to enjoy a privileged and superior status.

In Pakistan, it was because of the state's tacit approval of the superiority of Islam above all that it gradually came to undermine the authority of the various arms of the state. Today, things have reached such a pass that no one, irrespective of whether it is a democratically-elected leader or a military dictator, can make religion operate under the overall supervision of the state. The basic philosophy of the Indian Constitution, from which the judiciary derives its power, is built on secularism. But the nature and tone of discourse emanating from various saffron platforms suggests that the judiciary is being taken for granted. Such elements have been emboldened by the ascent to power of political formations purportedly sympathetic to the cause of Hindutva.

Indeed, there is no denying that

And my India silently weeps



SEEMA MUSTAFA

The woman trapped in the burning coach with her baby screamed as the flames threatened to engulf them. She screamed for help, she remembered her God, she trembled with fear. She died.

The old man trapped inside his house with a mob threatening to wipe out his entire family screamed for help. He called every number he knew, he tried to get the police, he called friends, he called the authorities. He remembered his God, he trembled with fear. He died.

One could have a Hindu name. The other a Muslim name. They were both citizens of India. They were both citizens of this country which had fought back communalism in 1947 and built a new future for herself based on equality, religious freedom, tolerance, justice and amity. They were not born to die in this manner. They were born to die in peace.

One condemns the ghastly murder of innocent people aboard the Sabarmati Express. One cries for the women and children burnt to death by a terrible mob who locked them inside their compartments, preventing escape.

One condemns the dastardly attack on innocent people in Gujarat. One cries for the people who were burnt alive in the security of their homes, who were knifed to death, who lost their all.

One condemns the Indian government for sitting back and allowing all this to happen. One cries for India for being blessed with a political class which believes in death and destruction as justice, which believes in an agenda that can only take the country to 1947, and which rejects tolerance and secularism as a way of life.

Why is this happening? Do the people of different religious affiliations really hate each other to a point where they can kill and maim the other? Are they being misled? These are naive questions, perhaps, but they demand an answer. For instance, a face needs to be put on the mobs that are operating. On the mob that torched alive passengers in the train. On the mob that torched alive residents of Ahmedabad and other districts. Who are they? Why are they in the business of violence? What is their motivation?

Communalism has always been part of Indian polity. But it has reared its ugly head in large scale violence only when the Indian state has proved too weak, too incompetent or too unwilling to check it. The extreme right has afflicted the progress of both Hindus and Muslims, with the Jamaat-e-Islami and the RSS feeding off each other to polarise opinion and consoli-

date hold over their respective religious constituencies. Initially the Indian state fought the extreme right and with the doctrine spelt out in the Preamble of the Constitution kept these hunters at bay. Despite supporting and setting up candidates they found no representation in the Indian Parliament and their shenanigans in the field were easily countered by a determined leadership.

The Indian state began weakening with time. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi presided over the worst kind of violence in Assam and Punjab. Destructive politics contributed to

the polarisation of society with the government eventually leaving itself with no choice but to use excessive force to quell movements that had assumed an entirely violent form. The destruction of the Akal Takht became a political landmark in Punjab. The massacre of Nellie remains a political landmark in Assam.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presided over the worst violence resulting in the massacre of Sikhs in the capital of India. He sat back for three days as mobs went around burning Sikhs alive in their homes, in trains, in their shops, on the streets. Arson and looting passed for governance in those days when time stood still as the Indian state passively watched its people being killed.

P Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gave the worst kind of impetus to Muslim fundamentalism in a gesture that was used by the Hindu fanatics to fan the flames further. He intervened to overturn a progressive Supreme Court judgment at the instance of the Muslim hardliners, and thereby ensured that even the Rs 500 available to the destitute woman under the Criminal Procedure Code was denied to the Muslim woman. The secular voice spoke out against the government's decision, the Muslim fanatics bayed for blood, the government acquiesced, and the Hindutva brigade cashed in to grow in strength from that moment

onwards. Another landmark in the communal history of our country.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, worried about the Hindu conservative backlash to what was widely projected as appeasement of the Muslims (although the poor Muslim woman was the worst hit), then decided to appease the Hindu hardliners. Friend and colleague Arun Nehru stepped in with a brainwave. Open the locks of the controversial Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. A lower court conveniently gave the desired judgment, television cameras captured the event, and a fire was very effectively lit under the communal cauldron.

The fire was stoked by the decision to allow shikharas by the Congress government, and Rajiv Gandhi's call for Ram rajya in a bid to return to power with the 400 seats he had got in the wake of the anti-Sikh violence.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao finished what had been begun by his Congress predecessor. He presided over the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The RSS/BJP/VHP/Bajrang Dal organised the crowds. Senior leaders of the BJP addressed them. And the mosque was brought down dome by dome as the crowds chanted anti-Muslim slogans, and the Prime Minister of secular India sat in Delhi fiddling while his country burnt. Another landmark in the communal history of our country.

Hundreds paid for this with their lives. People were attacked in their homes and on the streets in ghastly incidents of violence. Bomb blasts in Mumbai took toll of more lives. The state abdicated its responsibility and the violence continued for far longer than it should have. It had an impact on civil society. This history of communal violence taught all the wrong lessons for which the innocent people are still paying with their lives and their security.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has presided over nearly three years of violence. It began with the attacks on the Christians in different parts of the country. These were

largely isolated, although none the less heinous, attacks on Christian workers, priests and nuns including the gruesome murder of missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons who were burnt alive in their car while sleeping.

And now this. Just when it began to appear that India's secular spirit was again asserting itself, and the people had given a mandate in the recent elections for peace, tolerance and unity, the wind was again deliberately changed. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad brought the temple issue back into focus with its decision to begin construction of the Ram Mandir from March 15. Karsevaks began travelling to and fro from Ayodhya raising slogans which added to the tension. The secular environment was vitiated, and fear and terror could again be smelt in the air.

Muslim mobs attacked the Sabarmati Express in which the karsevaks were travelling. Over 50 passengers were burnt alive. Hindu mobs attacked Muslims in Ahmedabad and other cities of Gujarat. Nearly 200 have so far reported to have been killed. A face must be given to these mobs. Who are they? Television pictures show them to be mindless young people reveling in the violence, in the looting and arson. Most of them are dropouts or unemployed. They are not Hindus or Muslims. They are mobs receiving their direction from others.

That brings us to, who are the others? Who are those people who control these mobs, who determine the direction, who plan violence, who seek communal divisions? They can be easily identified provided the state wants to identify them. We have unfortunately come to that turn in history where the Indian state is becoming a willing accomplice in mindless violence, and does not want to check it for one or the other reason. The political class, the most powerful part of the Indian State, does not want to, because it is looking at the votes and hopes to gain from the polarisation of society.

The Prime Minister is locked in a confrontation with his own cadres. The RSS and the VHP do not want to recognise the limitations of power, and are determined to forge ahead. He has no one to appeal to, as no one is listening. The Opposition let one entire day pass because of the Budget. But are now turning on the pressure on the government to act. As a result the Army has been finally deployed in Ahmedabad. The police is standing by in Gujarat, unwilling to take action. The state, in other words, has compromised.

Meanwhile the citizens of India are being killed. One can say they are Muslims, the other can say they are Hindus. But in actual fact they are just innocent people paying for the ugly machinations of others. Their deaths can only weaken India, damage its social fabric, retard progress and make insecurity and fear a permanent part of society. It is not just the relatives of the dead who are crying. It is the secular spirit of India that is weeping for the wounds it has received this time might prove too deep to heal.

Communalism has always been part of Indian polity. But it has reared its ugly head only when the Indian state has proved too weak, incompetent or unwilling to check it. The extreme right has afflicted the progress of both Hindus and Muslims, with the Jamaat-e-Islami and the RSS feeding off each other to consolidate hold over their respective religious constituencies. Initially the Indian state fought the extreme right and with the doctrine spelt out in the Preamble kept these hunters at bay. Despite supporting and setting up candidates they found no representation in Parliament and their shenanigans were countered by a determined leadership

Has communalism changed? — I

By Imtiaz Ahmad

SHOULD WE characterise what happened, and is still happening, in Gujarat as communalism? What happened in Gujarat is not a recurrence of the old and familiar phenomenon of violence between Hindus and Muslims for which the word communalism was originally invented. It is an entirely different phenomenon. What is the basis for arguing that the Gujarat carnage is different from communalism, as we have historically understood it? It is the differential role of the state. Communalism, as historically understood, arose in the context of a colonial state required to act neutrally between conflicting communities. The state acted to restore peace without being swayed by the consideration of which community was perpetrating violence and which was targeted. In this sense, communalism was a phenomenon that essentially belonged to civil society and the state sought to control it. The Gujarat phenomenon is different because the state abandoned the time-honoured principle of even-handedness and sided with one community.

One must, to understand the full import of this difference, go back to the familiar distinction between majority and minority communalism. Historically, this distinction was couched in the argument that minority communalism arose because the majority was communal. If the majority ceased to be communal, minority communalism would have no reason to exist and would peter out. This line of reasoning failed to see that this was an insufficient reason for the distinction to be made at all. Communalism relies for its operation on the creation of a mindset and control of civil society.

In this respect, no sustainable distinction can be maintained between the communalism of the majority and the minority. Where the distinction really lies is in that majority communalism can mask itself as a 'nationalist force' and can leverage state power. Minority communalism lacks this ca-

capacity. It grows under perceived threats to community identity. This is one reason why liberal forces find it hard to push the agenda of democratisation within minority communities.

Under the colonial state and for a considerable time thereafter, the inherent propensity of majority communalism to become ascendant and take control of state power was held in check by the neutrality of the state. The state recognised that communal-

the other. This significant difference is often glossed over when the distortions and deviations, such as those during Meerut riots or the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984 under Congress rule, are equated with the current situation.

What happened in Gujarat is a brutal manifestation of the takeover of state power by communal forces. The state allowed organised groups to go around perpetrating violence in full view of the law and order machinery.

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ism, whether of the majority or the minority, was essentially a phenomenon of civil society which it was obliged, in terms of the principles of rule of law and equal dispensation of justice, to tolerate only so far as it did not become threatening to the state and civil society.

The state was not always able to adhere to these time-honoured principles or to act neutrally. Many analysts tend to equate these deviations and distortions with what is happening currently to suggest that much difference does not exist in the character of the state under the Congress during the first 50 years and now. What makes for a difference in the two contexts is that in the first, if the state fell victim to the communal tendencies inherent in civil society, it was able to banish the communal forces, whether of the majority or the minority community, to the margins of state power. Now, the state has been so taken over by majoritarian forces (appropriately speaking, those speaking in the name of the majority, which is and remains otherwise extremely differentiated) that it is willing to allow itself to be guided by them and to protect them if they choose to execute pogroms against those they regard as

It offered justifications for that violence as if the function of the state was not to control violence but rather to adjudicate over the question of what sorts of violence it would permit and what forms it would bring under control. The principle of state neutrality in the control of communal violence was openly thrown to the winds.

One can also invoke a series of more immediate political reasons to explain the violence in Gujarat. The first is the drubbing majority communalism received in the recent Assembly elections. This prompted majoritarian forces to revert to their time-tested strategy of communal polarisation to prevent further erosion. Second, since majoritarian forces anticipated realignment of forces at the Centre following the debacle in Uttar Pradesh, their logic was that if their Government had to go, it must do so on a plank which brought them to power in the first instance. They also felt that they lost the Assembly elections because of the Centre's soft attitude on the Ram Mandir issue. Construction of the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya signifies for them control of state power and a weapon for polarising society along communal lines. The logic is: polarise society, reap

electoral benefits and consolidate hold over state power to shape the nation and society according to a majoritarian vision.

Obviously this is unlikely to go unchallenged by the minority communities. Sooner or later, they too are going to throw up lunatic fringes, which would seek to challenge the hegemonic domination of the state by majoritarian communal forces. As this happens on an increased scale, the country will be witness to spiralling of both communal hatred and violence. All the more because the state would in the process remain a passive onlooker to communal street battles. Once this starts happening on an increased scale, the state would gradually lose even a limited pretence to neutrality. It would start discriminating between the violence perpetrated by majority communal forces and that executed by minority communal forces who will increasingly see in the discriminatory attitude of the state a fair rationale for engaging in violence as the only means available to redress their complete oppression. It would condone majority communalism as a legitimate expression of a powerful national sentiment and penalise minority communalism as a kind of terrorism directed against the state. This will bring forth increased reprisals against minorities leading to large-scale genocidal violence in which the state would openly seek to legitimise majoritarian violence.

For example, the projection of the Ayodhya dispute as a Hindu-Muslim conflict not only concealed its otherwise political content but also aimed at helping majority communalism consolidate and expand its social base. This made it possible for the majoritarian forces to shift the onus of blame for the continuing impasse on to the Muslims. In a nutshell, the state's actions were a part of the majoritarian communal forces' strategy to achieve their vision of the nation and society.

(The writer teaches Political Sociology at JNU.)

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Has communalism changed? — II

By Imdiaz Ahmad

CONTEMPORARY COMMUNALISM operates within the framework of an enhanced desire of majority communalism to control and manipulate the leverage of state power. This form of communalism became prominent in the 1990s as a result of a deep legitimacy crisis of the Indian state in the face of economic liberalisation. Merely dislodging majoritarian forces from state power is not going to be sufficient to stamp this form of communalism out. Nor can it undermine their social and cultural hegemony. One must understand the link between modern thinking and 'daily-life' viewpoints in civil society to deal with it.

Since Independence, India has been pursuing the ideal of nation-building based on secularism. Indeed, the process of modernisation has always had as its focus the reduction of barriers between religions, languages and castes (or tribes) by establishing a secular state and ultimately a unified nation. However, a marginal retracing of history reveals that it was colonial rule that brought western-type modernisation to India and 'invented' the currently accepted view of Indian society as clearly segmented by social barriers.

Communalism in India shows that the achievement of constructing a secular nation-state modelled on the modern Western concept of civil society has been hindered by realities. Communalism continues to be given a tautological explanation in terms of conflict between religious communities or explained reductively as a conflict among secular interests under the cloak of religion. As a matter of fact, it is not the ignorant but the highly educated Indians who acquire the modern mentality that supports communalism. To truly understand communalism, one must go beyond the present interpretations that view it as a conflict of interests between religious groups and assess it from a historical perspective as reflecting the limitations of modern thinking which has dominated since colonial times.

Communalism is caused by the re-

pression of the 'daily-life viewpoint' by the dominance of a 'transcendental viewpoint' inherent in modern thinking. In modern society, which emphasises reason, a rationally objective view tends to repress irrational subjective view. As Kenichi Mishima, a Japanese scholar, has argued, "post-traditional society, which reveals the danger of reason, requires a proper balance between reason and the other of reason". Today, with the

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collapse of the Cold War structure, the ideal of modernisation that is secularism based on reason has also weakened. This has resulted in the current phenomenon of communalism as the liberation of the energy potential of non-reason. This problem is not unique to India, but common throughout the world. It must be understood in the context of the deadlock of modernisation, namely, worldwide resurgence of religions, which surfaced with the end of the Cold War. Paradoxically, both secularism, under which reason governs religions, and communalism, which liberates non-reason in the form of resurgence of religions, are two sides of the same coin of the modern age. Both are born from modernity and are striving within the limits of modern thinking.

Nonetheless, this strife between secularism and communalism can be regarded as a fluctuating process in the pursuit of a balance between reason and the other of reason, namely, groping for a post-modern episteme. The emergence of a new version of communalism since the 1990s can be attributed to economic liberalisation that realised the spread of consumerism and the development of the new media, particularly television. During the 1990s, TV began spreading rapidly reaching into rural villages and low-income households. The spread of TV enormously changed the informational environment of Indian society. The

drastic effect of the spread of TV on society is the realisation of the nationwide unification of information. Even before the spread of TV, print media existed in Indian society. Nonetheless, the TV, which represents visual images instead of letters, found it much easier to access people throughout the country regardless of social class. As a result, the TV enabled the public to more thoroughly live by sharing the same information.

Transmitting live images, TV permitted local viewers to see things from national and even global standpoints. The public therefore began to have two types of information: direct information obtained through first hand experiences and information transmitted by TV comprising images and knowledge but no first hand experiences.

Since TV images, despite the incident taking place in a distant place, appear as 'real' as those seen in first hand experiences, the 'real' images occasionally confuse viewers by blurring boundaries between 'daily-life viewpoints' and 'transcendental viewpoints'. This magic of encompassing friends or foes in an inflexible manner of 'daily-life viewpoints' by 'transcendental viewpoints' works for the generation of the phenomenon of communalism through two processes: the 'magic of categorisation' and an increase of warm consumer effects by a middle class syndrome.

To explain the 'magic of categorisation' one can refer to any local community in a distant part of the country. To them, Ayodhya was a place that had no relation to their daily lives. However, when TV broadcasts transmitted scenes of the destroyed Babri Masjid, Ayodhya was no longer an irrelevant place at least in the domain of imagination. As a result, the incident, which was interpreted as communalism between Hindus and Muslims, began to cast a dark shadow over local communities in which both

Hindus and Muslims shared a common culture. This meant that local people in every part of India shared the same visual information, which reflected their incorporation into a 'transcendental viewpoint'. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that TV spread modern thinking, allowing viewers to see their daily life from a 'transcendental viewpoint' and the popularisation of such a 'transcendental viewpoint' supports the development of majority communalism.

What is here referred to as the 'magic of categorisation' refers to an effect of categorisation from a 'transcendental viewpoint', that is, a strong sense of ties and affinity cultivated by the automatic assumption that individuals belonging to one category are siblings and share a common identity. For instance, any individual once categorised as Hindu immediately develops a strong affinity to others who similarly describe themselves including strangers in remote places. It can be called 'magic of categorisation' because 'daily-life viewpoints' from which a person regards someone he has never met as a stranger are repressed by the sympathy generated by a 'transcendental viewpoint'. Thus, the situation of communalism involves the 'magic of categorisation' since other persons are always categorised into either friends or foes in an inflexible manner regardless of individual differences within each category. The best way to attenuate communalism is to stay away from its trap. However, the problem concerning the balance between reason and the other of reason still remains unsolved. To cope with this problem, we must change our worldview that categorises objects and people in a uniform view. We must get rid of the one-dimensional, inflexible state of identities, which emphasise consistency. Gandhi probably had this mind when, at the height of the communal frenzy in Noakhali soon after Partition, he said: "You say Hindus are killing Muslims and Muslims are killing Hindus. I am a Hindu, but I am also a Muslim, a Christian and a Sikh. You are all also all of them."

(Concluded)

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Who are the guilty?

Punishment and confidence building in Gujarat

By Dipankar Gupta and Romila Thapar

NARENDRA MODI'S eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the Prime Minister was really quite a mild affair. Mr. Vajpayee upbraided Mr. Modi, but in the mildest manner possible. He was not even rapped on the knuckles! Instead of pulling him out of his chair, the Prime Minister suggested a variety of confidence-building measures to the errant Chief Minister. He was asked to construct homes for those affected, find them jobs, give them armed escorts, get businesses to contribute to their relief and rehabilitation, and so on. Not once was it mentioned that the Government of India would use all its powers to punish the guilty — and that this also included Mr. Modi.

Unfortunately, the demand to punish the guilty is not on the agenda of the Opposition either. All they want is the removal of the Chief Minister. This is really political gamesmanship. Of course, Mr. Modi ought to go, but if he sinks alone and is not weighted down by those other criminals who killed, burnt, maimed and looted then he might emerge as a political martyr. To bring credibility to Mr. Modi's ouster, he needs to be punished along with all those who are actually red in tooth and claw. This includes those who torched the railway coaches in Godhra as well as those who stalked and killed Muslims in Ahmedabad, and elsewhere in Gujarat, in recent weeks. It is indeed a sad reflection on the politics of our times that the Opposition has not come out with such a demand.

This is not the first time that a Government is directly implicated in fomenting and leading communal riots in the country. The 1984 killings of Sikhs is a cruel predecessor of what happened recently in Gujarat. The way the civil liberties groups mobilised in 1984 was, however, quite remarkable. Instead of doing social science and discovering caste and class antagonisms behind the killings,

The best way of fighting communalists is not by tiptoeing around them in the hope of letting sleeping dogmas lie, but by taking them on frontally every time they break the law.

the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) jointly conducted a first rate social forensic study and brought out a report entitled "Who are the Guilty?" The data in this little booklet were compiled on the spot by PUDR activists in Delhi even as they went about trying to bring relief to the besieged Sikhs. This booklet named those who were directly involved in the murder and mayhem, it gave evidence of responsible politicians leading mobs from the front, and it also carried authentic eye-witness accounts. This booklet sent shock waves all the way up. Though a thousand manoeuvres were dreamt up by the Government in power, the fact that the perpetrators of the killings were named made it very difficult for even these people to emerge again as legitimate political actors. "Who are the Guilty" should indeed be a prototype of how citizens can respond to riots in this country. It is obvious that citizens can no longer sit on the sidelines when communal carnages occur in the belief that the state machinery will do its job and punish the guilty. Most of those in state administration see themselves as Government servants and not as servants of the public. This is why they are not as mindful of citizens' interests as they are of the wishes of the Government in power. In such a situation the public must assert itself and demand the names of individuals who led and participated in the communal killings, regardless of which community they may belong to. It is only by putting such people on trial that confidence can meaningfully be restored in Gujarat. This will also send

warning signals to all would-be rioters in the future. As Justice Verma, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, recently commented, police inaction in Gujarat is tantamount to police complicity. If the guilty are tried and punished then this will also expose another lie on which communalists thrive. The popular assumption is that these sectarians are as willing to kill for a cause as they are to die for a cause. This is a complete fallacy. None of the hotheads of the RSS, or Bajrang Dal or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad will ever die for a cause. In which case, why are they so willing to kill for a cause? The answer to this is very simple. It is because they know that no harm will come to them as they enjoy active or tacit protection from the Government of the day. It is cover of this sort that makes sectarian activists appear so frightening. Take away Government support and they will all expose themselves as paper tigers.

It is time now to remember how Jawaharlal Nehru handled the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha when he was at his best. Partition had just happened and Hindu sectarians were having a field day, even in the city of Delhi. Nehru did not reason and plead with them. He locked them up in jail whenever they broke the law. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, Nehru again acted swiftly and unambiguously. He banned the RSS and other allied organisations and exposed their shallow bravado. The leaders of the RSS made several overtures to Nehru (and Patel) to lift the ban against them. Golwalkar even tried to curry favour with the Government by promising to fight communi-

sm. In a letter to Nehru he said the ban on the RSS should be lifted so that the *swayamseviks* could help the Government in ridding the country of the red menace. No mention now of the Muslims, nor of any other religious minority. When that did not work the RSS tried *satyagraha*, which was again a flop. Eventually the RSS leadership had no option but to agree to a written constitution as demanded by the Government. This constitution had to clearly state that the organisation would treat all faiths with equal respect and would refrain from entering politics and resorting to violence.

Nehru was clearly not intimidated by the rhetoric of these sectarian Hindu activists and simply called their bluff. It was Nehru's uncompromising stand against communalists that allowed the Congress to win election after election, from the perverted post-Partition days right up to 1967. The best way of fighting communalists is not by tiptoeing around them in the hope of letting sleeping dogmas lie, but by taking them on frontally every time they break the law.

Mr. Vajpayee would like Mr. Modi to find jobs for the devastated, get industrialists to donate money, Bhuj style, hold hands with the aggrieved families, even set up goodwill marches, and so forth. All sweet talk and a few pieces of silver! What the Prime Minister has cleverly sidestepped, and what the Opposition has not pressed upon him, is that nowhere has he asked of Mr. Modi: "Who are the guilty?" Without raising this issue, no amount of relief and goodwill missions will help in restoring confidence in Gujarat. If the guilty are not punished by the due process of law then this might engender cynicism, and, what is worse, vigilante-style reprisals — both of which are deleterious to the well being of the country as a democratic republic. As citizens we have the right to demand that the guilty be punished first! And Mr. Modi is not the only one we are thinking of.

The Hindu, April 2

While the Gujarat earthquake brought out the best in people, a year later it is the depths of inhumanity and barbarism that is being exhibited.

We all remember the 2001 earthquake. Indians, rich and poor, spontaneously came forward to help the people of Gujarat cope with the disaster. Non-governmental organisations rushed to aid with rehabilitation. Companies 'adopted' villages and their staff contributed a day's wages. Many caught the first train to Gujarat to assist in relief. And, after initially displaying some sluggishness, even the Government sprung into action. There seemed to be a collective national effort to stand by the people of Gujarat.

Compare our response today to the communal mayhem in Gujarat to how we stepped out a year ago. Those who died this time were hacked to pieces or burnt alive. Those who managed to survive now huddle in fear in camps. Reports from Gujarat say that more than a fortnight after the violence, tens of thousands of people remain in the make-shift camps throughout the State, too terrified to return to what remains of their homes. Food they get somehow, shelter just about and sanitation does not exist.

Of course, nobody dares go to work or send their children to school.

The State Government is providing token relief, the NGOs this time are largely absent and we, elsewhere in the country, continue with our lives as if nothing has happened. No national appeals this time for help. No companies coming forward to adopt camps, no offers to take care of orphans and certainly no tax exemption for donations to relief and rehabilitation efforts.

It is not that our responses are conditioned by the numerical scale of a disaster and the country therefore prefers to be quiet about the aftermath of the killings in which 'only' 600 people were butchered, compared to the official death toll

AGAINST THE GRAIN C. RAMMANOHAR REDDY

Survivors do not matter



A collective effort to rebuild after the earthquake (left) and collective silence after the riots (right).

of 10,000 in the quake. Most of us are so desensitised by public violence that it has already become just another riot, some of us are simply terrified of reaching out and, it has to be said, a fair number of Indians are quite satisfied with both the carnage and the plight of the survivors.

The people who were fortunate to escape the mobs need help to physically rebuild their homes (destroyed by the rioters), to find work (not easy after the call to boycott Muslim businesses) and, most of all, to heal the trauma that they

have been subjected to — watching family and friends burnt, pregnant women knifed to death and even heads smashed. Nothing can ever heal those scars, but our collective silence even in the aftermath sends out the message that India does not care. If our collective silence per-

mitted the killings to take place we refuse now to demonstrate our support for the survivors. Open support would actually have signalled to the communalists that they do not own the public space. The only help the inhabitants of camps in Gujarat are receiving now is from the members of their own community who are helping out with food and clothing, a handful of NGOs involved in relief, and a few brave individuals determined not to let the horrors go by without a response.

The new breed of 'nationalist' secularists will first ask, 'What about the victims of Godhra?' as if our collective shame is confined to the State wide killings after the massacre at Godhra. No person with any sense of humanity feels that way.

Such questions about reactions to Godhra should not, in normal times, be given the dignity of a response, but these are not normal times. So it has to be said that the families of the survivors of Godhra need no less support than the survivors of what followed.

A catastrophe brings out either the best or the worst in a nation. The Gujarat earthquake brought out some of the best. But a year

later we have witnessed the depths of inhumanity in India and seen barbarism at close range. The callousness of our reaction today when set against the overwhelming response to the quake a year ago may be a minor statement about ourselves. However, if the massacres were a crime against humanity, the subsequent silence is just as big an offence. Silence is acquiescence.

Silence also means we continue as if nothing has happened. We refuse to see that the biggest have been able to ratchet their aggression many notches higher. What is at stake now is nothing less than the kind of India that will be bequeathed to our children.

Omkar Goswami, the chief economist of Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), last week penned a moving piece (*Business Standard*, March 16, 2002) which could not have said things more sensitively, ending with the question, 'Have we ever thought of the frightening, fragmented, divisive polity that we are bequeathing to the next generation, where, instead of removing poverty, we remove people? Will we ever learn?' •

E-mail the writer at err100@india.com

The Hindu, March 24



AGONISING WAIT: Muslims wait for food at a refugee camp in Shah Alam Dargah in Ahmedabad on Sunday. (AP)

Villages now ghettos of Muslims & Hindus

By PARAG DAVE

Ahmedabad, March 3: The unprecedented spread of communal violence in the rural areas across the state has resulted in mass-scale segregation of population in villages along communal lines for the first time, ending the history of peaceful co-existence practised since centuries.

The police is also strongly advocating separation of the two communities in rural belts to stop the carnage. People of the minority community in villages or small towns across the rural areas of Mehsana, Godhra, Anand, Kheda, Sabarkantha and Gandhinagar districts of the state, are leaving their

villages for safer places since Friday night.

The ghettoisation of communities might have been common in communally sensitive urban centres like Ahmedabad and Surat for the past two decades, but it has spread to the rural areas of the state after Godhra. The violence and killings has had a deep effect on the psyche of villagers who think that they are safe with their community members. The result is, the villages are beginning to have exclusively Hindu or Muslim populations now.

Houses belonging to Muslims in Ladol village in Mehsana, which is near the ill-fated Sardarpur where 28 people were burnt to

death, are empty. The police evacuated five to seven families of the minority community to Savala that has a majority of Muslim population, after frantic calls from family members to Vijapur police stations.

Similarly, 12 Hindu families have migrated from Savala village which is dominated by Pathans to Vijapur which has majority Hindu population. Police inspector posted in Vijapur, Mr B.K. Purohit said that as the situation had become bad the best option available for people of both the communities was to migrate. The police also helped people evacuate from the villages in response to their calls for help, he added.

Jayant Desai, a political activist from Vijapur, said that in this time of crisis people would naturally like to be with their community members. "The polarisation of the population is natural and on expected lines. However, it is to be seen whether this is a permanent migration or whether the population would return after normalcy is restored," he said.

Godhra DSP Raju Bhargav said that to stop the violence they have shifted 600 families to safer places, to separate both the communities in sensitive villages. They do not have enough police force to provide protection to each and every village as there are around 800 villages in the district.

The Asian Age, March 4

Riot victims don't want to go back home

By Sourav Mukherjee
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Fifteen-year-old Rafiq Chandbhai Sheikh's family has taken refuge in Shah Alam. "My father says we will sell the plot where our home was and settle in an area like this. At least we will be safe here," the teenager says, recounting how their house was burnt down by rioters.

Rafiq mirrors the sense of insecurity that haunts riot victims after the unprecedented destruction and mayhem. Many do not have any reason to go back, and most are too terrified to do so.

A mute shake of the head is all you get from eight-year-old Sahil Sharif Mohammad Sheikh. Sheikh used to stay in Gulbarg Society at Chamanpura, where 40 people were burnt alive. He along with three other children had witnessed the carnage and had hidden behind the adjoining police outpost till marauding mobs had left their society.

Aslam Khan also had a miraculous escape. He says, "Many of my relatives were killed at Gulbarg Society by a 10,000-strong mob. I won't ever go back there. I will repair the house and give it on rent, but I am not going back to live there, with those horrible memories." Khan now stays at a relief camp in a municipal school of Sahibpura.

Khan's neighbour at the camp is Saheda Bano, who hails from Jawaharnagar in Patia. Sixty-five persons were burnt alive at Naroda-Patia. Bano is also not willing to go back home. She says her house has been completely burnt down, and that there has been no news of her husband and son since five days.

Their fears are reflected in the deserted streets, destroyed homes and gutted shops. The walled city of Ahmedabad and the fringe areas like Odhav, Meghanagar and Naroda-Patia wear that devastated look which is scaring the locals into looking for a new home.

In the heart of Bapunagar, a short distance from the Al Amin Garib Nawaz hospital, is Juni Chali. The narrow entrance to the Chali even in a minority-dominated zone is blocked by two autorickshaws and some plastic milk cartons. A total of 122 families have taken refuge here.

Mujib Ahmed, one of the organisers of a relief camp at Aman Chowk in Bapunagar, says: "More than 4,000 have been staying here since the night of March 1. Nobody is willing to go back to their ravaged homes."

Sheikh Sahabuddin from Parikshitlal Nagar in Behrampur, now lodged at the Shah Alam relief camp, says: "I am not sure I will feel safe in an area that I had to regard as my own."

'I escaped with some burns because I got buried under a mass of bodies'

By Radha Sharma and
Saurav Mukherjee
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: A newborn baby clings to the bosom of a woman lying frozen at the Civil Hospital morgue. The unsevered umbilical chord ties the foetus and mother beyond death.

The child was silenced before it could utter the first cry. The charred bodies of mother-child, locked even after death, epitomise the devilry that ravaged Ahmedabad ever since the Godhra massacre.

It was baptism by communal fire for some of these young. They had to pay for being at the wrong place at the wrong time with their lives.

Little Asif (5) lay at his bed in ward number E-7 of the civil hospital, immobile. Swathed in bandages from head to foot Asif has 90 per cent burn injuries. There was nobody to attend to him, as his mother, Sabera, lay motionless in the far-away corner of the ward with severe burn injuries. Doctors give them a "slim chance".

The ward seemed to groan with pain and agony along with the riot victims. The scenes of

horror were clearly reflected in the eyes of those lying helpless, without any near and dear ones to attend.

Young Shahrugh, all of five years, is suffering stinging pain from the deep burns. "Mummy, it hurts very badly... please do something," he mumbles. The child is oblivious to the horrifying fact that the riots have orphaned him and neither his mother nor father would come to his rescue.

ORPHANED BY MADNESS

Shahrugh's sister Shah Jahan, 10, lies on the bed adjacent to his, but is in no position to comfort her little brother. Shah Jahan is in excruciating pain herself. The burns have turned her face into a mask of horror. She could barely gulp the spoonful of khichdi that was being painstakingly fed to her by a good samaritan.

"We were a family of seven... only the two of us remain, my three sisters and mummy-papa are missing. I do not know what has happened to them... probably they have died," fears Shah Jahan, wondering aloud of how she and her brother will manage

alone.

Young Nayeem Sheikh, shrunk into the corner of his hospital bed as a doctor came to attend. "Don't hit me, please," he whispered to each new-comer.

Seventeen-year-old Shabbir Ahmed is relatively calm but has a horrific tale to recount. "Some men in khaki uniform came in on February 28 and offered to take us. We were hiding when Naroda-Patia was bathed in its residents' blood. The men in uniform turned out to be villains, as they led us straight into a marauding pack. All of us were set ablaze. My brother and sister-in-law were burnt alive. I escaped with some burn injuries on my left leg because I had got buried under a mass of bodies." Ahmed has no idea where his parents are.

A similar incident has separated 16-year-old Yasin Usmanbhai Mansuri from his mother. Mansuri with 25 per cent burns on his legs and left arm lies alongside his unconscious father at Civil Hospital. He is concerned about his other family members, who have been missing ever since the rioters ravaged their home.

The Times of India, March 6

The Times of India, March 6

Minorities flee homes to safer places

BY ADITI DAVE

Ahmedabad, March 4: Gujarat's minority communities are abandoning their homes out of the fear of violence that has plagued the state since the Godhra incident.

Not only residents of slums and chawls, but also those residing in posh bungalows have left their homes and shifted to comparatively safer localities.

A society in the posh Paldi area, the Corner Flats Society, is one such place. About 10 families residing here have fled leaving all their belongings, as an irate mob

attacked them after the bandh on Thursday.

According to a resident of Ahmedabad's Faiz Mohammed Society, which is adjacent to the Corner Flats Society, "A mob of about 500 people attacked house of one Dr Bhavnagri, who opened fire to protect his family.

However, could not hold back the ferocious mob, long and the doctor and his

son were seriously injured." He said that the mob then moved on to the Corner Flats Society where they pelted stones and attacked the residents injuring many.

The resident of the Faiz Mohammed Society further said that his friend Nizamuddin Momin received serious head injuries in the mob attack. "Nizamuddin has lost his memory and is presently in a hospital," he said. All the 10 families residing in the society are affluent. Abdullah, who owns Moti Mahal Hotel in Ahmedabad, was also injured and he too has taken his family out of the place out of safety concerns.

Tax consultant V.A. Isani was also forced to flee and is now at his relative's place in Sarkhej, the resident informed.

The resident said, "Most of the people who attacked the society did not belong to the locality. There were people whom I had never seen before."

He claimed that other than that there were four police vehicles standing next to the

mob and none of them made any attempt to stop the violent mob.

In yet another sensitive locality of Ahmedabad, a student of H.L. College of Commerce was forced to leave at midnight due to an incident of stone-pelting.

The student who did not wish to be quoted said: "We had to abandon all our belongings and flee the locality immediately at night time due to the mob attack. It is very depressing to leave one's own home. My exams are approaching but with no study material with me, I am unable to study and may miss the exams."

Ayub Khan (name changed), a resident of a chawl near Nagri Mills, claimed, "The mob had the best of support from the police authorities as they attacked us without any obstacles put by the police. They had planned the attack so well that the mob first attacked the houses of the residents. They even dragged women and children with the males and hit them with sharp weapons."

The Asian Age, March 5

SPECIAL REPORT

For victims of past riots, the violence is a painful reminder

For 30 yrs, they have been on the run

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 15

RASOOLMIAN first started running for his life in 1969. That's the first time an armed mob came looking for him at his house at Naroda, one of the suburbs ringing Ahmedabad city. Rasoolmian picked up his son Rahim, then 12, in his arms and ran along with his wife, daughter, another son and 250 other residents of the colony. For two months, they darted from village to village, living in shanties and surviving on borrowed food before they crawled back.

Rasoolmian and his family took to their



heels again in 1985, then again in 1992. Two weeks ago, he realised that he simply cannot pause to take a breath, that for so many others

like him, the running just won't stop: the *tolas*, as the mobs are known here, are still itching to get their hands on them, waiting to burn up their homes and everything else that's dear to them.

"I remember clearly how we'd fled the first time and taken shelter in an ashram. From there, we were sent to the police station. Then, some one remarked that the Hindus would burn down the station if they realised we were staying here and we were told to leave. We walked for kilometres to reach the next village. This went on for two months. Finally, someone put us on board a train and we came to Shahibaug," says Rasoolmian.

The Indian Express, March 16

Violence continues, one killed in Ahmedabad

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD/VADODARA: One person was killed in police firing and two others were seriously injured as violence escalated in the Astodia Chakla area of the walled city on Tuesday afternoon with mobs attacking shops and the police. The police fired at least 70 rounds and lobbed tear-gas shells in the Astodia Chakla area of Ahmedabad when mobs emerged from the Majoogam area near Gita Mandir and attacked shops of a particular community in the morning. When police dispersed them with tear-gas shells, a section of residents from the Kazi Na Dhaba area attacked the police. By the evening, violence spread to other

areas of Astodia. Combining operations were carried out in a religious place which further unleashed tempers. This area falls under the Gaekwad Haveli police station which is already under indefinite curfew. There were reports of arson and rioting from Madhavpura and Maninagar as certain shops selling decorative accessories were set on fire on Tuesday afternoon and a shop near the Maninagar railway station was destroyed by miscreants. Four persons were arrested from the area. Another six persons were picked up in cases of arson in Madhavpura, deputy commissioner of police D.J. Patel told TNN.

In Vadodara, a youth was shot dead in an encounter. Heavy stone throwing began and the police had to fire five rounds to disperse the mob. One person was injured and rushed to SSG Hospital. Late on Monday night, the police fired ten rounds in the Amraiwadi area of Ahmedabad as violence broke out when a mob attacked policemen. No one is reported to be hurt in the firing although one sub-inspector was injured in the intense stone throwing that lasted for about three hours. Amraiwadi was the area where violence broke out first immediately after the Godhra carnage. Police sources said the violence lasted till 3 a.m. when the police lobbed 12 tear-gas shells and opened fire.

Death toll in village creates controversy

By HITARTH PANDYA

Kalol (Panchmahals), March 2: While the death toll continues to rise after the Sabarmati Express incident, the massacre of more than 40 residents of the Pandarwada village, in Khanpur taluka on Friday, has emerged as the centre of controversy, as far as the number of deaths is considered.

On Friday, the district authorities and the police stated different figures of dead people. The strong resistance shown by the government and the villagers speaks volumes about the gravity of the incident. Speaking to *The Asian Age*, Panchmahal district collector Jayanti Ravi said the official report of the Pandarwada incident confirms only eight deaths. She said, "So far I have been given reports of eight deaths in Pandarwada. I am yet to get information about the deaths at Delol-Godhra road."

On Saturday villagers warned media persons against visiting Pandarwada.

The Asian Age, March 5

City may be split into communal ghettos

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Ahmedabad may soon become the capital of communal ghettos. The riots have taken away the remnants of Hindus and Muslims sharing a common neighbourhood.

Now, there are densely populated Hindu segments on the one side and equally dense Muslim sections on the other. Neither having anything in common except deep-rooted mistrust.

Most Muslim families may not even have a choice but to move to a ghetto from the relief camps. Only ruins remain of their homes and, in many cases, their neighbours have made it abundantly clear, they are not wanted. Victims in the relief camps allege that landlords have bulldozed their own homes to ensure that the Muslim tenants don't return.

The state government did try to stop mass

exodus and distress selling from a particular area in the mid-80's with the Prevention of Transfer of Property in Distress Act. It did not allow residents to sell their homes at a lower than market rate and under distress. But like all other legislations with good intentions, it was effectively circumvented with a simple power of attorney allowing residents to get rid of the property without actually selling it.

As a result, the National Commission for Minorities suggested to the state government to allocate a separate piece of land for the families in the camps during its recent visit to Ahmedabad. Chairman Justice Mohammad Shauham (ret'd) had said that it was important that the Muslims feel secure at a site away from all the communally sensitive areas.

Taking a cue from this Muslim leaders are in the process of asking the government for one lakh yards of space near the Bombay Hotel at

Chandola Lake to rehabilitate about 2,000 families. They have already shifted half of the 10,500 inmates of the Shah-e-Alam relief camp there, most of whom are from the Naroda Patia and Bapunagar areas.

"If the land is given to us, we would be able to move about 20,000 persons there," says Mohsin Kadri, one of the organisers of the Shah-e-Alam camp, who has been given the responsibility of preparing a proposal for the land and present it to the Ahmedabad collector. "We believe this land is the best option considering it is close to a Muslim locality, allowing the victims to have security in numbers."

And this is just one ghetto that will rise from the ashes of the riots. There are nearly 40,000 more such refugees in the 42 camps of Ahmedabad alone who have no home left to go back to. And they will all demand new land to be rehabilitated.

The Times of India, March 27

The Times of India, March 27

There's easy money in betting on riots

By SONAL KELLOGG

Ahmedabad, April 10: Strange as it may sound, certain people see an opportunity to make some easy money during the riots. All kinds of bets — where the violence will break out next, what will be the death toll, how long the violence will continue — are being made in the circles of these go-getters.

That gambling is an addiction is a known fact, but the extent to which a gambler is ready to go comes as a rude shock, especially when so many lives have been lost and so much property damaged or destroyed.

Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat, besides other small towns, have emerged as nodal points for such betting rackets, a young gambler who works in a posh office on Ashram Road said. People bet on where the next communal violence will erupt, whether curfew will be imposed, how many rounds

of cartridges will be fired by the police, whether there will be any private firing and even on how many will be killed on a given day, he added. Even the number of stabbing incidents on any given day is being betted upon.

But the hottest topic these days is whether chief minister Narendra Modi will be ousted or not, he said.

All people — young and old, educated and also those with blue-collar jobs — indulge in betting and for those who gamble as an addiction, it is a pleasant (or rather unpleasant) change from the routine, a small time bookie in the Walled City area said.

But some gamblers are abstaining from betting on such issues and the money involved in gambling has come down by about 30 per cent compared to regular times, he said. Usually, lakhs of rupees are on bet daily in the cities and the number

goes up during cricket matches, said a Paldi-based big time bookie whose regular business is cricket match betting.

He said this is one business which is not divided on community lines since both Hindus and Muslims gamble and there are no restrictions on any person. "Anyone can place a bet as far as we know him. It is a closed business with most gamblers being regulars," he added.

Additional director general of police, intelligence, R.B. Shrikumar said his department does not look after gambling rackets and that this is a social vice which comes under the purview of the local police. He did not rule out the possibility of such rackets going on in full swing.

It may be recalled that in Jaipur, some bookies were caught by the Rajasthan police for placing bets on whether there will be riots in Rajasthan.

The Asian Age, April 4

Riots in Gujarat drive thousands of workers to brink of starvation

By Sanjay Pandey
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Is Ahmedabad turning into a virtual Kalahandi? The communal conflagration that has spilled over to the second month has driven thousands of labour class people to the brink of starvation. It may sound unbelievable, but some of them eat salt and drink water to survive yet another day. The more fortunate ones eat rotis with salt.

"You promise them two kilos of atta (wheat flour) and ask them to stand in a queue for the whole day, they will oblige you gleefully," says Abdul Samad, a kiosk owner at Ambawadi Ni Chali area in Rakhial. Like scores of people living in many other chalis and slums in trouble torn areas of Ahmedabad, residents of Ambawadi Ni Chali, home to over 50 families, are fighting against starvation. People who have lived through the communal carnage say they could now die of hunger.

Sardar Kamruddin Mirza, a daily wage earner residing in the chali when asked how he is surviving these days, says "sometimes onion, salt and water taste wonderful," in a lighter vein he adds that maybe it was his fate to undergo such hunger.

Like him, many other daily wage earners like rickshaw drivers, handcart pullers, construction workers and skilled workmen like tailors are forced to stay indoors due to the curfew in the surrounding areas of Bapunagar, Gomtipur, Kalupur and Shahpur. Even when there is no curfew it is hazardous to venture out and go to work.

Without any work every family in the chali has already borrowed groceries of over Rs 1500 but even the grocery shops owners ran out of

stock and were not able to replenish the stocks because the supplies are not coming. Cutting across caste and community lines, thousands of daily wage labourers have been caught in the vicious cycle of violence with no communication with the outside world.

"The families of my three brothers are also dependent on me after their houses were burnt in Parikshitlalnagar," says Bharat Ugrejia, a kiosk owner selling snacks in Behrampura. But he is finding it hard to help them as he has to frequently close down his shop no sooner tensions build up in the area.

Similar was the fate of 40-year-old Kamta Prasad Khatik, who sells eatables on his hand-cart. He has not ventured out from his home in Hiralal Ni Chali in Jamalpur to sell biscuits and sevayian for last one month. "I cannot think of earning in the near future as factories from where I used to source them from have also been burnt down," adds Khatik, who has to feed four other persons in his family. He has already borrowed Rs 2000 from his neighbours in the hope that he would resume work soon.

In Bhartinagar, Chokshi Ni Chali on Rakhial Road, Khadawala Ni Chali in Gomtipur, Parikshitlalnagar, Vankarwas and Choriyasi Ni Chali in Behrampura, home to thousands of labour class people belonging to the majority community, residents have not ventured out of their homes for weeks together. "Daily wage earners suffered the most in riots as trade activity and industry has come to a standstill," says Kalpesh Jha, a relief worker running a camp for Hindu families near Gita Mandir in Jamalpur.

The Times of India, April 6

We are safe here but it is like living in hell, say riot victims

By Sourav Mukherjee
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: The one-year-old baby that clung onto Zahida Sheikh's body was wailing unconsolably. But, terror had choked Zahida's tears. Hounded out of her house in Behrampura on Tuesday by rioters, she was faced with the stark reality — even the relief camp at Shah-e-Alam that she thought would shelter her, was overflowing with inmates and had no place for her and her daughter.

And, not just Zahida, this reality is hitting hard the growing breed of people fleeing their homes everyday as violence just refuses to subside in the city. Fifty more women, children and a tow, who came to Shah-e-Alam from Parikshit Nagar of Behrampura along with Zahida too had nowhere to go.

Moved by their plight, the camp's organisers let them stay at the only place available, the outer areas of the camp premises.

"We will set up a small shamiyana for these victims as soon as possible. But, this camp has now reached its limit. Any more riot victims and we will have a serious problem in getting food, water and maintaining sanitation," said



Mohsin Qadri, organiser of the camp.

Qadri's woes are understandable. On April 16, the number of inmates in his camp was 10,537, accounting for 1,866 families. In just a week, the number jumped to 2,219 families, which meant 13,500 inmates. And, the influx continues.

as petrified victims are pouring in even from as far as Mahemdabad.

For the camp inmates, the rising numbers translate into cramped space, longer queues near public toilets and bathrooms, water scarcity and insufficient stock of medicines, especially those for gynaecological disorders. For many, the growing numbers mean sleeping at the graveyard inside this premises.

Farid Khan, of Kamod near Pirana Road, along with five other family members, is still mourning the death of his 17-year-old son. "I am here since March 7 and the police have not yet registered an offence regarding the murder of my son Sultan who was stabbed and then burnt near Sewage Farm of Pirana Road area. Though we are safe here, it has been like living in hell," says Khan.

Khan's problems are reflected in long queues that are common features now near the 26 toilets and 18 bathrooms being shared by the over 5,000 women inmates of the camp. The 8,000 men in the camp have just 14 latrines and four bathrooms amongst them. Inmates have to travel far even to places like the Chandola Lake to relieve themselves.

The Times of India, April 25

Hate tracts being distributed in Gujarat towns

By RAJEEV KHANNA

New Delhi, April 25: The propaganda of hate against Muslims and Christians continues in smaller towns of Gujarat. A report brought out by Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind cites a leaflet circulated in Kalol town of north Gujarat which asks Hindus to train their children in karate, keep them away from Christian educational institutions and go in for complete boycott of films featuring Muslim filmstars.

The leaflet, which was in Gujarati, accuses Muslims of inciting labour unrest in various business enterprises and of running illegal liquor dens. Trying

to penetrate into the trade union movement, Hindus are being asked to fight their cases through Hindu unions only. "In reality, they (Muslims) scheme against the workers and loot lakhs of rupees from the companies in the name of compromise. Since the employers and employees are Hindus, in their fight against each other the Muslims stand to gain both ways while the workers and companies lose crore of rupees," the leaflet says, while adding that instead of insisting on court verdicts, they insist on compromise of the management.

The report also cites another leaflet which calls for the eco-

nomic boycott of Muslims which was reportedly in wide circulation in Ahmedabad.

The leaflet circulated at Kalol also calls for boycotting those business establishments in which Hindus and Muslims are partners. "Recognise them and isolate them and do not buy anything from their shops, because, indirectly, the Muslim partners also benefit from their profits. If you stop buying goods from their shops then the Hindu partners will learn a lesson and break away from Muslim partners," it reads.

The leaflet also attacks the educational institutions being run by Christians. "With the

intention of giving them (the children) the best education you get them admitted in schools such as St. Xavier's and St. Anne's and consider it prestigious. In fact, this is the biggest mistake of your life. In order to make the Hindus forget their religion, the Christian schools inject the tenets of Christian religion into the tender minds of the students right from their childhood. On account of your irresponsibility and the Christian education influenced by the Christian tradition, when your child becomes a youth, he or she is already half Christian," it reads. The pamphlet shows calculated profits earned by Mus-

lims establishments at Kalol which have been put at Rs 4 crores and it has been alleged that the Muslims keep Hindu names for their enterprise to create an illusion amongst customers from majority community. The leaflet also alleges, "If we could save Rs 4 crores that we mentioned earlier, we could strengthen the hands of our Hindu merchants and moreover, we could open a school or a college every year and we could give our children free education in our Hindu schools."

The Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind report contains details about the desecration of religious places, establishments in the state.

The Asian Age, April 26

In Gujarat, a sewer is safest place

Innovative ways to prevent police from looting money

BY TUSHAR PRABHUNE

Ahmedabad, May 6: First it was the police atrocities and "biased" behaviour towards them. Now it is the fear of the police allegedly taking away valuables from their homes "forcibly" during combing operations that is plaguing residents of communally sensitive areas in the Walled City.

As a result of this, fear psychosis has gripped the minority community in riot-prone areas of Gomtipur, Juhapura, Shah Alam and Shahpur. Residents have started finding innovative means to protect their valuables from being "forcibly taken away" by policemen during the combing operation. Sabir Hussain Malik, a resident of Gomtipur, has hidden jewellery, traditional copper vessels and other precious things in a four-feet deep pit hardly 100 metres from his house.

Mr Malik alleged, "Such behaviour of the police is not surprising for us. We have experienced this during communal riots of 1992 too when the police took away our cash and jewellery and we were mute spectators."

Another resident of the same area, Aminabibi, who has also wit-

nessed the 1969 riots said, "After violence in our area, the police started searching for weapons. First they asked us to wait outside till their search was completed. We heaved a sigh of relief as they went away without harassing us, but to our dismay, the whole jewellery box and some old vessels had disappeared."

According to some residents of these areas, gutters and underground water lanes also prove to be a safe haven for valuables for these people.

It is as simple as collecting all the cash and jewellery in a piece of cloth or a plastic bag and hiding it in the sewage pipes under the house, they added.

Rizwan Amaan, owner of a grocery store at Behrampur revealed, "After sudden violence, there were chances that the police might carry out combing operation in the area. And nothing is as safe as a gutter."

Other than such "innovative" means to protect their valuables, bank lockers obviously are considered the safest.

However, with curfew clamped in many areas, not many people have been able to go to banks for depositing cash and other valuables.



RIOT WEAPONS: A Gujarat police officer shows crude bombs, pistols and detonators confiscated from rioters in the Danilimda area of Ahmedabad on Monday. (AP)

The Asian Age. May 7

Gujarat VHP leader named in rioting FIR

Ahmedabad, March 18: The name of the general secretary of the VHP's Gujarat unit, Mr Jaideep Patel, has figured in an FIR registered at Naroda police station in Ahmedabad for the attacks that followed the Godhra train carnage, the police said. The FIR has been registered on the basis of complaints by some people, rendered homeless in the attack and now living in relief camps at Maninagar in the eastern part of the city, they said.

One Babubhai Pirubhai Sheikh and others, in their complaint, have identified Mr Patel and others among a 2,000-odd mob which indulged in arson and looting in Naroda-Patia area. (PTI)

The Asian Age, March 19

Replace Modi, victims implore PM

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Riot victims shouted slogans against chief minister Narendra Modi when Prime Minister Vajpayee visited the Shah Alam refugee camp here on Thursday.

Survivors of the Naroda-Patia and Naroda Gam massacres showered abuse on Mr Modi and the Gujarat police. The victims were allowed a brief meeting with the PM. Naimuddin Shaikh of Patia, who lost six members of his family, told Mr Vajpayee, "People attacked us saying, 'Upar se hukum hai' (there are orders from the top). Nanumiyan Rasoolmiyan Malek of Naroda Gam told Mr Vajpayee, "The Modi government is not humane. You must replace the chief minister."

He gave a detailed account of how people were butchered 50 metres from the Naroda police station. "VHP and BJP leaders were inside the police station distributing swords. How can they now expect us to go back to that same police?" he later told TNN.

Husainabano Azgarkhan Pathan described to the PM how men with swords had hacked her brother in bed, poured acid on him and burnt him alive. Among the victims was 11-year-old Raja, who narrated how he had seen his mother and sister being burnt alive at Naroda Patia. Mr Vajpayee said that the victims should make an effort to put the tragedy behind them and that he would help them.

The Shah-e-Alam relief committee submitted a memorandum to Mr Vajpayee condemning the Modi government. They demanded that the PM take the National Human Rights Commission report seriously and instruct the Gujarat government to implement its recommendations in letter and spirit. They suggested that Muslims be allotted land nearer their conglomeration so that they felt secure. "The Muslim community does not need doles. Their big problem relates to their children's education. They cannot go to schools where they are studying at present as they lie in areas which are not considered safe," the memorandum said.

The Times of India, April 5

Modi primes pitch for polls

- Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Buoyed by the BJP's call to seek a fresh mandate of the people, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi on Sunday put his party into poll mode on his return to the state. He has already begun addressing rallies and sent his ministers to various districts to "begin campaigning".

Soon after reaching the capital on Saturday night, he addressed a large gathering along with former chief minister Keshubhai Patel.

Mr Modi was more a suave politician than an angry pracharak as he walked up to the people lined up along the path at the VHP-run relief camp in Kankaria, where he addressed a rally on Sunday. He accepted their greetings with folded hands, signalling to the party workers that the elections were round the corner.

Mr Modi also distributed cheques to some of the riot victims as part of the rehabilitation package announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during his visit on April 4 and appealed to the inmates of the camp to maintain peace and order even

after they returned to their homes.

Perhaps, Mr Modi had done his homework even before he descended here as the chief minister made use of the Ambedkar Jayanti to address a gathering of 2,000 Dalit activists, telling them that he would not have entered politics but for the inspiration provided by

Dr Ambedkar. Mr Modi also released a book on Ambedkar. "The government will protect the fundamental rights of the people as mentioned in the Constitution framed by Dr Ambedkar," he said.

He also went to the state assembly building and garlanded the life-size statue of Dr Ambedkar. He was accompanied by other ministers, including social empowerment minister Fakirbhai

Waghela. A senior state government official, who accompanied Mr Modi at various functions, said, "The election campaign has commenced even before a formal announcement by the BJP or the government."

Mr Modi also directed his cabinet colleagues not to "sit in Gandhinagar and speculate about elections", but to reach out to the people immediately.



Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi (centre) is greeted with a lotus upon arrival in Ahmedabad on Saturday night.

The Times of India, April 15

'Gujarat BJP was keeping tabs on Muslims from '99'

BY ARCHANA JYOTI

New Delhi, May 7: A secret circular, issued by Gujarat's director of police (intelligence) to the top brass of the state police in 1999, reveals the hostile attitude of the BJP-led state government towards Muslims over the last three years.

The circular directs all police commissioners, district police officers and range IGPs/DIGPs to "intimate details of persons (Muslims) involved in communal riots which occurred in their city/district during the last five years — viz offence registration section, place, what was the judgment by court, how many times the person was booked under CrPC Sections 107, 151, 110, or Pasa, Nasa." According to the circular (No. D 2/2, Com/Muslim/Activity/84/99 of 1/2-2-99), which is published in a report released on Monday, the district police officials and others were asked to "intimate (to the state) how many *darul ulm* (madrasas) are functioning in their districts/cities and where they are located."

Gujarat Carnage 2002: A Report To the Nation, has been drafted by an independent fact-finding mission comprising

JNU professor Kamal Mitra Chenoy, former finance secretary and former member of the Planning Commission S.P. Shukla, former director-general of police of Tripura K.S. Subramanian and visiting professor at Jamia Millia Islamia Achin Vanik. They had met a large number of victims of the communal violence, eyewitnesses, administrative and police people during their five-day visit to the riot-hit state.

A copy of the circular on page 34 of the report, signed by P.B. Upadhyaya, further directs the police to "intimate the details of existing Muslim organisations in your district, with their address and who are the leaders working for their organisations, their names addresses, total members, telephone numbers etc." "Please open the dossier of Muslim individuals who are involved in the offence of assault with knives or scissors, rioting and murder with their names and the copy of the same be sent here," the circular adds. In a clear bid to keep tabs on the political parties funding Muslim organisations, it says, "Please intimate the names of political leaders and their party who are supporting these criminals."

The Asian Age, May 8

The spirit of inquiry: khaki sympathy for saffron accused

■ Ahmedabad cop casts doubts on FIRs

JOYDEEP RAY

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 11

AHMEDABAD'S Assistant Commissioner of Police P N Barot, who was entrusted on Friday with investigating two of the city's bloodiest massacres, has already made up his mind on one thing: members of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP accused of carrying out the attacks — in which 127 lost their lives — could have been falsely named in the FIRs.

Eleven persons have been named in the Gulbarg Society case, where former Congress MP Ehsaan Jafri and 42 others were killed, while five others have been named for the massacre of 84 persons in the Naroda-Patia slums. Most prominent among the accused: Bajrang Dal activist Babu Bajrangji, who has a lengthy criminal record.

Barot, who was entrusted with the investigation on Friday, visited both spots on Sunday. "How could the police have identified 5-6 people in a mob of a thousand?" he complained to *The Indian Express*. It's the same complaint made by VHP General Secretary Jaydeep Patel when he was accusing the police of "falsely" implicating his men.

Barot also offered his own explanation of the Naroda-Patia massacre: "First, a Hindu boy, Ranjitsinh Chouhan, was stabbed to death by Muslims. Then they killed three others by crushing them under a Matador van. This infuriated the Hindus, leading to the massacre."

And about the Gulbarg Society killings, he said, "Jafri fired with a weapon and injured 13 persons, which provoked the mob". The same explanation had been given by Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

Why had the mobs gathered around Gulbarg Society in the first place? What forced Jafri to pull the trigger? Why was there a gap of at least five hours between the second incident at Naroda-Patia and the massacre? These questions, said Barot, are "under investigation".

Before Barot was entrusted with the investigation, the Naroda and Meghaninagar police had arrested some of those named in the FIRs. Barot has now promised to "check with the complainants" as to how they named the accused in the FIRs. The



'How could police have identified 5-6 people in a mob of a thousand? I will have to check with the complainants'

— ACP P N Barot

complainant in the Naroda Patia case is ASI N T Bala, while Senior Inspector Kiritsinh Erda of Meghaninagar police station lodged the FIR in the Gulbarg Society case. Both refused comment on Barot's remarks.

The Indian Express, March 3

Cops resort to firing as groups clash in Godhra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
VADODARA, MARCH 13

POLICE fired a round to disperse two groups which clashed in the interior residential locality of Godhra town even as the situation continued to remain tense in Kawan taluka of Vadodara district where arsonists set afire houses on Wednesday.

Police said that tension gripped Zaboopura area of Godhra town when an altercation took place between an owner of a shop and his tenant.

Police said that since the two belonged to two different communities, tension gripped the locality. What fuelled the tension was an accidental fire in a shop which resulted in stone-pelting.

Senior police officials said that even as they had to resort to lathicharge to disperse the mob, a round had to be fired. However, no one was injured in the process.

Godhra Collector Jayanti Ravi denied reports of private firing and attack by minority community members.

The reports are baseless. The stone-throwing continued for a brief period and prompt ac-

tion by police prevented any major conflagration," the collector told *The Indian Express*. She said that stone-throwing was triggered by an accidental fire in a shop. "Rumours were spread that the shop had been set afire and that set off stone-pelting," she said.

Police continued combing operations in the old city areas of the town, the collector said. Superintendent of Police Raju Bhargava said the situation was under control and maintained that relaxation in curfew would continue despite the violence. "It was a minor incident which was brought under control swiftly," he said.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed in Kawan taluka where rampaging mobs set afire at least six more shops and houses. Police lobbed nearly 15 tear-gas shells to disperse the mob.

An official spokesman said that 15 persons were arrested along with looted valuables from Kawan. Half a dozen houses were also set afire in Tejgadh and Karjan. Collector Bhagyesh Jha and SP Keshav Kumar are camping in Chhotadepur to monitor the situation.

Post-Sabarmati: 9 cops shunted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 8

LESS than 24 hours after shifting two senior IPS officers named in the attack on mediapersons at Sabarmati Ashram here, Gujarat government today carried out yet another reshuffle in the state's police administration transferring nine officials in "public interest".

Shivanand Jha and V M Pargi, additional commissioner of police (ACP) and deputy commissioner of police (DCP) of the city, were transferred yesterday and appointed as DIG, Armed Unit, Rajkot, and Commandant of State Reserve Police, Group 8, Gondal, respectively.

Keshav Kumar, ACP (administration), Baroda, replaces Jha in Ahmedabad while S M Katara, additional SP of Kutch takes the place of Pargi. P C Valera would replace

Keshav Kumar as DCP (administration). The post has been downgraded.

Rakesh Asthana, who was on deputation, is DIG (crime) in state police, according to an official release. P B Upadhaya, superintendent intelligence, Gandhinagar, has been posted as district superintendent of police, Amreli. P N Patel, Commandant, SRP, group 8, Gondal, would hold the post previously held by Upadhaya as SP, Intelligence. D S Bhatt has been appointed SP, Vigilance Squad, DGP's office, Gandhinagar.

Meanwhile, one police inspector has been suspended in connection with the attack, Health Minister Ashok Bhatt said. He added that Justice S D Dave, a retired HC judge, will head a judicial probe into the attack. The inquiry report will be submitted within three weeks, Bhatt said.

The Times of India, April 9

The Indian Express, March 14

Gujarat police finally on the justice trail

JOYDEEP RAY

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 19

S HAIKH Abdul Hussain is a survivor of the Naroda Patia carnage, one of the worst in the reprisals after the Godhra attack. Last Thursday, more than 40 days after the slum in which he lived was set ablaze killing 92 residents, he took the first step to seeking justice.

Policemen wrote his complaint at Daryakhan Ghummat relief camp, from which he hasn't ventured out in fear since he was brought there. A deluge of allegations of police refusal to take down complaints and register FIRs on violence against Muslims has forced top officers to reverse procedure.

Policemen from all 30 city stations are now going to relief camps to file complaints. Since this began at 24 camps last Wednesday, over 1,000 complaints have been lodged, 707 by Naroda police alone. However, not all complaints are being converted to FIRs.

"That is unnecessary, as most are duplications," said a senior officer. "Sometimes they are from two or more members of a family. Unless we screen to avoid duplication, the large number of FIRs will hinder rather than help investigation."

For the past few days, Addi-

tional Commissioner Keshav Kumar has been going through bunches of complaints to help decide which to convert into FIRs. Staff shortage and the magnitude of violence has forced senior officers to get down to the daily routine usually confined to police stations. "If the city remains peaceful for a few more days, we will make considerable progress," said Kumar. "We will soon finish inquiries and file chargesheets."

Naroda police has chosen 103 complaints of 707 it received to convert into FIRs. At Vejalpur police station, two inspectors are feeling the pinch of staff shortage.

Tension still hangs over the area, which has Hindu and Muslim pockets. Though the station has 17 sanctioned sub-inspectors, six posts are vacant. Hundred complaints have already been lodged and 26 FIRs registered.

Deputy Commissioner S.K. Gadvi said: "Even as we screen complaints, we are sending our men to Shah Alam and Daryakhan Ghummat camps. Everyone is welcome to lodge complaints. They may identify attackers by name." This had been a sticky point for many Muslim victims who alleged that when they identified some bigwigs, police refused to file complaints.

Miscreants fire at relief camp, 3 hurt

■ **VADODARA:** IT was an incident that exposed the chinks in the security armour around relief camps. Six unidentified persons with private fire-arms opened fire at a relief camp in Sukhsar village of Dahod district, causing injuries to three people belonging to the minority community.

The incident has shocked people and a hunt has been launched for the assailants. Security has been beefed up around relief camps in Dahod and adjoining Panchmahals. The police said the incident took place in the wee hours when the 500-odd refugees sheltering at the camp were asleep. The police said the six fled before the security personnel could react.

NEW DELHI: THE Centre has sanctioned a sum of Rs 83.15 lakh to Gujarat for setting up 1109 education activity camps in riot-affected areas in the state. The amount sanctioned by HRD would cater to 27,715 children in relief camps in 8 riot-affected districts of Ahmedabad, Anand, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha, Mehsana, Kheda, Vadodara and Dahod.

The Indian Express, April 20

Mission Gujarat

Enforce the law, is all that K.P.S. Gill can advise Modi

IT is easy to see why K.P.S. Gill has been sent to Gujarat. He has notched up a formidable reputation as the police chief who stamped out militancy in Punjab. Mired in the continuing violence in Gujarat, and painfully aware of the brickbats coming its way from home and abroad, especially abroad, the Centre has evidently retrieved the Supercop, retired for many years, to put his aura to its own use. The Vajpayee government hopes Gill's appointment as security adviser to the Gujarat chief minister will send out the right signals. It hopes to hold up the appointment as proof of its seriousness about its obligation to address the constitutional crisis in the state — an obligation it conspicuously acknowledged only recently by supporting the Opposition-sponsored censure motion in the Rajya Sabha. Yes, it is easy to see what takes Gill to Gujarat. But the question is: what, really, can he do there?

To begin with, there is the question of position and powers, the terms and conditions under which Gill will be required to operate. What is the precise job definition of a security adviser to the chief minister? How binding is his advice? By all accounts, it will be as binding as the chief minister says it is. Gill's efficacy, then, will depend entirely on Narendra Modi's willingness to cooperate. The supercop can offer advice that Modi may or may not follow. This is as it should be, constitutionally speaking. But, in the context of Gujarat, it invites some awkward questions. Ever since the violence began in that state, the media

and other independent agencies have accumulated enough evidence to prove the Modi administration's inaction, even connivance, in the targeting of the minority community in the state. There is more than enough reason to believe that over the last two months and more, police officers in worrying numbers have either supported the rampaging mobs or watched them in silence. As this paper has reported, many of the officers who did do their job have been summarily transferred. How effective can Gill's mission be in these circumstances? And how realistic the expectation that he repeat in Gujarat what he did in Punjab? Those who have settled down to watch Gill perform would do well to remember that in Punjab he was assisted by a force that followed the leader and a state apparatus that was largely supportive of his exertions.

There can be no progress and no healing in Gujarat until and unless there is some move towards enforcing accountability. All those in government who watched the state burn and stoked the fires, must pay. There must be quick action to control the continuing violence and preventive measures must be taken to ensure that it doesn't spread. The state must reach out to all the victims of the violence, and restore the confidence that has been lost. There have been no signs so far that the Modi government is willing to address itself to this job. Parachuting a security adviser into Gandhinagar will solve nothing. The time for tiptoeing around the problem is long past. Gujarat's continuing crisis calls for some hard measures from the Centre.

The Indian Express, May 8

Religious leaders meet PM, ask for Modi's dismissal

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 2: A delegation of people of all faiths met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee over the Gujarat riots here on Saturday evening.

The delegation, led by Maulana Asad Madani of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, sought a ban on the VHP and Bajrang Dal. They also asked the Prime Minister to dismiss the state government, led by chief minister Narendra Modi, for its partisan attitude and impose President's Rule in the state.

Those who comprised the delegation included Dr. John Dayal from the All-India Catholic Council, Mr. Shamim

Faizl from the CPI, former law minister H.R. Bhargadwaj, eminent human rights activist D.R. Goyal, former chairman of the National Commission for Minorities Tahir Mahmood and Mr. Niaz Ahmed Farooq, from the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind. The delegation sought that the security of the state should be handed over to the Army and the victims of the riots should be given the same amount of compensation as has been given to those killed in the Sabarmati Express massacre. It was also pointed out that peace-makers and relief workers should be allowed to go to Gujarat.

It is learnt that the Prime Minister was also appraised of the statements being

reported in the media on behalf of certain organisations, saying that they be allowed to post armed workers at various railway stations and that they would teach those coming from the Haj a lesson.

The Prime Minister assured them that this will never be allowed to happen.

Those who attended the meeting with Mr. Vajpayee said that while he assured the delegation on the issue of compensation and providing security to the minorities and agreed with them that the madness should be controlled immediately, he did not hint at any action on the state government.

Meanwhile, Anjuman Syedzadgan, the

elected representative body of the hereditary Khadims of the holy shrine of Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti, has passed a resolution condemning "the organised and systematic massacre of innocent Muslims and destruction of their properties and religious places in a savage display of the might of Hindutva."

A statement issued by the Anjuman said, "The Narendra Modi government allowed the fire to spread in tune with the 1984 Sikh massacre in Delhi." The Sabarmati Express massacre was also condemned in the resolution. The Anjuman has postponed the Kul Hind Mashaikh conference on Islam's Message of Peace, scheduled for March 10.

The Asian Age, March 3

Gujarat seeks time for report

New Delhi: The Gujarat government has sought 15 days' time from the National Human Rights Commission to submit its report on the incidents of communal violence in the state and the measures taken to contain them. Gujarat has asked for 15 days time to respond to the Commission's notice issued on March 1, seeking a report on the escalating communal violence and reports of inaction of police and the highest functionaries, NHRC sources said. NHRC will consider Gujarat's plea on March 6. (PTI)

The Asian Age, March 5

Controversy surrounds commission of inquiry

STAVAN DESAI
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 15

THE appointment of Justice K G Shah (retired) to inquire into the Godhra attack on kar sevaks and the state-wide rioting that followed has invited criticism even before he has been allotted an office.

The very next day after the state government appointed Shah's one-man commission of inquiry, a trade union called it "mere mockery".

The March 7 statement from the Hind Kisan-Mazdoor Panchayat's president, P Chidambaram, went on to say "The panchayat is convinced that by appointment of Justice Shah as a commission, the Government of Gujarat is trying to save itself from the sins it has committed."

Given the scale of violence Gujarat saw, and given the allegations that the state government failed to check it — even condoned it, legal experts say the inquiry should have best been left to a judge from another state. Some suggest that the inquiry should have been given to a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court — no less.

But the worst cut for Shah comes from critics who have dug

out a remark made against him by the Supreme Court in 1991 while overturning one of his judgments sentencing five men to death.

The Supreme Court bench had said: "The finding of the judge... is not based on appreciation of evidence but on imagination."

Shah had sentenced five men to death, finding them guilty of burning eight persons to death on

Given the scale of violence Gujarat saw, legal experts say the inquiry should have been left to a judge from another state

June 9, 1985, in the Dabgharwad area of Ahmedabad, during the communal riots which had erupted after the agitation against the state's reservation policy.

Another fact Shah's critics point out is that for two years he has been on the state government's panel of advocates in the Supreme Court. They find this reason to feel that this could warp his inquiry.

Said senior advocate Girish Patel, "The state government can still dissolve the present commission. Moreover, there are no restrictions on the state government as far as appointment of judges is concerned. It could have appointed a retired Supreme Court judge or a retired judge of any other high court."

He added: "The prevailing atmosphere in the state is so vitiated by communal hatred that it is difficult to find a person from the state to conduct an impartial inquiry. And in a scenario where serious allegations are being levelled against the government for its involvement, questions will be raised about the impartiality of the inquiry."

Concurs T U Mehta, a former high court judge: "An outside judge should have been appointed as he would be seen as being above local differences."

But some experts defend Shah. Said P D Desai, a former chief justice of Gujarat High Court: "Being on the panel of advocates cannot be a disqualification as it is not an exclusive job. Shah can also appear against the government. Moreover, a judge convicts on the basis of the evidence and he is not free from error."

The Indian Express, March 16

Gujarat mob attacks NHRC delegation

BY SHRAMANA GANGULY

Ahmedabad, March 20: A delegation of the National Human Rights Commission, on a three-day visit to the state to probe into communal riots in wake of Godhra carnage, was attacked by a mob that allegedly belonged to the Sangh Parivar on Wednesday.

Justice J.S. Verma's car was *gheraoed* inside the premises of Circuit House Annex C around 7 pm after the delegation concluded a meeting with representatives of various non-government organisations.

According to eyewitnesses, saffron-clad activists, about 20-30 in number, *gheraoed* the car as it was about to leave for a visit to one of the relief camps in the city.

"They shouted slogans against the representatives of the commission and demanded that they be heard," said one of the representatives of the NGO.

Human rights activist Father Cedric Prakash, who was also

present on the spot, expressed shock over the incident. "NHRC is a commission that minorities look up to for justice and equality. We are shocked to witness even the NHRC being targeted by unruly mob. What can people of minority communities hope now," he remarked.

Reportedly, the police officials present to look into the security of the delegation were mere onlookers. Tension prevailed for ten minutes.

NHRC chairman of the Gujarat chapter P.G.J. Nam-poodhri told *The Asian Age* that the vehicle transporting the representatives was *gheraoed* by a mob and they demanded to talk to Justice Verma.

When Justice Verma declined to talk to them they blocked the path of the car and raised slogans. No police complaint was filed, said joint commissioner of police sector (II) M.K. Tandon.

When contacted, personal secretary to Justice Verma Y.S.R. Murthy outright denied that such an incident had occurred.

The Asian Age, March 21

5 killed in Ahmedabad, NHRC pulls up govt

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Five people were killed and 19 injured in fresh incidents of violence in the city on Thursday. While two persons were killed in police firing at Kalupur, two others died in a shoot-out between groups and one person was stabbed to death.

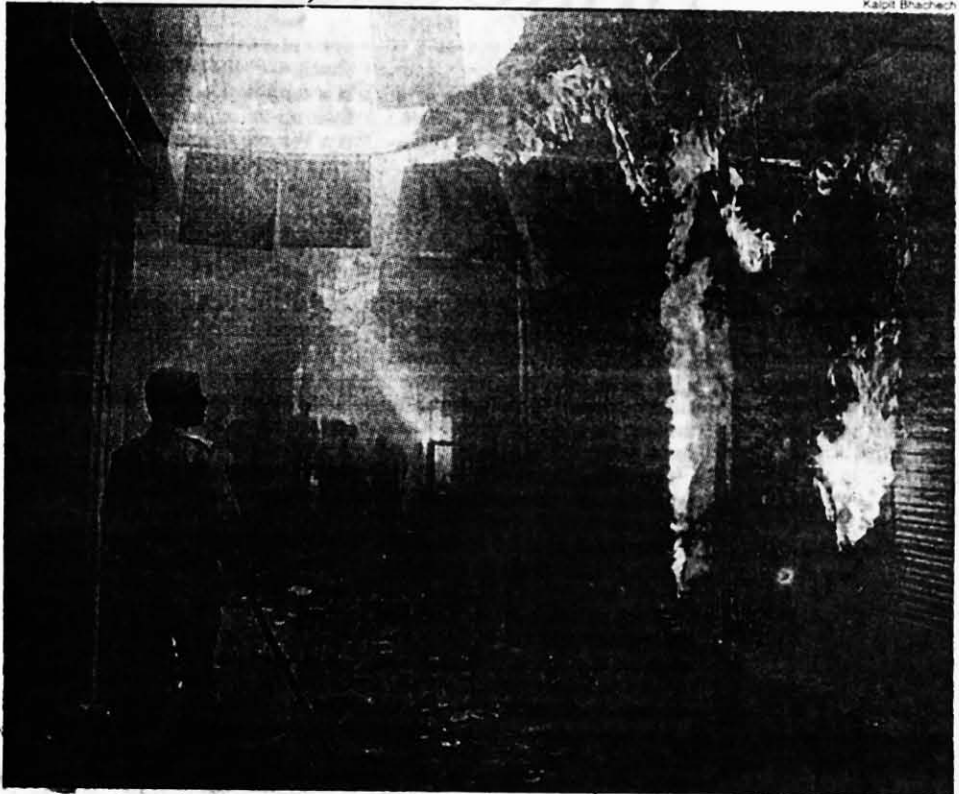
Curfew was clamped on Kalupur after an army jawan was shot in the leg when the forces were trying to keep a raging mob under check. In fact, the police were forced to lob tear-gas shells to bring the situation under control. About 50 shops were burnt down in Revdi Bazaar, the main wholesale textile market in the city. Reports of stabbings and stone-throwing also came in from other parts of the city.

There was also an attempt to burn down an insurance company's office, which forced shops to shut down shutters while panic-stricken people ran helter-skelter.

With the countdown to Moharram beginning, rumour-mongers and rioters kept the police on their toes. The police, however, confirmed that there would be no 'tazia' processions on Monday in view of the communally charged atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday criticised the Gujarat government's handling of the recent riots and said that there was a general feeling of insecurity in the state.

NHRC chairman and retired chief justice of the supreme court Justice J.S. Verma said, "Society at large is not feeling very secure. That should not be so. Normalcy has not yet been restored. That is the general perception." Addressing a press conference, he said that although a preliminary report had been given by the state government, he had sought more information, which was still to be



A home guard official walks past a series of shops that were set on fire by miscreants at the Revdi Bazaar on Thursday.

provided. However, he declined to say if the state had been given a deadline for the information. Declining to state whether he was satisfied with the Narendra Modi government's preliminary report, he only said, "We cannot say what the outcome will be, it will take time. After collecting the information and material, we will study it and then come to a decision."

Dismissing allegations that members of the majority commu-

nity had mobbed the NHRC team on Wednesday as it had ignored them and spent much time and attention with the minority community, Justice Verma said, "We have given as much time as was needed. There was an open house in the afternoon (on Wednesday). But every person cannot expect to meet us individually. We consider what people are saying, how many there are and decide accordingly. The dichotomy that you are trying to draw is not our perception. The

dignity of every individual is more important for us."

Justice Verma said he had taken suo motu cognizance of the reports published in the media.

"The commission is keeping a tab on the shaping of events right from the Godhra incident, which was indeed shameful, the chain reaction that followed and the continuous process. But we will form an opinion only after hearing everyone," he said.

The Times of India, March 22

Gujarat to submit riot report to NHRC chief

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 26: The Gujarat government is likely to submit a comprehensive report on the violence in the state to the National Human Rights Commission after chairperson J.S. Verma expressed his displeasure towards the attitude adopted by the state government.

According to sources, the comprehensive report is expected to reach the commission either on Wednesday. Justice Verma had made it clear on Sunday that the commission would not wait for the state government's report endlessly to issue an order on the issue.

The commission had rejected the preliminary report filed by the state government on the grounds that it had "nothing significant" as it neither dealt with any allegation or any incident.

Justice Verma had stated, "I told him (chief minister Narendra Modi) that I will not wait for more than five days for the final comprehensive report after which the commission will pass orders on the issue."

He had made it clear that "It is not only important to restore confidence and hope amongst the people, but impartial, fair and objective investigations also need to be conducted into the incidents."

Justice Verma had also pointed out that there have been occasions when individuals have got support from people to do something for the victims but the administration has failed to join in.

He had indicted the Gujarat government for its "inefficiency" and "inaction."

If the Gujarat government fails to furnish a comprehensive report, the commission will rely on the material it gathered during the visit of Justice Verma and two other members to the violence-ravaged state last week.

Justice J.S. Verma (Retd.) had said that three weeks are long enough for normalcy to return to the place but it is nowhere to be seen and there is a sense of insecurity among the people at all levels.

He had mentioned in clear terms that if the government could not anticipate and control the incidents, it is nothing but "inefficiency" and "inaction."

NHRC meets to discuss PIL against intervention in Gujarat

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, MARCH 28. The National Human Rights Commission, which met here today, could not consider the "comprehensive" report submitted by the Gujarat Government on the communal violence in the State following the Godhra train carnage.

Commission sources told *The Hindu* that 19 pages were found missing in the report sent by the State Government on Wednesday and after it was pointed out, a copy of the complete report was sent today.

Though some preliminary discussions took place, as the report is in three volumes, the Commission is likely to consider it fully only on April 1.

Meanwhile, the Commission discussed the strategy to be adopted in the public interest litigation petition filed in the Gujarat High Court challenging the NHRC's jurisdiction to intervene in the enquiry when the

State Government had already set up a judicial commission to probe the incidents.

It might be recalled that a similar situation arose in July last when the Tamil Nadu Government raised preliminary objection questioning the jurisdiction of the NHRC when it served notice regarding alleged violation of human rights in the arrest of the DMK president and former Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, and two Union Ministers, Murasoli Maran and T.R. Baalu.

The Tamil Nadu Government took the stand that as it had set up an enquiry commission headed by a retired High Court judge, the NHRC had no right to intervene in the matter.

The Commission passed a detailed order rejecting the State Government's plea for deferring the proceedings for three to four months till the State enquiry commission furnished its report.

On the contrary, the NHRC

said that it would be appropriate for the Justice Raman Commission of enquiry, appointed by the State Government, to defer its probe till the NHRC completed its proceedings.

The NHRC had made it clear that its jurisdiction was excluded only when the subject matter of the enquiry was pending before the "State appointed commission" before the NHRC took cognisance of the same.

Therefore, the NHRC is likely to submit to the Gujarat High Court that it had taken suo motu cognisance of the incidents and had ordered notice to the Gujarat Government prior to the setting up of an enquiry commission and that its jurisdiction could not be ousted.

Sources in the NHRC regretted that its proposal sent to the Union Government two years ago suggesting certain amendments to the Human Rights Protection Act to confer more "teeth" to the Commission is yet to be approved.

The Asian Age, March 29

'Sangh used dalits to attack Muslims in Gujarat riots'

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 6: Dalit leader Udit Raj has accused the Sangh Parivar of forcing and enticing the dalits in Gujarat to fight against the Muslims and thereby give the Gujarat carnage a colour of dalit-Muslim strife.

Mr Raj, who is the national chairman of the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations said, "In some definite localities like Dani Nimada, Gomatipur, Shahpur and Khanpur of Ahmedabad, illiterate, innocent and unemployed dalits were forcibly used against Muslims. Initially they were persuaded to take on the Muslims by enticing them through money, liquor and weapons and when they resisted, other tricks like pressure tactics were applied to force them."

"By the end of the first fortnight in March, things were cooling in Gujarat. But since Gujarat, as a Hindutva laboratory has to rescue the ruling class from crisis, it has to be consolidated by escalating communalism. Under this thinking the second phase of communalism began in the state."

He pointed that the dalits follow the Muslims in the number of casualties.

The Asian Age, April 7

Pamphlets used to provoke Hindus

BY TUSHAR PRABHUNE

Ahmedabad, April 3: Inflammatory literature in the form of pamphlets continues to be circulated in Ahmedabad. Pamphlets urging people to "drive out" members of minority community and "come, let's unite to form a Hindu Rashtra" are being circulated in the Old City areas of Ahmedabad. If pamphlets reading "Jago! Utho! Vicharo! Amal Karo! Desh Bachavo! Dharma bhachavo! Hindustan ko Pakistan mat banne do (Awake! Arise! Implement! Save the nation and religion! Don't let Hindustan turn into Pakistan)" are being used to provoke Hindus, others incite Muslims with messages like, "Masjid banakar rahegi, ham kafiro ko masjid to kya smashan bhee nahi banane denge, har musalman ki khwaish hai (Masjid will be constructed at any cost; Forget the temple, we will not allow construction of a crematorium also by atheists. It is the desire of every Muslim)."

Many leaflets urge Hindus to pledge not to buy anything from Muslim-owned shops and also support the boycott of films starring Muslim actors. According to Intelligence Bureau sources, as many as 20 such pamphlets with provocative literature are reportedly being circulated in predominantly Hindu and Muslim areas.

The Asian Age, April 4

Amnesty gives guidelines for communal violence probe

By RAJEEV KHANNA

New Delhi, April 7: International human rights group Amnesty International has given a memorandum to the Gujarat government outlining the terms of reference for an impartial investigation into the ongoing carnage. It has also called for steps to protect and redress those who have had to flee from their homes.

Amnesty International stated: "Following the recent violence in

Gujarat which targeted the Muslim minority and left at least 700 people dead and over 90,000 displaced, Amnesty International has a memorandum to the government of Gujarat outlining the terms of reference for an impartial investigation, and urging protection and redress for those who have had to flee their homes."

The organisation has pointed out that "as a matter of urgency, the government needs to deliver justice to the victims and protect those

people who have been displaced." "If the government of Gujarat does not investigate promptly, independently and thoroughly, those who perpetrated the violence will remain free to do it again and again," Amnesty International said.

The human rights group stated that the violence in the state is reported to have reached unprecedented levels of brutality. Eyewitnesses and relief workers have suggested that much of the violence was organised and

planned. There are further reports that the administration and the police may have colluded with the attackers.

"Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the situation of displaced people. At least 50,000 people are living in 20 relief camps in Ahmedabad alone and over 40,000 persons are living in camps in other cities. There have also been reports of direct attacks on the camps," the group pointed out.

The Gujarat government has been under attack from various human rights organisations. Two of India's premier commissions, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Minorities Commission, have stated in clear terms that the Gujarat government has failed to perform its duty in protecting the citizens from being killed and rendered homeless.

NHRC has come out most vocally against the government in its

preliminary comments on the role played by the government. It clearly stated that government claims that the situation was brought under control within three days is nothing but a "naive" thought.

It said: "The recent events have resulted in the violation of the fundamental rights to life, liberty, equality and the dignity of citizens of India as guaranteed in the Constitution. And that, above all, is the reason for the continuing concern of the Commission."

The Asian Age, April 8

Human rights activists condemn continued mayhem in Gujarat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
APRIL 8

HUMAN rights activists strongly condemned the genocide being perpetrated on the people of a certain community in Gujarat on April 6. Holding the Central and the Gujarat Government responsible for the continued mayhem, the activists demanded that it fulfil its constitutional and moral obligations by restoring peace and sanity in the state. A resolution to this effect was also passed by the Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) at a public meet it had organised at Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Fort.

Earlier, harsh words were used to criticise Chief Minister Narendra Modi and his attempts to create a wedge between Hindus and Muslims. Renowned columnist and former journalist, Anil

Dharkar, said that Modi ceased to be the head of a state six weeks ago. "Gujarat has gone completely mad. How else can one explain the threats given to a group of citizens for putting up hoardings appealing for peace. We have reached a state where there is a definite offensive even against peace. What do the citizens do? What options do they have? Courts, maybe. I have no answers?," said Dharkar.

Vehemently criticising the Central Government's failure to demonstrate the use of Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) as a weapon to combat terrorism, Rajya Sabha member and activist Shabana Azmi said, "We were told POTO (now POTA) is required to deal with terrorism. Why didn't we then manage to prevent the December 13 attack on the Parliament, the attack on the Jammu and Kashmir assembly and Godhra. We feared that POTO

will be misused like TADA. And then, within 48 hours of the Lok Sabha passing the bill, we found that all those booked under POTA at Godhra were Muslims. As against the 800 people arrested after the Ahmedabad riots. The selective use of POTA is giving a dangerous signal."

Eminent Gastroenterologist Dr H G Desai said that the problem did not start with the Godhra incident but with the rath yatra organised by BJP leader, L K Advani. "Was a rath yatra needed? Common sense tells us that that is the cause of our problems. The fight is not between Hindus and Muslims but between the Gandhian ideology and those who advocate hatred. Men are attacked by men who do not respect the constitution but call themselves 'patriots'. It is time we wake up and not follow Ram/Allah blindly," said Desai.

The Indian Express, April 9

Gujarat sends NHRC riot report

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 15: The National Human Rights Commission on Monday received a report from the Gujarat government which had been sought after the commission gave its preliminary comments on the situation in Gujarat on April 1. The NHRC had strongly indicted the state government of inaction in its comments, and had also made some urgent recommendations on controlling the situation.

However, a similar report which was to be submitted by the Union home secretary is yet to be received and the commission is learnt to have sent a reminder to the ministry of home affairs in this regard. The deadline for submission of the report was Monday.

The commission on April 1, had drawn up the proceedings of its meeting containing some preliminary comments and urgent recommendations which it believed needed to be recorded without delay in national interest. The comments were addressed to the Gujarat government and the Government of India.

A copy of the proceedings with a copy of the report was sent by the secretary-general of the commission to the chief secretary, Gujarat and the home secretary, ministry of home affairs, requesting them for the response or comments of the state government and Government of India within two weeks to enable further consideration of the matter by the commission without any delay.

In view of the visit of the Prime Minister to Gujarat on April 4, and to facilitate his task, a copy of the commission's proceedings and of the report were also sent to him.

MEA wants its missions to say all is well in Gujarat

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 17: Pushed back to the wall by the graphic coverage of the Gujarat violence in the international media and several governments expressing concern over the widespread killings, the ministry of external affairs has asked its missions abroad to spread the message that all is well in the state.

The ministry, echoing what the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders have been saying, has sent a note to the missions in different countries explaining the Gujarat situation.

According to the note, all is well in Gujarat and the state has been functioning normally.

The ministry has substantiated the claim by projecting that the panchayat elections have taken place in the state successfully and lakhs of high school students had appeared in the high school examination.

The MEA spokesperson said even values of shares of some of the government companies were not doing bad.

The "all is well" note to the missions has been sent even when the Parliament proceedings remained stalled for the third consecutive day on Wednesday over the Gujarat issue.

The Opposition parties, various non-governmental groups, the National Human Rights Commission and other organisations have come out with independent reports about the failure of the state government in arresting the violence in the state.

The widespread publicity to the communal carnage has damaged the image of the country. Several governments, including the United States, China and UK, have expressed concern over the situation.

But MEA officials said most of the governments have expressed their understanding of the issues and believe that India has the ability to deal with the aberration.

The Gujarat issue even surfaced during the Parliament proceedings in UK.

The British and the United States governments have been in touch with the Indian leaders on the issue.

The decision to send these notes to the missions was taken after all the embarrassment that the leak of an "internal" report of the British high commission on the Gujarat violence caused.

The report, a section of which appeared in the media, claims that the riots were planned and targeted at the Muslims.

The Asian Age, April 18

The Asian Age, April 16

Gujarat situation is internal affair: MEA

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 22: India on Monday criticised Finland's foreign minister for making adverse remarks on the situation in Gujarat. New Delhi also took strong exception to visiting foreign dignitaries commenting on the "internal affairs" of the country.

Taking an extreme position, New Delhi has criticised visiting foreign dignitaries for using the Indian media to make public statements "in order to pander to their domestic lobbies." The MEA, however, has not explained what these

domestic lobbies were. In the first reaction on a remark made by a foreign dignitary on the Gujarat situation, the MEA has launched a strong protest with the Finnish government. But the reaction comes a bit late as the Finnish foreign minister is not the only person to have commented on the Gujarat situation. The US assistant secretary of state for south Asian affairs who was in New Delhi earlier this month had described the violence in the state as "horrible."

The Finnish foreign minister, Mr Erkki Tuomioja, who visited New Delhi last week, had commented in

an interview to a newspaper that the situation in Gujarat was regrettable and described the "picture of carnage disturbing." India has officially launched its protest over the remarks.

An MEA statement, which was a reaction to the Finnish foreign minister but made a general observation, said: "We would like to make it clear that India does not appreciate interference in our internal affairs including utilisation of the Indian media by foreign leaders as well as by visiting dignitaries to make public statements in order to pander to their domestic

lobbies." Using the Finnish foreign minister's statement, the MEA has tried to include the reactions from other foreign dignitaries. The Gujarat situation has caused considerable embarrassment to the foreign office with several government's condemning the incident. Finland is an important member of the influential European Union which too has prepared a report on the Gujarat violence.

The MEA official said that India was capable of handling the "complex" situation and would not like interference from the international community on the issue.

The Asian Age, April 23

Gujarat riot case is headed for The Hague

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
Times News Network

LONDON: Mohammed Aswat, a UK citizen of Indian origin, was dragged out of his car and killed by a mob at Prantij in Gujarat while travelling from Agra to Ahmedabad. Until now, the Indian government has failed to send even a letter of condolence to his family. His wife and five children have stopped waiting for any such gestures. They are now going to the international court at The Hague in search of justice.

Mr Aswat is said to have been known to the Indian high commission officials here as a regular helper at their visa surgeries in west Yorkshire. Indian officials confirmed that they recalled "a Mohammed bhai, who used to help control the crowds and settle people at the visa surgeries".

Mr Aswat's family and friends, who are preparing to file a murder case here against the Gujarat gov-

'A thoroughly-researched document will be presented to the British government to take up at the International Court of Justice'

ernment, say the body of "water-tight evidence against the state machinery" is building up well.

On Monday, a spokeswoman for the British foreign office said, "We have not been approached by the families of the British nationals and are not involved at the moment in any legal matter. That is for the families and their lawyers."

Vipul Thakker, a senior human rights lawyer, said, "a thoroughly-researched document will be presented to the British government to take up at the International Court of Justice," adding that the filing of the document was only a formality as they had already been given the green signal.

On Monday, the British government's reluctance to admit its alleged support for West Yorkshire's Gujarati Muslims did not surprise them. They felt that their reaction was stronger when two Christians were killed in India long back. But pressure from Muslims in the UK has forced the government to come out with strong statements.

Britain's foreign secretary Jack Straw, who had initially tried to wash his hands off the case by telling angry Muslims that he "was not the foreign minister of India", later issued three strong statements condemning the violence.

INDIA Kant allows RS discussion on Gujarat under Rule 170

Keep off Gujarat, it's internal issue, says MEA

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, April 24: The face-off between the Indian government and the foreign missions here turned official on Wednesday with the foreign office issuing a one-page statement accusing the "foreign countries and missions" of "injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate in the country and creating an impression of playing a partisan role."

The strong words used by the foreign office have not cut ice with the diplomats here who refuse to accept the "internal matter" argument on Gujarat as a basis for reconsidering a European Union-mooted proposal to issue a demarche on the violence that has taken a heavy toll of lives in Gujarat. Interestingly, the international criticism has not been led by the Arab nations, as was expected by the government here, but by the developed countries who have prepared detailed reports of the violence for the basis of future action.

The Indian foreign office virtually attacked the missions for interfering with what it claimed was a "vigorous democratic debate going on in our country, at all levels of Indian society, on the situation in

Gujarat by deliberately leaking their internal reports or making substantive political comments on the subject." It also pointed out that the interference was not only contradictory to well-established norms of diplomacy but also "injurious to the friendly relations that exist between India and the EU as well as individual European countries identified in the press as sources of leaks and political interference."

The official reaction to media reports in itself is unprecedented with the criticism from missions here obviously carrying a disconcerting sting. Foreign office efforts to still the criticism have failed with the envoys representing different governments concerned about the nature of the violence in Gujarat. Senior officials who met a large section of the envoys posted here to explain the government's view were not able to convincingly answer counter-questions and doubts raised by the intensity of the violence in Gujarat and the state government's involvement. It is now being pointed out by the diplomats that India has shown no such reticence when

campaigning against "racial" intolerance in Fiji, or directing Bangladesh to be more sensitive to the rights of its minorities.

India, the sources said, is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and required to make detailed representations before its human rights committee every five years at New York or Geneva. Three attorney-generals, Mr. K. Parsaran, Mr. G. Ramaswamy and Mr. Ashok H. Desai, had appeared on

SPOTLIGHT

behalf of the Indian government before the committee. The point being made, the sources explained, was that human rights violations in any country were not an internal matter and the government concerned was answerable to the international community.

The BJP-led government has also taken a strong position on Fiji with the Foreign Office issuing regular statements on the situation there, particularly through the year 2000. One such statement reads,

But it's not just an internal matter, counter envoys

"India attaches very high importance to the creation and sustenance of racial harmony in Fiji and to the restoration of a non-racial, democratic constitutional government in accordance with the 1977 Constitution." Citing the proactive role being played by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, the European Union and the Pacific Forum, the foreign office observed that it would "cooperate closely with its partners and friends in the international community" on this front.

The sources pointed out that the government had also taken a strong position on minority rights in Bangladesh. Replying to a question in Parliament, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh had said in November last year: "A number of incidents have been reported of attacks on the life and property of the minorities, molestation of the women members of their families as also of damage and destruction of puja pandals and temples. According to the Bangladesh media, the scale and intensity of the violence were unprecedented." He went on to add, "After

the new government assumed power in Bangladesh on October 10, 2001, the government of India's serious concern was conveyed at different levels. The high commissioner of India to Bangladesh raised the issue with the Bangladesh minister of state for religious affairs on October 16, 2001. Shri Brajesh Mishra, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, who visited Dhaka as his special envoy on October 26-27, 2001, also discussed the matter with the Bangladesh government."

It has been made clear by senior envoys to the Indian foreign office that serious violations of human rights, as witnessed in Gujarat, are not considered an internal matter by the international community. A senior envoy minced no words when he said, "Matters here are terrible and we hope that the violence will end soon and the guilty placed on trial." The National Human Rights chairman, Justice J S Verma, recently addressed the United Nations Commission for Human Rights at Geneva where he directed attention to his report and the recommendations "to bring to justice those responsible for the violations of the rights that have occurred and to ameliorate the suffering of those who are the victims."

The Asian Age, April 25



ON PATROL: The police patrols the banks of the Sabarmati river, which was used as a route by rioters, in Ahmedabad on Friday. (PTI)

Meet to discuss Gujarat rights violations

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 27: The instances of human rights violations in Gujarat and the implementation of laws like the Prevention of Terrorism Act will be some of the key issues that will come up for discussion at a meeting of chief secretaries and director generals of police of various states being organised by the National Human Rights Commission here on April 30.

NHRC is holding a meeting of chief secretaries and DGPs of all states on Tuesday which will be preceded by a meeting of the Special Rapporteurs and Special Representatives of the Commission from different states and Union territories on April 29.

The meetings are likely to discuss the functioning of Human Rights Cells that have been set-up in the offices of DGPs of all

Minority youth has hardline plans

Ahmedabad, April 27: Faced with uncertainty over the return to normal life, a large number of the minority youth in relief camps appear to be in a militant mood and have reportedly floated an outfit with hardline plans.

The state police and intelligence agencies have gathered inputs on the formation of the nascent outfit Lashkar-e-Khalideen and have quickly reported the matter to the Centre, sources said.

"There is a planned guerrilla agenda Because they believe fight can be given to the majority community only by a sustained guerrilla system," said the report. (PTI)

states and Special Areas Security Act Bills. Those attending the meeting will also have discussions on atrocities on minorities and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Another important issue which will be taken up by the participants is the compliance of directions of the commission by the states.

The matter of jail reforms including overcrowding in jails, regular inspection of jails, mentally ill prisoners, custodial deaths and rapes will also come up for discussions at the meet. NHRC has been issuing directions at regular intervals on all these issues.

The meeting will also discuss issues of economic, social and cultural rights like trafficking, bonded labour, child labour, rights of the disabled, manual scavenging, problems of denotified and nomadic tribes, child marriages and registration of marriages.

'Human rights is state responsibility'

By Our Correspondent

New Delhi, April 30: The chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice J.S. Verma (Retd), reiterated once again that it is the duty of the state to ensure the protection of the human rights of its citizens. He pointed out that the state is responsible for not only the violation of human rights by the state agents but also the factors within its jurisdiction.

Justice Verma addressed participants after the conclusion of the meeting of chief secretaries and director generals of police of various states that was organised by the NHRC here. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the special rapporteurs and special representatives of the commission from different states and Union Territories on Monday. The chairperson said the commission is discharging its responsibility of facilitating the discharge of their duties.

Without making any particular references, he further stated that secularism is a faith to which

Indians are committed to not only by the Constitution but through the ages. "We, as a pluralist society, are an example for the entire world. Without diluting anyone's identity we come together to constitute the main stream," he said while adding that it is a unique fabric which the state must preserve. He asked the officials present to improve the quality of governance and pointed out that the human rights record will improve automatically.

Justice Verma said that individual dignity and national security go hand in hand. "Let us not be led by the global frenzy into thinking that national security is inconsistent with individual dignity," he said.

Earlier, in his inaugural address, he said that the main purpose of the meeting was to share the experiences and problems faced by both the states and the commission in performing their task and to make collaborated efforts for greater effectiveness. Justice Verma stated that the emerging principle of jurisprudence, universal-

ly accepted, is that the state is primarily responsible for all action and inaction on the part of not only the state actors and players but also the non-state players in civil society resulting in the violation of human rights. Good governance, he said, is the only answer to violation or threat of violation to human rights.

The main issues discussed in the course of the day-long meeting were the functioning of human rights cells set up in all states, Special Area Security Acts and bills, atrocities on minorities and SCs and STs, compliance of directions for payment of compensation and disciplinary action issued by the commission, human rights situation in jails, overcrowding in jails, regular inspection of jails, mentally ill prisoners, custodial deaths and rape.

The other issues that were discussed included manual scavenging, problems of denitrified tribes and nomadic tribes, state-wise review of child and bonded labour situations by the NHRC.

The Asian Age, May 1

Strife-torn Gujarat may lose Rs 1,800 cr investment

JANYALA SREENIVAS
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 14

GUJARAT faces the risk of losing at least Rs 1,800 crore in investment, both foreign and domestic. With reports and pictures of the recent arson and violence flashed across the world, Gujarat has lost its image as a peaceful state, conducive for investment and growth.

"Not only foreign investors are reconsidering their options, but potential domestic investors have also paused to think," says Director of Confederation of Indian Industry Dipankar Roy.

In a recent meeting of members of Western Regional Council of the CII, which includes Maharashtra, MP, Goa, and Gujarat, it emerged that "exporters have been left in the lurch, international commitments have gone haywire, our credibility has been damaged," says Roy. Many CII members felt that the violence was "the final straw after high electricity tariffs in the state and last year's earthquake."

Amit Goradia, chairman of FICCI's Gujarat State Council, says the world now sees Gujarat in a negative light and urgent remedial measures are required to undo the



damage. On Monday, top executives of several Gujarat-based Indo-British and Indo-US firms flew to the UK and the US to "re-assure clients that all commitments will be met and work schedules stuck to. They fear contracts will not be renewed, and fresh orders delayed," says a senior member of the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce.

Facing the heat are at least 500 joint venture firms, mainly into software development, manufacture of parts and components, and infrastructure projects at Poshitra, Dahaj, Palej, Hazira and Pipavav, sources said. Samsung and LG, which were already hesitant because the state budget wasn't very attractive, are now considering

new options.

Principal Secretary, Industry and Mines, L. Mansingh, admits, "There is a degree of apprehension among foreign investors and firms considering investments in Gujarat. Our USP has been the image of a peace-loving, culturally harmonious state; it has taken a beating. The burning of Opel Astras near Halol has not been lost on the world, nor the fact that General Motors had to shut down its plant fearing attacks."

Foreign firms with interests in Gujarat have got in touch with the Industry Ministry, expressing their concern. "We are holding meetings and teleconferences with investors, NRIs and firms. We are trying our best to reassure them that this is an aberration and things will normalise soon," Mansingh says. Vishnu Varshney, president of the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce, says clients and partners in several projects and businesses were shaken by the violence. "The reaction was inevitable. We may lose contracts due to the apprehension that commitments will not be met or the quality of work will suffer," he says.

Several investments have been made in Gujarat based on calculation that this is the best state vis a vis law and order. "This has taken a major beating. Several of our members have raised this issue and they categorically said they were disappointed with what is happening," says Varshney, who is also the head of Gujarat Venture Finance Limited.

Roy believes that while local industry may limp back to normal, attracting new investment especially from NRIs, NRCs and foreign firms is going to be difficult — an opinion shared by Varshney who says even non-resident Gujaratis will now shy away from putting their money here.

Sources in Industrial Extension Bureau (Indexb), which organised the Resurgent Gujarat meet a few weeks ago, say many of the deals that were being negotiated have already fallen through. Industries Commissioner Hasmukh Adhiya is the only person who sounds optimistic. "This is a temporary setback. Ultimately investors will consider several other positive factors that Gujarat has, like well-equipped ports, an investor-friendly bureaucracy and the general law and order situation. Investors may pause, but that will be only for a while," Adhiya says.

The Indian Express, March 15

6 lakh rendered jobless in riot-affected Gujarat

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 28

NO *chulhas* burn at the Achabhai Nilli ni Chawli in Saraspur. And residents, primarily vegetable vendors and those working in junkyards who are jobless courtesy the riots, say that ever since February 28, they have been lucky to have got one meal a day.

"There are many households where food is not cooked even once," says Manjuben Kantiben Patni, a vegetable vendor, pointing to the cold *chulha* in her compound. The chawli, with more than 1000 households, was attacked during the riots. Since then, the residents haven't dared to step out their houses, surviving on the rare handout or the odd menial job that comes their way.

Raghubhai Raibambhai Patni, from the chawli, says a voluntary organisation had given them a kilogram of flour. "We used the flour for a couple of days but that fin-

ished too. Today, we are ready to stand in the sun all day long and beg for Rs 5," he says.

"The area where we put up our stalls is sensitive and that's why

For daily wage-earners it is a substantial loss, say trade union leaders

none of us has had the courage to go and sell vegetables. For the past 40 days, we have been sitting idle with nothing to eat," says Gilaben Ratnabhai Patni, a 65-year-old vegetable vendor whose 20-year-old son Tarun Patni was shot dead on February 28. Ever since the riots broke out the Hindu community hasn't dared to go to the nearby junkyards which are run by the minority community. "We work in the iron junkyard opposite the

chawli but haven't been able to go to work for the past 40 days. I have tried getting whatever work I can get but we are scared to step out of our area," says Chunnibhai Parmar. It's not just a personal tragedy for daily wagers but a substantial economic loss.

An estimate chalked out by trade union leaders and members of Solidarity Centre, a voluntary organisation, put the number of workers rendered unemployed by the riots at almost six lakh.

"This is a conservative figure that we arrived at after discussions with several trade unions. However, we plan to carry out a detailed survey in the near future," says the Solidarity Centre member. "The labour class has been affected during these riots. It is these people who have died and are now deprived of food. But neither the government nor other agencies have realised this," says Hausala Prasad Mishra of Kaamdaar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal (KSSM).

The Indian Express, April 24

6 lakh rendered jobless in riot-affected Gujarat

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 28

NO *chulhas* burn at the Achabhai Nilli ni Chawli in Saraspur. And residents, primarily vegetable vendors and those working in junkyards who are jobless courtesy the riots, say that ever since February 28, they have been lucky to have got one meal a day.

"There are many households where food is not cooked even once," says Manjuben Kantiben Patni, a vegetable vendor, pointing to the cold *chulha* in her compound. The chawli, with more than 1000 households, was attacked during the riots. Since then, the residents haven't dared to step out their houses, surviving on the rare handout or the odd menial job that comes their way.

Raghubhai Raibambhai Patni, from the chawli, says a voluntary organisation had given them a kilogram of flour. "We used the flour for a couple of days but that fin-

ished too. Today, we are ready to stand in the sun all day long and beg for Rs 5," he says.

"The area where we put up our stalls is sensitive and that's why

For daily wage-earners it is a substantial loss, say trade union leaders

none of us has had the courage to go and sell vegetables. For the past 40 days, we have been sitting idle with nothing to eat," says Gilaben Ratnabhai Patni, a 65-year-old vegetable vendor whose 20-year-old son Tarun Patni was shot dead on February 28. Ever since the riots broke out the Hindu community hasn't dared to go to the nearby junkyards which are run by the minority community. "We work in the iron junkyard opposite the

chawli but haven't been able to go to work for the past 40 days. I have tried getting whatever work I can get but we are scared to step out of our area," says Chunnibhai Parmar. It's not just a personal tragedy for daily wagers but a substantial economic loss.

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The Indian Express, April 24

Condemning a carnage

T.K. RAJALAKSHMI

in New Delhi

THE attacks on the Muslim community in Gujarat and the passive role the State and Central governments played have evoked protest not only among political parties but among various sections of society. The nature of the violence was such that it drew outraged citizens to the streets.

The outpouring of protest against the Bharatiya Janata Party, which rules both at the Centre and in Gujarat, drew attention yet again to the growth of right-wing fanaticism and the need to fight it politically. Large sections of the Muslim community, who had stood with the government in the aftermath of December 13, were angered by the virtually state-sponsored carnage in Gujarat. Students, teachers, journalists and even the working class joined hands in protest and stated in unequivocal terms that the violence in Gujarat was not acceptable even if it was triggered by the horrifying incident at Godhra on February 27. That both incidents were deplored in equal terms was clear from slogans such as "*Godhra ho ya Ahmedabad, sampradaya-ka ho barbad*" (condemn communalism in both Godhra and Ahmedabad).

It was appalling to see the State and Central governments looking for excuses to defend the post-Godhra violence. Mediapersons who brought out the horror were accused of behaving irresponsibly by none other than Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, while he gave Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi a clean chit. It appeared as if the media were acceptable as long as it fought the government's patriotic war, but not when it seemingly transgressed government-set boundaries to expose a pogrom in a BJP-ruled State. This further prompted mediapersons from prominent newspaper organisations to come out in solidarity against the carnage.

The murderous retaliation had just begun in Gujarat when seven national women's organisations and several bodies of teachers and students organised a dharna outside Gujarat Bhavan in New Delhi on March 2. The previous day a candle-light vigil was held at Rajghat by several groups, including women's organisations,

the All India Federation of Trade Unions, and the Coalition For Nuclear Disarmament and Peace, where the Godhra episode and the revenge killings were condemned.

In spite of a drizzle, the dharna went on for two hours. Speaker after speaker stressed the need to stand up to the atrocities perpetrated by organised gangs with state patronage. Led by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), the National Federation of Indian Women, the Centre for Women's Development Studies, the Joint Women's Programme, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the All India Women's Conference, the Muslim Women's Forum, Nirantar, Saheli, Sama, Jagori, the women's unit of the Indian Social Institute, and others, the meeting demanded the deployment of the Army in the State. Pointing out that women and children were the worst sufferers, they demanded the setting up of an independent panel to expose the real perpetrators of the carnage. Significantly, even women not associated with any organisation joined the protest. A two-minute silence was observed to mourn the death of innocents.

On March 4, hundreds of journalists, academicians and students took out a march in the national capital, condemning the carnage, the negligence of the State government and the attacks on the media. Prominent among them were authors Khushwant Singh and Arundhati Roy, columnist B.G. Verghese, *Frontline* Editor N. Ram, *The Times of India* Executive Managing Editor Dileep Padgaonkar, veteran Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande, *The Asian Age* bureau chief Seema Mustafa, senior journalist Amit Sen Gupta of *The Hindustan Times*, *Nai Duniya* Editor Shahid Siddiqui and *Mainstream* Editor Sumit Chakravarty. The meeting was supported by the Delhi Union of Journalists, Janwadi Lekhak Sangh and the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union. The speakers condemned the Narendra Modi government for its abdication of responsibility during the carnage and took strong exception to its attempt to blame the media for "inciting violence".

While Padgaonkar said that the march was an expression of solidarity among the media and that the media had

come out in flying colours for its coverage of the carnage, N. Ram demanded the resignation of the Modi government and pointed out that though the situation could have easily been brought under control by the State government, it had chosen to allow violence to continue unabated for two days. Slogans were raised denouncing the carnage and demanding a ban on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

The same day, hundreds of teachers, students and *karamcharis* of Delhi University organised a march calling for a ban on the VHP, the resignation of the Gujarat government and action against members of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) students who spread terror in the university during the VHP-sponsored bandh on March 1. Students had walked the corridors of the Arts department, wielding lathis, swords and tridents, shouting communal slogans and trying to disrupt classes. The VHP's bandh call proved to be a damp squib.

The Left parties gave a call to observe March 6 as National Unity Day. Thousands of people in various parts of the country came out on the streets to hold meetings, protests and demonstrations. The same day, teachers from across the country, under the banner of the All India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations and the Federation of Central Universities Teachers' Associations, marched to the Parliament House protesting against the government policies on higher education as well as against the Gujarat carnage.

There were violent reactions to some protests. In Ahmedabad, a hundred-strong mob forced students and faculty from three city-based institutions – the National Institute of Design, the Indian Institute of Management and the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology – to call off their protest. They had undertaken a token fast but it had to be called off as some of them were threatened. Their placards were burnt and some of them beaten by VHP activists.

On March 9, at a meeting on the role of the state and the media and ensuing violence in Gujarat prominent journalists condemned the killings and reiterated that the media had not behaved irresponsibly but had highlighted the horrors taking place while the government remained inert and impassive. The horror of the killings as reported in the media has succeeded in evoking a strong public reaction against Hindu right-wing forces. ■

The kar sevaks were belligerent but no provocation

By PRIYANKA KAKODKAR in Godhra

GODHRA has always had an unsavoury reputation. Now it's become notorious. Situated nearly 150 km from Ahmedabad, those travelling there are advised not to disclose their destination. The township in Panchmahal district itself is a clean, fairly well managed one with a population of two lakh. The houses are concrete structures with narrow lanes branching out from the one main road that runs through the town.

Days after the torching of the Sabarmati Express, Godhra now has the look of a ghost town. It remains edgy, and has evidently still not shaken off the shock of February 27 which triggered off one of the worst communal riots witnessed in Gujarat. When the *Outlook* team visited the nondescript town, a man was nearly stoned to death a mere half an hour after curfew was lifted. More than 40 people have already been killed in the rioting in this communally volatile town.

Godhra has always had a history of violent communal clashes. Hindu and Muslim communities live in equally populous, sharply segregated quarters. The backward Ghachi community forms the majority of the Muslim population here. Ghachis are viewed with suspicion, not only by the Hindus but also by the higher caste Muslims. Godhra has witnessed communal clashes in 1948, 1965, 1980, 1990 and 1992, local officials say. In 1980, the town was placed under curfew for an entire year following communal clashes.

The divide between the communities is pretty sharp here. In the Hindu-dominated areas, people are accepting of higher caste Muslims but not the Ghachi community. "They are all *chur log, rakshas*," says Natwarlal Mansukh Parmar, who lives on MG Road. "They've been responsible for creating communal problems throughout the history of Godhra. They do *number do ka business*," he alleges.

Rumours abound about the community's links with Pakistan. Many say the Ghachi community in Godhra arrived after fleeing Pakistan during Partition. The area had seen violent riots in 1947-48 when the new settlers arrived. Says a Hindu resident: "The area is known as mini-Pakistan. People keep coming and going from here to Karachi on the trains. They even have Pakistani maulvis in their madrassas."

The Muslim community, located in the Signal Falia slums close to the railway tracks where the incident occurred, refuses to speak. However, Muslims in other pockets say the relationship between the communities has been steadily worsening. "We didn't have riots here for the last ten years but tensions were simmering. We live totally separately here, like Hindustan-Pakistan," says Siraj Mansoor, a driver. "We heard that the kar sevaks had behaved badly with women on the train and that's why people reacted."

Official investigations suggested last week that the attack was not a meticulously planned strike, as alleged by some senior BJP leaders. Rather, it appears to be a spontaneous retaliation by the Muslim populace in the area to news of consistent acts of provocation by kar sevaks aboard the Sabarmati Express for several hours before it reached the small town.

According to eyewitness accounts, later confirmed by Ahmedabad police officials, kar sevaks aboard the ill-fated train had been misbehaving with Muslim passengers and vendors. Says an official: "Several Muslim passengers had been forced to chant Jai Shri Ram



JUST LIKE HINDU

Godhra has long been on the trouble-map, but the Sabarmati Express massacre may not have been a premeditated ambush

by the kar sevaks during the journey. At one station, Muslim passengers had even been forced to disembark. We also heard that they misbehaved with women passengers."

Hundreds of kar sevaks had boarded the train, most of them travelling unreserved. As the train moved towards Godhra, the situation worsened. The kar sevaks apparently refused to pay for refreshments obtained from Muslim platform vendors at Raftam and Dahod stations. There were also rumours that a local dargah at Dahod had been demolished by kar sevaks. The rumour reached Godhra through the largely Muslim population of tea vendors at the stations. By the time the train pulled into Godhra early in the morning, the mood was already tense.

At Godhra itself, eyewitnesses speak of another scuffle at the railway station, once again between the kar sevaks and vendors on the platform. But the final act of provocation occurred minutes after the train pulled out and reached the Muslim-dominated Signal Falia slum. Official sources say kar sevaks aboard the train pulled a Muslim woman washing clothes near the tracks into the train. This created an uproar and a passenger pulled the chain. By the time the train stopped, a mob had already gathered at the spot.

But whatever the provocation, responsible Muslim leaders point out that the torching of the Sabarmati Express cannot be justified. Many senior leaders of the community as well as the opposition have condemned the gruesome attack which claimed 57 lives. The

on could justify the gruesomeness of the act.



Godhraites (from far left) driver Mansoor, Parmar, a reclusive Muslim family: ghettoed minds

This goes against the state government's view that the Sabarmati Express massacre was a pre-planned attack, possibly linked to Pakistani terrorists. The arrest of the Godhra municipality president Mohamad Hussain Kalota and several other councillors on March 3 is being considered a major breakthrough in the case. Haji Bilal, one of Kalota's associates who is currently absconding, has been declared another prime accused in the case. While Kalota does not have a previous criminal record, Bilal has a criminal history and used to be a part of Ahmedabad don Latif's gang. The anti-terrorist squad posted at Godhra says both Kalota and Bilal have a history of stoking communal tension in the area.

Kalota's arrest stirred a hornet's nest, with both the Congress and the BJP declaring that he belonged to the other. In reality, Kalota is an independent who won the presidency of the municipal council with Congress support. According to local administration sources, the Congress had initially supported Kalota's BJP opponent Raju Darji who won the presidency in 2000. However, last year, it

STAN-PAKISTAN'

brutal manner in which men, women and children were torched cannot find place in any civilised society, feels the Muslim clergy.

Local residents say it wouldn't have been difficult for a large crowd to assemble in a matter of minutes. The Signal Falia slum lies close to the tracks and the largely Muslim populace was already restive since reports of the earlier incidents had already reached the area. The woman's abduction was apparently the final spark.

The mob was armed with stones, petrol and kerosene. They apparently began the attack by stoning the train and later setting fire to a mattress dragged from a nearby house. They also set fire to the rubber flooring of the passageway between the two ill-fated bogies.

threw its weight behind Kalota enabling him to become the president. Kalota is supported by several independent councillors affiliated to him. Some of them are now suspects in the Godhra case.

While the perpetrators of the horrific tragedy must be severely punished, it is unclear whether the investigation is proceeding along politically neutral lines. A judicial inquiry into the Godhra incident and the communal riots that followed has been ordered by the state government. As for the residents of Godhra, each has a theory but no one has any evidence to prove what actually caused the incident. Looks like the ghosts of February 27 will haunt Godhra for some years to come. ■



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End the butchery, sack Modi

The pogrom in Gujarat spells this nation's descent into unalloyed barbarism. It can only end if Modi is sent packing and Vajpayee shaken out of his smug complicity by the Opposition.

NARENDRA Milosevic Modi. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh *pracharak* has emerged as the deadliest purveyor of communal poison in "Hindutva's laboratory", Gujarat. As the official death toll exceeds 650, the Godhra incident, terrible as it was, pales into the shadow. Mortal fear, insecurity and hatred stalk Gujarat as the wave of violence shifts to villages from the big cities.

What has been in progress in Gujarat since February 28 is not a communal altercation or riot, or as much of the media calls it with an air of neutrality, "violence". It is a *veritable pogrom, a systematic, targeted massacre of a religious minority*, with the full complicity, consent and direct involvement of the state, and a good chunk of Gujarat's power elite. The lacerations and deep wounds inflicted by the pogrom are unlikely to heal soon. The images of people, real flesh-and-blood human beings, being burnt alive, speared or quartered and dismembered into small bits, will haunt us for a long, long time to come.

Only a thorough, impartial and credible inquiry can establish just what led to the gory Godhra incident in which 58 people were charred to death by a mob. This must investigate who was responsible for setting fire to the coaches of the Sabarmati Express on February 27, and determine the cause of failure of the intelligence agencies.

No such inquiry can ignore the relevant background: increasing harassment of Indian Muslims since September 11 and especially since December 13, and their maligning as the principal perpetrators or sympathisers of terrorism; growing communalisation of Gujarat's society; the desperate tactics of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its associates in launching the incendiary temple-building campaign in Ayodhya just as the party faced an ignominious electoral defeat in four States; the mobilisation of thousands of kar sevaks from Gujarat; and their movement by rail, and the many instances of verbal abuse and manhandling of Muslims by them, reported in Faizabad's *Janmorcha* news-

paper.

None of these constitutes a valid "provocation" for horrible and gratuitous acts such as burning people alive. But they highlight the intelligence failure and warrant a serious investigation into the calculations behind the Godhra incident, and its actual organisation and execution on February 27.

However, unlike the unknowns in Godhra, there is little about its far bloodier aftermath that is in doubt, in particular the elaborate planning and preparations that had taken place well in advance of February 27, including the stockpiling of firearms, swords and trishuls. Already, there is overwhelming evidence of the involvement of agencies of the state in the calibrated escalation of violence, which began barely 24 hours after the Godhra incident. Consider the following information gathered through extended conversations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and eyewitnesses in Gujarat, and through the media:

- ★ During the crucial interval between Godhra and the first targeted attacks on Muslims, the police failed, despite mounting reports of the coming "Hindu backlash", to go through the routine drill they have been trained to carry out for over 100 years, including special patrolling, rounding up "bad characters" and communal goondas, setting up meetings of *mohalla* and residential colony representatives, and so on.

- ★ Early on, Narendra Modi gave out unambiguous signals that he did not want preventive action. He discouraged tough police measures even *after* the Hindutva-spouting hordes launched their campaign of arson and murder.

- ★ In countless instances, the police stood about and watched as Hindutva hooligans went about looting, burning and killing. Many officers deliberately delayed despatching

BEYOND THE OBVIOUS



PRAFUL BIDWAI

constables or summoning the fire brigade when Muslim localities came under attack – as a means of letting the "natural reaction" (read, extreme anti-Muslim hatred) work itself out. Soon, sections of the police themselves were accused of participating in these crimes.

- ★ After the first major day of violence, in which 150 people were murdered in gory ways, Modi expressed "full satisfaction" with the working of the police and the law-and-order

machinery. This was a loud and clear message that the very apex of the state would remain complicit in the pogrom.

- ★ Mobs of the Hindutva hooligans specifically and accurately targeted Muslim homes, buildings and shops – on the basis of the electoral rolls provided by the municipal or State election authorities.

- ★ By the time George Fernandes visited Ahmedabad – and his convoy was attacked – the anti-minorities trend of the violence was clear. It was also clear that the Army would *not* be deployed in the proper sense of the term. It belatedly sent about 500 men to stage flag marches in different localities. The delay would lead to hundreds of avoidable deaths. The State government, and its district officials, failed to request the Army in time to assist the civil authority in the maintenance of law and order.

- ★ The Ahmedabad Police Commissioner (P.C. Pandey) made unacceptable and lame excuses for the partisan attitude of the police, saying that what happens in the larger society was "bound to affect it". Senior officers did not dare discharge their duty in conformity with the Constitution and protect the life and property of all citizens in an impartial manner.

- ★ Muslim High Court Judges and senior police officers had to go into hiding because the state failed to provide them even minimal protection against the

marauding mobs.

- ★ The bestiality of the methods of killing has left lakhs of people utterly traumatised.

- ★ The police themselves burned down the office of an NGO engaged in promoting communal harmony and reconciliation.

- ★ The moneyed elite of Ahmedabad indulged in looting posh shops. Some of them financed the salaries of the trishul-wielding youth who joined the unprecedentedly large, 5,000 to 15,000-strong mobs organised by the extremist Hindutva organisations.

- ★ At the end of the first week of the pogrom, there were reports of mistreatment of the 65,000 people who fled their homes for the safety of ill-equipped refugee camps. Vehicles carrying essential supplies to them were attacked.

- ★ Narendra Modi shamelessly kept repeating his claim that the pogrom was only a "natural reaction" to Godhra, and further asserted that his actions had the full approval of the Prime Minister, to whom "I speak four times a day."

THE Central government, on its part, endorsed Modi's actions and decisions and was complicit in one of the worst episodes of organised, unspontaneous communal violence in our history. Home Minister L.K. Advani did not bother to visit Gujarat, from where he was repeatedly elected an MP, for the first 100 hours; he finally made a short, tokenist, visit. Vajpayee broadcast a pitiful and parsimonious address to the nation, in which he did not even promise to protect the life and property of the Muslims of Gujarat, or to punish those guilty of unspeakable brutality and inhuman crimes.

This state-sponsored communal violence systematically targeted at a religious minority is what gives the butchery in Gujarat a special, sordid, terrifying, character. What has been accomplished qualitatively by the Hindu Right exceeds the bestiality behind the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 and, in some ways, the Bombay riots of 1992-93. In neither of these episodes was the involvement of the State government so direct, proactive and comprehensive. Nor was the Central government's conduct nearly as reprehensible.

For Gujarat's religious minorities, Modi's rule is no different from what Slobodan Milosevic's reign was for Serbia's ethnic minorities. Modi's government must be sacked. Its rule is incompatible with fundamental rights – including rights to life and liberty – guar-



On February 28 in Ahmedabad, where mobs specifically targeted Muslim homes, buildings and shops.

anteed by the Constitution. This is not a party-political demand, but a prerequisite of democracy. Gujarat's civil society organisations see no other way out of the present crisis. Nothing can justify the continuation of a government which so abjectly – and brazenly – violates the right to life of millions of its citizens.

Advani too has lost the moral authority to remain India's Home Minister thanks to his complicity with Modi and his failure to uphold the Constitution of India. He must go.

Gujarat's is precisely the kind of emergency or exceptionally stressful, extreme situation for which Articles 355 and 356 were envisaged by the framers of our Constitution. These empower the Centre to dismiss a State government or deploy troops to enforce its compliance with Central orders. Article 355 specifically says it is the "duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance" and to ensure that its governance "is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution."

It will not do to plead, as P.V. Narasimha Rao did in 1992-93, or as many BJP apologists do now, that the Centre can intervene in a State only after imposing President's Rule. As the legendary jurist H.M. Seervai argued in two brilliant articles in *The Economic Times* (April 9 and 10, 1993), episodes like the Babri demolition or the Gujarat pogrom eminently constitute grave "internal disturbance". Therefore, when the Centre is "apprised of a situation in which internal

disturbance is threatened, it must take all necessary steps, including the use of armed forces, to prevent internal disturbance." This duty, says Seervai, is imposed on the Union alone and not on the State government.

Seervai elaborates on Article 355, which, according to Dr. Ambedkar (quoted in the Constituent Assembly debates), is modelled on Article 4, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution. In the U.S., this was used in the 1950s and 1960s to enforce the Supreme Court's order to de-segregate white and black schools. Thus, in 1957, President Eisenhower despatched several companies of the U.S. Army to Little Rock, Arkansas, where "a large and ugly-tempered mob" had gathered to prevent black students from entering a formerly whites-only high school.

Similarly, in 1962, John F. Kennedy sent thousands of U.S. troops to Mississippi to break racist resistance to the admission of a black student, James Meredith, to a university, where "massive riots, approaching the proportions of outright insurrection", had broken out. The mere presence of the troops led to the collapse of the resistance.

The case for applying Article 355 to Gujarat, deploying Central forces to take over law-and-order functions, and dismissing Modi is pressing in today's circumstances. The ground for his dismissal must not be obfuscated by inappropriate appeals to federalist principles and the valid but inapplicable argument that Article 356 has been frequently abused to settle scores with Opposition parties ruling in the States. There is a manifest and visible breakdown of the constitutional machinery in Gujarat, which poses a dire threat to the very survival of its citizens.

The Vajpayee government is so crassly insensitive and callous that it will not voluntarily act to defend the Constitution or the principle of democratic decency. It can only be forced to do so by the secular Opposition. The Opposition parties must do everything in their power to raise public awareness – through mass-level campaigns, public meetings, and rallies in different cities. Only such a mass campaign launched jointly with civil society groups and people's movements will generate the pressure necessary to force the Centre to act.

Allowing the subversion and suborning of our democracy by communal forces means descending into downright majoritarianism, and rationalising murder and mayhem – ultimately barbarism itself. This is unacceptable. ■

28 labourers burnt to death in Mehsana

By PARAG DAVE

Sardarpur (Mehsana), March 2: Smoke still emerges from the charred remains of a house on Sheikh Ne Wadi street of Sardarpur village where 28 farm labourers belonging to a minority community were torched to death around midnight on Friday.

The labourers had taken shelter in a pucca house when a 500-strong mob attacked and set the house on fire.

There is deadly silence on the street where 17 other shanties were also burnt in the attack. All that remains here is burnt debris, consisting of household items and weapons like dhariyas, knives and axes that were used in the attack.

Fourteen hours after the incident, most of the 4,300 inhabitants of the village have fled. A few policemen maintain vigil. The 28 bodies recovered from the house on Saturday have been taken to Mehsana

Civil Hospital for post-mortem. Those killed included 16 women, eight men and three children. Forty people injured in the incident have been admitted to the district hospital and around 150 people who were rescued by the police have been taken to Savala village, 40 km away.

Congress secretary (Mehsana taluka) Someshwar Pandya, who is among the few still residing in the village, told *The Asian Age* that this was

the first time that such an incident of violence had taken place in the village. Both communities lived peacefully so far, he said.

Reliving the incident, Mr Pandya said the mob, comprising people from adjoining villages, came in tractors and attacked the labourers. "The members of the minority community tried to retaliate but they soon found out that they were outnumbered. They took shelter in a pucca house think-

ing that it would protect them. However, even the pucca house could not protect them as a liberal quantity of kerosene was used to set it on fire." Four to five villagers present alleged that two Ramsevaks from the nearby village of Jatral had died in the Godhra train incident. The residents of Jatral and surrounding villages might have wanted to take revenge, he said. Village official Jitu Mehta said the attack was

unprecedented as violence has never been reported from the village before.

Mr B.K. Purohit, the police inspector on duty at the village, said according to the primary investigation, the attackers had come from nearby villages of Jatral and Firozpur. No arrests have been made so far, he added.

Mehsana DSP said the police saved around 150 people of the minority community and shifted them to a safer place.

The Asian Age, March 3

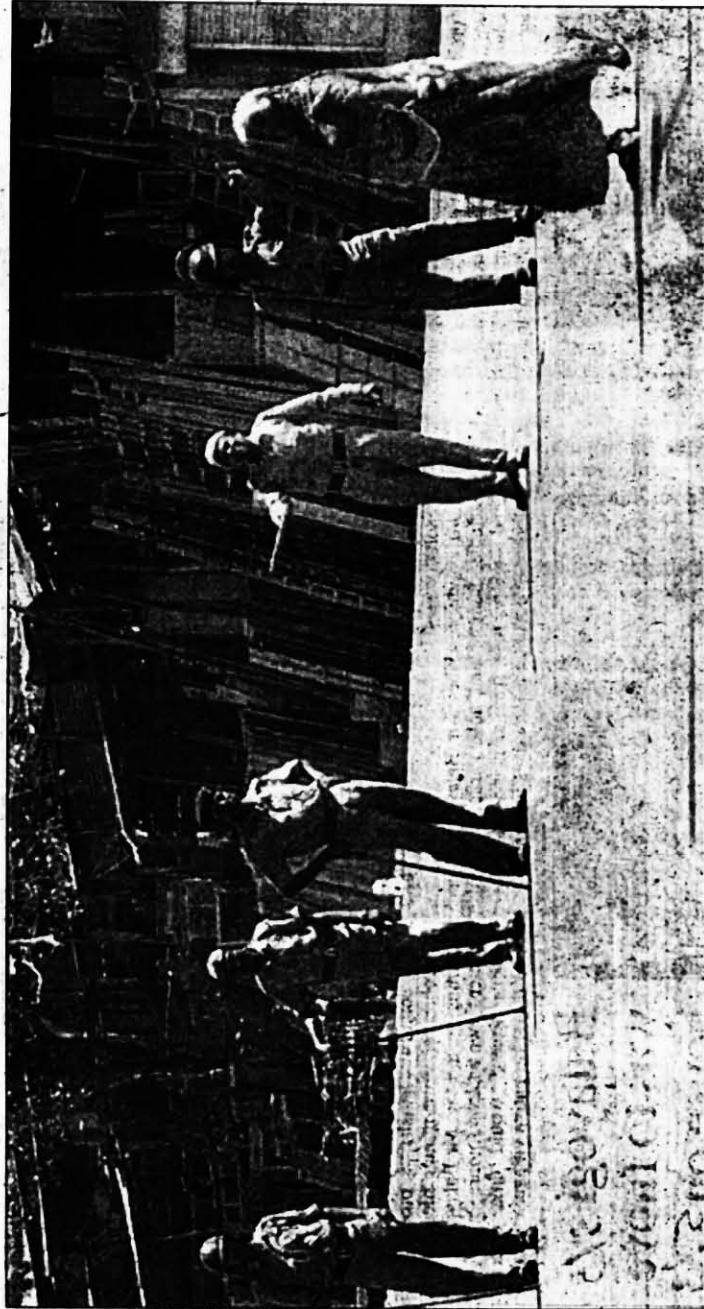
Retaliation plans boiling in Gujarat

By ANIL NAIR

Ahmedabad, March 4: Officials of the Intelligence Bureau are working on specific reports and information that anti-social elements are gearing up for a serious backlash in response to the several gruesome deaths caused by communal violence in Gujarat. The involvement of Pakistan's ISI in setting ablaze the Sabarmati Express is almost evident and all the culprits arrested by DIG (Anti Terrorist Squad) Vipul Vijoy Singh have serious criminal backgrounds and ISI links.

Highly-placed sources in the IB say that fanatic groups charged by the killing of so many minority community members are planning retaliation in more than one way. However, senior officials say that anti-social elements are on the run at this moment and it is the bigger and operative minds that are reportedly scheming the retaliation. The official added that retaliation could either mean more RDX operations, planned riots or even

aeroplane hijack missions. Though the official refused to divulge specific intelligence information, he said that the Gujarat government has to coordinate all its forces and agencies to work on all reports about the communal build-up. Speaking to *The Asian Age*, Mr Vipul Vijoy Singh said: "Intelligence is working very hard on various reports on anti-national elements operating within the country and those who are funding operations from outside. It was not at all surprising that the Sabarmati Express was attacked at Godhra. That particular station has been a haven for all sorts of criminals for several years and it has gone on unchecked by the local authorities. It is as tense as Dariapur in Ahmedabad during communal violence. Most of those arrested from here have serious criminal backgrounds."



BEATING VIOLENCE: A woman walks past a police checkpoint in the old city of Ahmedabad on Monday. (Reuters)

The Asian Age, March 5

'It was state-sponsored carnage'

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 12. A delegation of the CPI(M) and the All India Democratic Women's Association visiting the riot-affected areas in Gujarat has described the disturbances as 'state-sponsored carnage' and expressed shock at the way the burnt-out bogies of the Sabarmati Express had been left unguarded outside the Godhra railway station so that anyone could tamper with the evidence.

The delegation called on the Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, and handed over a memorandum demanding that the Army be allowed to stay till there was total normality.

It cited the coming religious festivals of both communities

and the apprehension of more disturbances.

Rejecting the State Government's theory of the disturbances being the "reaction" for the Godhra massacre, the delegation leader, Subodh Roy, a member of the Lok Sabha, and the AIDWA convenor, Brinda Karat, told media persons here today that the conclusion they had drawn after talking to over thousands during their visit was that the BJP government in the state was implementing the "Hindu agenda" of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, selectively targeting the minority community with a view to breaking their economic backbone.

Ms. Karat said the government taking credit for controlling the mob violence in 72 hours

actually meant that it had given a clear three days to the hooligans to loot and plunder.

But contrary to the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's claim, violence continued even beyond 72 hours and the delegation met several people who were attacked and looted five days after the Gujarat bandh day on February 28, when the disturbances broke out. Even now, the tribal belt of Chhota-Udepur taluka in Baroda district was witnessing violence.

She said that if the 'carnage' was a natural reaction as claimed by the BJP government, Godhra, the scene of the train attack, should have witnessed the maximum violence.

But because of the stern preventive measures taken by the local administration, barring a

few stray cases of shop-burning, it did not suffer major incidents.

While condemning the Godhra incident as an 'inhuman crime,' Mr. Roy and Ms. Karat said it was natural for the people to feel outraged over what happened to the train passengers, but the sense of anger was 'deliberately diverted' by an 'organised force' to target the minority community and with police connivance.

The delegation also expressed shock that even after the Godhra tragedy and the subsequent violence in the state, the Gujarat government, was not trying to stop 'kar sevaks' from leaving for Ayodhya.

"This is an indication of the Gujarat government's commitment to its own dangerous communal agenda," it said.

The Hindu, March 13

Rumours ensure a sleepless night for hapless residents

■ Armed with bricks, stones, pipes and sharp weapons they kept vigil all night

PALAK NANDI
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 3

It was a night that they won't forget. Homes no longer seemed a haven for residents of upmarket areas — long used to thinking that violence was something that only took place on the other side of the river. The cases of arson and loot reported from Satellite, Vastapur, Bodekdev and Thaltej brought home the reality that they too were vulnerable.

And as rumours flew thick and fast on Friday, it seemed as if almost all residents in these areas were keeping vigil all through the night.

"Since late evening, there were many rumours that a mob from the minority community would attack residents of this area. There

were various stories about them swearing revenge. It was being said that these areas had been selected as there was no curfew or proper policing here," Lalit Sheth, a resident of Lad Society at Bodekdev, said.

The news soon spread to other areas like Vastapur, Satellite, Thaltej and Vejalpur. The most sensitive of these areas is Vejalpur, which is closest to Juhapura, a minority-dominated locality.

"There was police in our area but there were rumours that this area would be attacked first. Then the mob would move to areas like Bodekdev, Vastapur and Satellite, it was being said," said Haren Panchal, a resident of Vejalpur.

Among the various rumours was one which said milk from certain dairies and bread from some

companies would be poisoned. "I got an SMS that milk and bread was not to be consumed. We use Amul milk so we were not really worried but we decided not to buy bread for a week at least," said Panchal.

Scared of a backlash, most residents "prepared for the worst." Most stayed up all night, armed with whatever they could lay their hands on — bricks, stones, pipes, sticks, sharp weapons and even chilli powder.

"Only as a precautionary measure and only for self-defence," said Amit Patel, a resident of Thaltej.

"At around 11 pm, we heard that the mob had already reached Karmavati Club on the highway. All males in our society, adults and youngsters, gathered on the ter-

race of our four-storeyed building. We preferred the terrace so that we could hit the mob with stones," said Pankaj Rawal, a resident of Shivalik Apartment in Bodekdev.

The Rabari community, which resides in Vastapur village, made frequent rounds of the village and surrounding areas. A crowd of about a dozen men on two-wheelers, with weapons like swords and metal rods in their hands, also patrolled the area.

"Most residents of various societies were awake but we wanted to keep a close watch on most areas. We also kept in touch with people in areas where we were not making rounds, so that we could be of use to them if need be," said one.

Similar rounds were made by youths of Satellite and other areas, including Maninagar and Naroda.

The Indian Express, March 14

Silent spectators

An eyewitness account of the riots, then and now

THE house had been plundered, torn apart and burned down with systematic precision — exactly the way one would expect a communally-frenzied mob to rampage with the property of one belonging to a minority community.

Bits of life were strewn all over the floor, most of it charred black — sepia prints, dented stainless steel kitchenware, the family's medical records, hair oil, bank passbooks.

But none of it was heart-rending enough to feel all choked up. I checked for signs. Vision clear, breathing easy, emotion in balance as I stood in the courtyard of the house in small-town Loharu, district Bhiwani, Haryana. Till I saw Sultana's half-opened *baksa* (trunk).

A red, sequined *duppatta* tangled with a plain green one was spilling out of it, dusty at the edges, torn in some parts. Orbs of bangles in almost all colours in one corner, some spheres still intact. Postcards of Hindi film heroes, a note book filled with scrawly writing in Urdu and "Sultana Hassan" written in English. A half-chewn pencil, three round stones and a chipped *dya*, made up the remaining contents. Sultana's treasures. Nothing of value there.

But it took me back to a "safe" middle-class colony in suburban Bombay on the night of January 8, 1993. When a group of 50 youths, some recognisable, decided to burn down a shoe shop. Rehamtullah's shop. It was around 1 am and the mob was carrying *mashaals* and iron rods with which they forced open his shop. After the 50-odd had selected footwear for themselves, their wives, children, parents and neighbours' grandparents, the pile left was doused with kerosene and the bonfire was lit.

We saw everything. Our window opened into that road. So did those of others living on the floors above and below us, living across the road opposite us. Everyone was watching. The 50 knew they had a rapt audience. A quiet audience that wouldn't squeak. Nor would it miss the action. An audience whose

shoerack could produce at least four pairs of shoes per family from Rehamtullah's shop.

An audience which knew that the quiet Irani was getting married in two months time. He had been working harder. In the past few months his shop had been offering such good choices that our aunts and cousins, living in another part of the city, insisted we buy them a pair or two. Rehamtullah had his finger on the pulse of people's feet.

He knew everyone in the colony. He had bought the shop when the colony had been constructed in 1983. Ten solid years and he had amassed scores of acquaintances, dozens of friends and very loyal customers. The fact that two aunts, one grandmother

and five cousins of mine, living 35 km away from us, were wearing assorted footwear from his shop was proof enough.

But that night, the scores and dozens chickened. They didn't stop the mob's looting and arson. They were just 50. We would have been 200. By simple arithmetic, the odds would have been in our favour. But we didn't budge.

Instead, I called up my cousin, who was at that moment wearing house slippers from the Irani's shop, as was I and gave her a blow

by blow account of what was happening.

"They have managed to break the locks, Sonu... That street Romeo who sits by the *nukkad panwalla* has managed to pinch so many pairs of shoes... The pile is so tall!... Oh God they are going to burn down his shop as well!... I don't think anyone is going down from our building."

We didn't see or hear of Rehamtullah after that day. The next morning, those who had front row seats the previous night, described it frame by vivid frame, with appropriate sound effects. But no one felt humiliated about not helping a long-time friend. Of simply not having the guts to protest against a violent wrong. In time we stopped talking about Rehamtullah. We also stopped buying footwear in bulk for the entire family.



**TIME
OUT**

PUJA BIRLA

The Indian Express, April 6

Enough is enough... Stop rubbing salt into wounds...

All the malicious propaganda and untruths tarnishing Gujarat's image cannot face up to the truth



"Peace is our collective responsibility."

Shri Narendra Modi
Chief Minister, Gujarat

Malicious campaign

All of Gujarat has been consumed by flames of violence...

Gujarat's economy has collapsed...

Lakhs of students have been pushed into a gloomy future...

Life and transportation has come to a grinding halt in Gujarat...

Complete breakdown of law and order in Gujarat...

Here are the facts...



- No untoward incident occurred in 18300 villages in the state
- Festivals of all communities solemnised amidst a climate of harmony
 - Moharram: Tajiya procession in 1000 places
 - Holi: 18000 villages celebrated Holi in a spirit of amity
 - Cheti Chand: Ambedkar Jayanti celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm
- About 7,000 Haj pilgrims returning after solemnising sacred Haj were felicitated in over 800 villages/cities in the spirit of harmony
- Lakhs of devotees thronged Dakor, Ambaji, Girnar, Palitana after padyatra to offer their obeisance
- Gram Panchayat elections conducted peacefully in 1700 villages; more than 75% of rural voters exercised their franchise enthusiastically

In Ahmedabad alone, clearing in banks...

	Cheques (instruments in Lakhs)	Amount cleared (Rs. in Crores)
January - 02	35.61	17724
February - 02	32.56	16754
March to 15th April - 02	47.74	25531



- Production remained uninterrupted in all big industrial units
- International automobile giant, M/s General Motors, has made an additional capital investment of Rs. 500 crores at their Halol unit



About 1.20 crore students appeared for examinations in the state:

- 4.18 lakh college/university students
- 6.55 lakh SSC students
- 3.35 lakh HSC students
- 21.50 lakh secondary and higher secondary students
- 85 lakh primary school students
- The call to boycott exams was completely ignored by parents and their wards

- S.T. Buses plied normally on all the state's 19481 routes
- Highway traffic was as usual

After February 27

- Police assisted by army within 16 hours
- Effective action against elements violating peace:
 - 31000 arrested
 - 6849 rounds of police firing
 - 145 dead
 - 7153 rounds of teargas shells



Understand the agony of the five crore people of Gujarat...
Who are committed to peace and amity... Stop rubbing salt into wounds...

Violence continues in Gujarat

Times News Network and PTI

GANDHINAGAR: Stray incidents of violence continued in parts of Gujarat on Monday even as curfew remained in force at six police station areas of the city — Kalupur, Dariapur, Shahpur, Karanj, Haveli and Vejalpur.

One person was stabbed by some unidentified men at Viramgam town of Ahmedabad rural district on Sunday night. At Savali village of Baroda rural district, police fired in the air to disperse a mob pelting stones, trying to damage a religious place.

Police resorted to firing to scare away the crowd trying to set afire shops at Bhadrin town on Sunday night after a stabbing incident in Boarsad town of Anand district.

The Tazia procession on the eve of Muharrum was postponed in view of the prevailing law and order situation in Ahmedabad city and other parts of the state.

Meanwhile, the Gujarat government has decided to constitute a 13-member committee to be headed by governor Sunder Singh Bhandari, to oversee and review the working of relief camps for the violence affected people in the state.

The decision to form the committee was taken by the state government following the announcement by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in the Lok Sabha on March 16, an official release of the revenue department said here on Sunday night.

The members of the committee include chief minister Narendra Modi, leader of the opposition in the state assembly Naresh Raval, former chief minister Keshubhai Patel, state BJP chief Rajendrasinh



A doctor examines an expectant mother from the Naroda-Patia area at the Dariakhian Ghummat riot relief camp in Ahmedabad on Monday. She fled from her home after a mob attacked the area on February 28.

Rana, GPCC president Amarsinh Chaudhary, industries minister Suresh Mehta, health minister Ashok Bhatt, and Congress MLA Siddharth Patel, the release added.

While the PM wants the panel to look after "speedy economic and social rehabilitation of the affected families" Mr Modi wants the committee, to confine its job to "operational running of the relief camps".

The PM had assured to Congress president Sonia Gandhi earlier that he would direct the Gujarat government to set-up a broad-based committee under the chairmanship of the governor of the state, to plan and implement rehabilitation measures on a war footing.

The PM said, referring to his statement 11 days ago in Parliament, the "speedy economic

and social rehabilitation of the affected families" was the "first and foremost challenge before the Gujarat and Union governments and civil society at large". He said "All political parties and voluntary and community-based organisations in the state should participate in this urgent effort in a spirit of cooperation."

Though the letter states that the PM had "forwarded" it to the Gujarat governor and the CM for their consideration and necessary action, the CM's office feigned ignorance it had received the letter. A spokesperson to the CM said the terms of reference for the committee only spoke of "overseeing and reviewing the functioning of relief camps set up after the communal riots".

Times of India, March 26

Rural Gujarat is not immune to the madness

That's the difference this time — villages saw the same violence as cities

NARODA-PATIYA, Gulmarg Society, Best Bakery, are today household names and speak of a barbaric violence having taken place in Gujarat's cities. However, the 'golden era', when communal killings were confined to cities is long past. The killings in rural districts like Panchmahals, Dabod and Melisana, have not been less gruesome than those that have occurred in Ahmedabad.

Just yesterday a college teacher was killed near Sarkhej police station, in Ahmedabad district. He had been identified by his beard. It took me back to the trip I made to Gujarat some days ago. Sporting a beard, I nervously alight at Godhra and was pleasantly surprised to encounter a large number of men with very 'Muslim-looking beards'. People don't give up their cultural identity easily. Rationality may demand the shaving of a beard to reduce the threat to life, but the drive to adopt cultural symbols runs deep.

We arrived at the relief camp in Kalol, Panchmahal district. Survivors from the villages of Boru, Dehlol, Malav, Eral, start recounting their tragic stories. Almost all the relief camps in the state are located in Muslim areas. There is safety only in numbers. Madina, who still bears sword cuts on her body, and Sul-tani, who was gang raped as her son Faizan fell and lay crying, relate how the path of their tempo packed with people fleeing from mobs in their village, Dehlol, was blocked by a Maruti. A mob of about 150 attacked them with swords, and trishuls, poured kerosene and burnt people. Altogether 14 persons were killed.

"Respectable" people like the manager of a local bank, the owner of a local theatre have been clearly identified among the attackers by several eye-witnesses. The Kalol police station is ten steps from the relief camp, yet FIRs/statements with the names of the accused have not been recorded.

Some people from the relief camp are ready to visit their village Boru. The

Hindu sarpanch of the village had sheltered some women at the time of the attack and this appears to influence the decision. The row upon row of burnt houses of Muslims present a searingly stark reality. A bit further, water is being filled from a hand pump, children play, as 'normal' life goes on in the Hindu *prada* of the village. The nearby 'Kamal Pir ki Dargah', which both Hindus and Muslims had visited from time immemorial, has been vandalised.

Like the exception proving the rule, numbers did not provide safety in Sanjeli village of Dabod district. Today, not a single one out of the 500 houses of Muslims here, remains. The village was attacked on March 2 by a mob of 25-30,000 with the a large scale participation of activists. The 'credit' for mobilising the activists goes to Dilsukhji Maharaj, himself a Bhil, who runs an ashram with a hostel for schoolchildren. Dilsukhji asserted that Bhils are Hindus. The attack, he said, was spontaneous as the Bhils had been oppressed for ages and have now risen. Like a textbook case illustrating the power of propaganda, he declared that Muslims took "our" women and have 'violated' at least 100 Bhil women in Sanjeli alone.

In the low hills is nestled Anjanwa, a sprawling village in the Panchmahals. On March 3, the Muslims of the village were lured into a school with promises of safety and then attacked. Finally, those who had fled into the forests had to be rescued by the army. Today, the standard story of the Hindus here is that all the attackers were outsiders. However, survivors point out that the singling out of their homes was done by fellow villagers.

At present the administration is busy trying to broker a totally illegal deal of the withdrawal of complaints naming specific individuals by the victims in return for security to return to their old villages. Thus will 'normalcy' be 'restored' and the embarrassing relief camps closed down.

The writer is a Supreme Court lawyer



BYWORDS

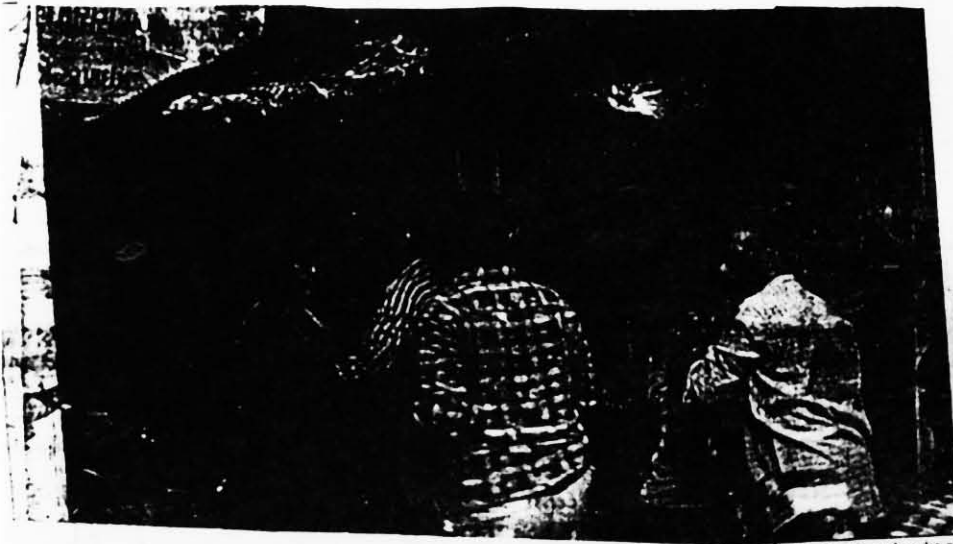
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RAKESH SHUKLA

The Indian Express, May 9

Modi's city simmers, death toll 22 in 48 hours

Firing by police hits people above abdomen
Police firing kills, instead of scaring potential rioters



2 killed as fresh riots break out in Ahmedabad

Times News Network
 AHMEDABAD: Two persons were killed and nine injured as fresh riots broke out in the sensitive Dargapur area of the walled city on Sunday and an indefinite curfew was clamped in the afternoon. Police opened fire as mobs came out of the lanes and bylanes and

53 KILLED UNDER ONE ROOF, TOLL 150

■ Mobs rule Gujarat for most of the day ■ Troops come in late ■ Fernandes heckled, convoy ston



...women while the identity of the victims is not yet known. However, it could not be confirmed whether the persons were killed by police or private bullets.

DEATH MARCH SLOWS DOWN, BUT SPREAD

Violence breaks out in P. Gujarat again, 13 dead

■ Toll 320 as violence spreads to central Gujarat ■ Over 35 people burnt alive in Panchmahals ■ Ahmedabad uneasy

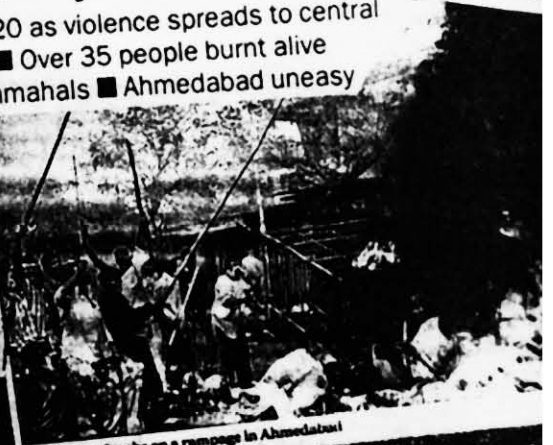
inmate camps in the debate on the Sabha last Tuesday said to myself: ment. ell the Gujarat deceived. The victims spared the pain of commitment' and our representatives ards their plight. The said the debate was because the allies did r two-faced positions. The allies alleged ted to avoid embarrassing BJP shrugged off idy to ensure the House ly as the motion had ed by the Opposition m to field Uma Bharat ge Fernandes from the nt's side was like a red : Opposition. And Fer- remark that there was hocking about the rape of n Gujarat revealed the a constituency he has been ng over a period of time. urant Singh agreed within s of the motion being s of the Rajya Sabha to sup- in letter and spirit, he was avoiding a vote but also ad- opinion up-



the debate. One may talk about what the right accent but MPs can take a leaf out of her book. She writes out her speeches and works on them, putting across her point in a brief and focussed way. She does not ramble on and on for an hour or even two, which many speakers did, wasting everyone's time.

What a come-down for 'giant-killer' George Fernandes, the man who has struck the high notes in debates over the years — and undoubtedly someone with that back-ground and experience does not

...hot temper- ground once again. It provided no insights into why Narendra Modi continues to survive despite the outcry from the BJP's allies and an increasingly adverse international opinion. It did not explore, for instance, the change in the middle-class Hindu psyche, the absence of remorse in nity over arat. It is Partition c of 50 years is different il and D : What course t We need address not a ly survive religio- If made Rajya Vajp shor be a day ge mo ch in b



File photo of mobs on a rampage in Ahmedabad



THE FLAMES RETURN: A policeman watches a burning car in the Shahalam Tolnaka area of Ahmedabad on Sunday. (AP) ■ Another photograph on Page 3

***Preliminary report of the investigation by
Medico Friend Circle***

**Carnage In Gujarat –
A Public Health Crisis**

13th May, 2002

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank members of the Citizen's Initiative, ANANDI, SAHAJ, SAHRWARU, PUCL Shanti Abhiyan and the Gujarat Health Forum for the generous help and cooperation they extended to us during various phases of the investigation.. We are deeply grateful to the camp inmates and volunteers working there for all the information they shared with us. Our thanks also go to the individual doctors, senior officials of the health department Government of Gujarat and the AMC who spent time in discussing various issues with us.

About Medico Friend Circle

The medico friend circle (mfc) is a nation-wide group of socially conscious individuals interested in the health problems of our people. Since the last 28 years, mfc has critically analysed the existing health care system and has tried to evolve an appropriate approach towards health care which is humane and which can meet the needs of the vast majority of the people in our country.

The existing system of health care, we have realized, is not geared towards the needs of the majority of the people, the poor. It requires a fundamental change. This would occur as a part of the total social transformation in the country, since the medical system is only a part of the total system.

Mfc has been involved in several investigations and has engaged in surveys. Some to mention are (a) Lathyrism survey in Rewa district, MP; (b) study of health effects of the Bhopal Gas Leak, (c) pregnancy outcome study in Bhopal nine months after exposure to the toxic gas.

In Bhopal in 1985 we also gave technical support for the health activities of voluntary agencies and action groups among the gas victims, were involved with women's groups in campaign against hazardous hormonal contraceptives, and provided support of the International Medical Commission on Bhopal.

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When we visited one of the camps in Amdavad, an old woman narrated the gang / mass rapes (at times by 20-25 men) of young girls from a particular area. All of them were later burnt to death. She started shaking and trembling while narrating the incidents and later was completely withdrawn. She had also witnessed her son and daughter-in-law being slaughtered. She has a grandson to look after. She is worried how to cope with that responsibility.

In this camp, we met the man whose 9 months pregnant wife was killed by the mob, her womb was slit open by a sword and the baby was removed and thrown into fire. This particular case is widely known among people in all camps.

A nine year old girl, A., had witnessed the death of her father and brother in front of her eyes. When the mob left, she tried to put out the flames with a blanket. However, she could not save them. Now A carries the same blanket in her hand and lives in her own world.

Women in one of the camps told us that on Feb 28, they were taken to the fields, stripped naked and gang raped. Next day they somehow covered themselves with the sheaves and dried leaves in the field and went to the police station. They did not get any help.

Not many are willing to talk about the rapes. They told the volunteer that they are not willing to talk as they don't want their names to appear in newspapers.

We came across two young girls at the camp with symptoms of continuing insomnia and nightmares. Both wake up screaming "avyo, avyo". They have also witnessed killings and beatings. One of them was completely withdrawn.

A.A. is a young man aged about 20 whom we met in a camp in Amdavad on 16 April. He was shot by the police and received bullet injuries in the abdomen. He was operated upon twice, during the first surgery his perforated intestines were repaired but no bullet was found. However, a subsequent x-ray showed a bullet lodged in his vertebral column. A second surgery was then performed to remove the bullet. However, the bullet has caused irreversible injury to the spinal cord and he has been paralyzed from the waist downward, since being shot by the police. He now also has severe continuous pain in both legs.

A.A. now requires systematic physiotherapy and rehabilitation as a paraplegic for life.

"Ahmedabad,, May 7.

A youth was stabbed right inside the V. S. Hospital, run by the Congress-controlled Amdavad Municipal Corporation, in the presence of police. The youth was stabbed when he alighted from an ambulance carrying a patient stabbed in Juhapura locality when some Sangh Parivar volunteers were demonstrating against the alleged "partisan attitude" of the hospital authorities against Hindu patients."

- The Hindu (May 8)

I. Introduction

Starting with the Godhra train massacre on 27th Feb., Gujarat has been engulfed in unprecedented violence. Since then, in systematic and gruesome attacks unleashed against the Muslim community, hundreds have lost their lives and an even larger number have been seriously injured. Over a lakh people continue to live in relief camps. In a context where the entire state machinery stands implicated (NHRC report, 'The Survivors Speak' report by Citizen's initiative) the issue of timely, appropriate and non-discriminatory medical care assumes crucial importance.

The response and mobilisation of medical personnel and services in a crisis of these dimensions determines the quality of medical care provided to affected people. In any natural disaster medical care is one of the first priorities. However, when social institutions break down in a disaster like this, provision of medical care is also under threat due to pressures generated by the crisis.

In any crisis, the health care system and the health profession have a special role to perform. The mobilization of the medical personnel and services, required to provide relief to those affected by a disaster, be it man-made or natural, deliberate or unforeseen is always one of the first priorities. While several fact finding teams went in and reported on the failure or, even worse, the complicity of various state agencies in perpetuating the communal blood-letting, there was very little encouraging information about how the health profession had responded. Disturbing news about the outbreak of epidemics in the camps and descriptions of the appalling living conditions there, suggested that not enough had been done to provide relief to those who were forced to seek refuge. Hence, as organisation working on health issues, we felt a need to investigate the adequacy of medical relief efforts by the public health system.

Medical professionals are expected to perform their duties within an ethical framework that is above religious and political affiliations. If they fail to do so, for many it can make the difference between life and death. The consequences of this communalisation could have serious repercussions on a society that has already been so deeply ruptured.

On the other hand, in such a crisis, medical professionals could become particularly vulnerable because they have to venture out and work while the violence is still on. They may find themselves targeted both as members of a particular community and as professionals who are helping the victims. They may become targets of attacks or face intimidation by mobs and communal elements. While individual professionals may have little control over events, the medical profession has a responsibility to show solidarity towards all its members and protect them from pressure and coercion that prevents them from performing their professional duty in an ethical and human manner. MFC, as a body of socially concerned health professionals and activists, felt it necessary to document any such pressures and express solidarity with health professionals exposed to such pressures.

The medical profession also has to involve itself in the long and painful task of rehabilitation. In this context, we need to keep in mind that justice is an integral part of rehabilitation. have a duty to ensure that they do their utmost to ensure that justice is done by accurately and honestly recording and documenting information about those examined and treated by them. Post mortem records, medico-legal complaints and statements by doctors are vital for victims in the process for securing compensation and filing cases against the perpetrators of violence. Those who suffer physical disability and the large numbers who suffer from mental trauma need the services of the medical profession to rebuild their lives.

Finally, on the basis of whatever the health system witnesses in the discharge of its primary duty of treating the victims of violence, the medical profession and other personnel have an additional responsibility. In innumerable instances they have played a role in documenting and informing the other sections of society about what is happening, analysing its causality, and highlighting both the immediate steps for fire fighting and long term measures for prevention.

It was against this background that the Medico Friend Circle decided to conduct an investigation into the health impact of the unrelenting and horrific violence in Gujarat and the role that the public health system had played in this context.

This investigation is an attempt to document the experience of survivors as well as the health practitioners. We wanted to understand how communal violence in Gujarat has affected the health of the people, their access to health care and the impact it has had on the health profession itself. We also wanted to assess the response of both state and non-state agencies to the health crisis generated by the violence. In the current situation, where there is a deep threat to secular and democratic values, a self critical appraisal of its own role becomes imperative for the medical profession. It has to defend itself from external pressures and also fortify itself from within. It must ensure that it upholds the humanitarian traditions of the healing profession and does not become an accomplice in the descent down the slippery slope of violation of human rights.

A. Specific Objectives of the MFC investigation in Gujarat

1. To assess the health conditions in the relief camps and the health care needs of the inmates
2. To look into specific health care needs of women in the camps, including women who have faced sexual assault
3. To assess the health care services available to inmates of camps, with a focus on the public health system while documenting the contribution of the voluntary sector
4. To review the response of the public hospitals to the health care needs emerging from the communal violence
5. To examine the impact of the communal atmosphere on members of the medical profession, in terms of their attitudes, involvement in violence and the response of professional associations
6. To document attacks and pressures on the medical profession in current context
7. To review the adequacy of medicolegal assessment of violence victims, to enable them to secure justice in the current context
8. To review the larger role of the state in providing security, support to the relief camps, rehabilitative measures and policy initiatives relevant to the crisis situation

Based on this investigation, we have attempted to evolve certain recommendations, given below, for various public bodies and stakeholders, to enable them to respond more effectively to the crisis.

We also hope that this investigation would contribute to the discourse on people's right to health care in conflict situations and the ongoing debates on the issue of medical ethics. This may also contribute to developing protocols for health care / medical examination in various conflict and crisis situations.

B. Visits by the Investigation Teams

	Dates of visit:	Members
Team 1:	15-18 April 2002	: Ritu Priya, Sarojini N.B., Srinivasan S.
Team 2:	25-29 April 2002	Abhay Shukla, Dhruv Mankad, Jaya Velankar, Neha Madhiwalla, Sunita Bandewar

Three of the MFC team members were medical professionals, while others were health researchers or health activists.

Areas	Camps
Amdavad	1. .Dariyakhan Ghummat (Jamalpur)
	2. .Shah Alam (Shahi Bag)
	3. Jahangir Nagar (Vatva)
	4. Jai Ambe Yuvak Mandal (Lathi bazaar)
	5. Madhav Mill Compound camp (Gomtipur)
Vadodara	1. Khureshi Jamaatkhana (Mughalwada)
Panchmahals	1. Godhra
	2. Kalol village
Dahod	1. Fatepura village
Hospitals	1. Sheth Vadilal Sarabhai Hospital, Amdavad
	2. Civil Hospital, Sola
	3. Al Ameen Hospital, Amdavad
Other localities	1. Juhapura, Amdavad
	2. Khamasa, Amdavad

Interviews conducted with:

1. Officials of the Health Department, Amdavad Municipal Corporation (AMC)
2. Officials of Health Department, Gujarat Government
3. Medical officers (of the State Health Service) serving on deputation for relief work in camps
4. Individual doctors serving in public hospitals in Amdavad
5. Office bearers of organizations of medical professionals
6. Private practitioners in Amdavad and Godhra
7. Representatives of voluntary organisations associated with relief work

II. Development, organisation and living conditions in the relief camps

The relief camps set up by communities (*all camps and which communities*) and managed by volunteers (*who are they*) have been a crucial, *and perhaps the most important* support for survivors fleeing from violence. It is important to understand how these camps have evolved, how they are generally organised, and what kind of conditions the inmates are living in, *and the role of the State Government* in order to comprehend the larger context.

A. Development and organisation of the camps

The camps came into being immediately after the violence started and were continually added as the violence continued and spread to other areas. As of 25th April, official figures are of 68 camps in Amdavad alone, of which reportedly 4 have inmates entirely from the Hindu community. We visited 9 camps

spread across Amdavad, Vadodara, Panchmahals and Dahod districts, including two rural camps. Of these, 7 camps housed exclusively Muslim families, whereas one had both Muslim and Hindu inmates and one had only Hindu inmates. Immediately after the outbreak of violence on 28th February, people fled to majority areas of their own communities, to safe public spaces, mostly dargahs, madrassas and some schools, and sought refuge there.

None of the camps that we visited were set up at the initiative of the government. The first source of support were volunteers from the neighbouring areas and individuals among the victims themselves. Official recognition of the camps came from 6th March onwards. There was a process by which the state government recognised camps which, in many cases, took several days. Only then was supply of provisions and medical care initiated. The neighbouring community supplied food, clothes, medical aid and other necessities themselves. Till date, the camps are organised and managed by volunteers, most of whom are young people who had no previous experience of managing such a large activity.

In one rural camp, we learned that the entire Muslim population of two villages fled across the border to Rajasthan to escape the mobs. While three people had been killed in the violence itself, one small child was crushed to death accidentally during their escape. This group stayed in two different locations in Rajasthan for nearly 10 days before returning to their village and setting up a camp there.

In the context of the camps, the present role of the state is limited to the provision of rations, water and medical care. The government has also set up some rudimentary sanitation facilities in some camps. In many camps, these have been augmented by international voluntary agencies such as the WHO and UNICEF. The Indian Red Cross also provided some relief material and medical aid. Other than this, in general, we did not find a noticeable presence of the voluntary organisations in the management of the camps. The local volunteers were largely left to their own devices.

The camps have been extremely important for the survival of those affected by the violence, many of whom have lost their homes, all their belongings and even several members of their families. Apart from providing shelter, the camps allow them to access food and other basic amenities for bathing and washing. Although there are no real provisions for their safety, the camp provides a sense of security because it allows survivors to be together and provide support to each other. There was minimal security, or none, provided to the inmates of the camps. *The attitude of the government seemed quite clear - that the responsibility of the sustenance, and even safety of the victims is the responsibility of the Muslim community itself.*

The health care facilities are described in greater detail in the following section. In general, the living conditions in the camps are extremely poor. In fact, the inmates do not even have adequate shelter. In such a situation, when possible, inmates have been accommodated by relatives and acquaintances in the neighbouring area during the day, especially the sick, injured, and women who have just delivered or are in the last stages of pregnancy.

The recent reports that attempts to dismantle the camps are disturbing. The inmates of all the camps in the rural and urban areas articulated that if driven out of the camps, they have nowhere to go. They are afraid to return to their homes and localities because no action has been taken against the perpetrators of the violence, who could attack them again. They have no means of survival because everything they owned has been destroyed. Due to the fact that the economy has come to a standstill, those dependent on daily wages have no employment. Moreover, due to the threat of violence and impositions of curfews in many areas they can't reach their places of work.

We found very little evidence of attempts to rehabilitate the survivors in terms of reconstructing their homes and compensating for their damaged property. Rehabilitation should not only include compensation for physical losses but should also address to the psychological trauma caused by the violence. There is no indication that attempts have been made to ease the tension and create confidence before dismantling the camps. The total apathy and lack of responsibility exhibited by the State is not only shocking but inhuman

B. General living conditions in the camps

Shelter :

Most camps were found to be located either in open grounds, with usually minimal cover to protect from sun and exposure, or in community buildings (e.g. wedding halls, madaras or masjids) There was significant overcrowding. This problem was recognized by Dr Makwana, CMO, AMC. The team was shocked that no action was taken by the Government to solve this basic problem.

As the situations fails to improve and people continue to stay in the camps through the hot months of April and May ; the facilities do not equip the camps to deal with the scorching sun and heat . The cover in camps located in open spaces was often totally inadequate, exposing the inmates to the danger of dehydration and heat strokes. There were only a few durries to sleep on, (usually not sufficient for the number of people) and no mattresses in most camps. There was a need for sheets and bedding in most camps. In several camps, groups of small children were found on the bare ground in dusty, unhygienic conditions exposing them to the risk of gastrointestinal and skin infections.

Interestingly, amongst all these 9 State recognized camps which we visited, only in the Godhra camp we found comparatively adequate arrangements, with several large *pandals* having been erected, and even fans having been installed.

Water for drinking and bathing:

Water in the five urban camps was often being provided from large tanks, which were being refilled daily by the Municipal Corporation in Amdavad. Chlorine tablets have been supplied for disinfecting the water. The water stored in plastic tanks becomes quite hot during the day and is very difficult to drink.

Also, the quantity of water is not always adequate for bathing and cleaning. For example, on the day we were given data from the AMC (i.e. on 25th April), besides the fact that bathrooms or bathing spaces are either inadequate or not available, there is no provision for soap. As a consequence, residents are not able to bathe daily in many camps.

Toilets:

In most of the camps, toilet facilities were far from satisfactory. Even according to official figures for camps in Amdavad, as of 25 April 2002, there were only 573 toilets for 55,186 inmates. *This means one toilet for 96 persons, which is grossly inadequate.* Further, the provisions on paper were far from the reality on the ground. For example in Jehangir Nagar camp, the official figure was 15 toilets but we found only 6 toilets on actual inspection.

In rural camps, toilets were generally not present or not being utilized, people preferring to go to the open fields. The Kalol camp itself was housed in an abandoned PHC, in a compound which, before the incidents of violence started was being used as an open toilet space ! Some toilets and bathrooms have been erected by UNICEF in the camps in Amdavad..

Again, in the Godhra camp, the toilet and bathing facilities were found to be comparatively adequate.

Overall, the living conditions in camps were very poor because of lack of basic infrastructure, with no privacy for women or men.

C. Food for camp inmates

In Amdavad, the Government has issued cards to inmates and they are receiving the following rations per person per day according to the Govt. instruction:

Wheat flour	400 gm.
Rice -	100 gm.
Dal -	50 gm.
Sugar -	50 gm.
Oil -	50 gm.
Milk powder -	50 gm.

Similar allowance of rations is being supplied in other areas also. In addition, there is an allowance of Rs. 5 per day per person for fuel, spices and cooking charges etc. The rations are actually supplied weekly, in bulk for the entire camp.

However, there were some (delete) complaints that the food rations being supplied are of poor quality. In the Shah e Alam camp (Naroda Patiya), several inmates reported that initially the quality of rations given was very bad - the dal had worms and the grain was rotten. The camp organisers left this inedible food outside the camp and managed meals on their own.

In Godhra camp we were told that they sold the wheat provided by the Govt, and then purchased better quality wheat at a higher cost.

The food is cooked in the open, in large cauldrons, in most camps. Meals are usually cooked only twice a day, lunch and dinner, along with tea in the morning. This does not meet the needs of children.

There was usually no provision for special food for children, pregnant / lactating women or those who were sick. However, in some of the camps in Amdavad, Anganwadis have been functioning and providing some supplementary food to children under 6 years of age. However, no Anganwadis were functioning in the rural camps.

Vist to the Jai Ambe Yuvak Mandal Camp, Behind Geeta Mandir

This camp has 259 inmates - all Hindus from the Jamalpur area. (Men: 97, Women: 72, Children below 90. There were 4 pregnant women. The camp was being run by the VHP. There are 6 bathrooms, 2 old public latrines + 4 new UNICEF latrines when PM came.(about 26 persons per toilet). There is Water facility: one corporation tank. The camp gets ration supply like any other camp. Food is given to the inmates at 12 noon, 6 PM

The women in the camp do all the cooking and cleaning. A team of 5 doctors from the Sola Hospital make a visit between 4 and 5 PM. The Red Cross has provided 47 kits which contain bathing and washing soap and oil. The camp has not received any kit from the government.

No major health problems were prevalent in the camp. According to the camp organisers, there were no patients of burns and injury.

It was difficult to find the camp as nobody in the area knew about it. It was clear that we were not welcome. There was no inclination to offer us water to drink or chairs to sit, which was in sharp contrast to camps like Gomtipur or Shah-e-Alam where, in spite of being in a pathetic situation, we were showered with far more warmth and care.

The camp is constructed by tents put up before a row of houses -- the owner a Hindu person who allowed the premises to be used as a camp. When the team visited, there were three officers from the Collector's office with cheques for compensation. The men were sitting on chairs and cots, while the women sat on the floor. There were 26 women when the team visited. The children were playing in the rooms inside the house. When asked about the men, they told us that they had gone out for work. The women looked quite neat, bathed and relaxed, again in sharp contrast to the other camps that we visited.

The camp organiser told us that this camp was set up because their houses were destroyed and they were not feeling safe to go back as the area was still under curfew. He explained how the women were living in a stressful condition and that nobody talks about the plight of the Hindu families. He explained that the area was largely populated by Muslims and that there was a need for a clear demarcation of the habitation in communal lines; and till that becomes a reality, the camp will continue to exist.

The inmates had come out of their houses on 28th afternoon, fearing violence because of what was happening elsewhere. They had suffered no physical assault. They said that sometime later their houses were ransacked. Since they still did not feel safe they could not go back.

The officials present at the camp insisted that we all enter our addresses in the visitor's book. When we asked to be taken to the locality from where the women came from, they were not too keen and brushed it aside by saying that it was just adjacent to the camp. However, later they sent a volunteer with us who said he was present in the Sabarmati Express when the Godhra incident took place. When we asked him about his occupation, he told the team that he had a business dealing in plastics. His business was closed these days because the raw material used by him used to come from Muslim traders who were not working. He showed us two burnt shops of Muslims among a row of shops on the main road, and pointed out that the camp inmates houses were just behind these shops.

III. Health conditions in the relief camps

Although medical relief teams from the public health system have been visiting most camps regularly, the quality of treatment does not seem to be adequate. We came across a high

prevalence and large range of health problems among the inmates. In a few camps in rural areas, (e.g. Kalol and Fatepura) we conducted treatment sessions and were overwhelmed by the number of patients with various kinds of health problems. The prevalent health problems are both physical and psychological, some being a consequence of the violence suffered during communal violence while others are due to the unhealthy living conditions imposed on the inmates in the camps.

Some of the major health problems are described below -

A. Injuries / burns

We came across several cases of patients having unhealed burns and injuries. Even about one and half months after the acute violence, *these conditions have not received adequate care or have not healed completely.*

Case Study 1:

J is a 13 year old boy whom we met on 26th April 2002 in Jehangir Nagar camp, Vatva, Amdavad. He was hit in the left eye by a stone during the violence on 28th February at about 6 p.m. His mother first took him to a private doctor close by, who referred him to Lallubhai hospital, from there they were sent to V.S. Hospital, which finally referred him to the Civil Hospital. J was finally admitted to the Civil Hospital at 12.30 at night. In the Civil Hospital, the laceration in the cornea of his left eye was sutured on 1st March. However, on 4th March, while he was recuperating, the doctor treating him told his mother that 'We cannot guarantee your security. When you go out of the hospital to get food or medicine you might be attacked. So we will discharge your son, take him to a relief camp and come back after the riots are over'. According to J's mother, on the same day, *all four Muslim patients in the ophthalmic ward and in all about 25-30 Muslim patients from various wards were prematurely discharged.*

J's mother however does not blame the doctor personally for this incident. The doctor arranged for the police to come and transport these women and their children to the Shahibagh camp, from where J and his mother then went to Shah Alam Dargah camp. Subsequently they came to Jehangir Nagar camp, Vatva. *Due to the continuing violence, despite attempts, they have not been able to subsequently approach any hospital for J's follow up care.* (see section VI below in this regard).

The day we saw him, about 50 days after his untimely discharge from the Civil Hospital, on examination it was apparent that the sutured laceration in the cornea of J's left eye had become grossly infected. He had considerable pain in the eye, which was inflamed and continuously watering, and the entire cornea was hazy. The infection needed to be urgently brought under control, perhaps later needing a corneal graft / transplant to save the vision in the eye. We prepared a referral and discussed the problem with the Citizens Initiative volunteer, who subsequently arranged for him to be safely taken to Nagri Hospital, a public ophthalmic hospital.

Similarly, we came across cases of embedded pellets from gunshot wounds and other partially treated injuries. *Fear of further exposure to violence if they venture out of the camp to seek treatment in a hospital* is one of the major factors which is responsible for inadequate care to such cases.

Case Study 2

S was an elderly person in Jehangir Nagar camp who approached us on 26 April during our visit to his camp, requesting help to trace his missing son, I. I had accompanied his brother F, who had multiple injuries, to V.S. Hospital on 28th February. I phoned home the same day, saying that money was needed to treat F in the hospital. I said that he was leaving the hospital to arrange for money and medicines for F. This was the last that the family heard from I. He has been missing during the nearly two months since 28th February, and the family has failed to trace him despite various attempts. S fears that his son may have been killed when he left the hospital to make arrangements for the treatment of his brother.

This and many more similar narratives show the helplessness and fear that grips many of the innocent people who have had to suffer the consequences of the mindless violence in Gujarat.

B. Public health Issues

Given the state of living conditions in the camps, with overcrowding, exposure and inadequate sanitation, it is not surprising that there have been outbreaks of person-to person transmitted and waterborne diseases. Contributory factors are undernutrition and low level of previous immunization.

Some of the outbreaks we came across in various camps which we visited.

Outbreaks of infectious diseases

- There had been 27 cases of measles in Jehangir Nagar camp. Two special tents were erected by the Municipal authorities to isolate children after this outbreak.
- There were at least 46 cases of measles in Godhra camp and subsequently 9 cases of bronchopneumonia, which were being treated by the medical teams from the public health dept. and UNICEF.
- There were 6 cases of jaundice (infectious hepatitis) in Jehangir Nagar camp, two cases of which were seen by us. There have been 4 cases of jaundice in Fatepura camp also.
- There was an outbreak of chickenpox in Fatepura camp; we saw three cases during the treatment camp run by us

At a broader level, official data also indicated the high prevalence of communicable diseases in the camps:

- The Director, Directorate of Health Services (DDHS) confirmed that there were about 60 cases of post measles complications at the rural camps.
- In the official vigilance committee meeting, 6 deaths from typhoid were reported from one of the camps
- The Municipal health dept. records for patients seen in relief camps show that they had treated 11,820 new cases of diarrhea / gastroenteritis and 16,690 new cases of Acute Respiratory Infection among under five children, as of 25 April 2002.

The Municipal health dept. has tried to respond to these outbreaks by immunizing children and in some cases arranging for isolation of children with measles. However, significant improvement in the living conditions of camp inmates along with better surveillance and preventive health care, especially in the rural camps is necessary to prevent such further outbreaks. However, camps can only be an important but short-term arrangement. Subsequently, there needs to be urgent and immediate efforts made for creation of conditions for inmates to move back to their homes in safety so that they may be able to move out of the camps in due time and the health situation does not take further alarming and virulent proportions.

Discontinuation of treatment of chronic diseases

Another issue was continued treatment of chronic diseases. According to Akil Ansari, the volunteer taking care of medical relief at Dariyakhan Ghummat camp, there were over 20 cases of TB who had previously been under DOTS and other treatment. Similarly, there were reported to be above 50 TB patients in the Shah-e-Alam camp. However, follow up for those who were on DOTS treatment has not been taking place because most houses are burnt and so are the DOTS registration cards. Thus anti-TB treatment has been discontinued because of lack of access to health care facilities, related to the ongoing violence. Treatment for such patients of long term chronic diseases needs to be immediately resumed and regularly provided.

There are similar cases of hypertension and diabetes, where treatment has been discontinued because of lack of access to regular sources of health care.

Nutritional deficiency

Nutritional deficiency is another problem related to the qualitatively limited dietary intake available to the inmates. The frequency of meals and quality of meals is inadequate for children. Many women and children were found anaemic during the treatment session in Kalol camp, and we found over 25 malnourished children among those treated. There was a similar high proportion of malnourished children in the Fatepura camp.

The Dept. of Health, Gujarat Govt. conducted a study on malnutrition in one of the camps in Amdavad, and found the prevalence of malnutrition among children at 48%.

C. Mental health issues

Because we visited the camps nearly two months after the beginning of the violence, we could observe that a certain routine has been established. It is inevitable that survivors of the violence would make efforts to restore some normalcy in their lives. Regardless of this, we also found pervasive psychological stress and trauma. Those who had witnessed killings and/or lost members of their own families were the most severely affected. Many of them broke down while recounting the experiences. They were many who suffered from the more visible symptoms of the psychological distress, such as, insomnia, nightmares, bouts of crying, complete withdrawal.

In general among the survivors, the stress and the trauma was manifested both in physical and psychological symptoms. They expressed feelings of frustrations, helplessness and fatalism, agitation, anger and depression.

Case Study 3:

M is a 7 year old boy whom we met at the Kalol camp on 27th April, on the insistence of our volunteer friend. She told us that M couldn't walk and required immediate medical attention. This boy has lost both his parents and most of the family members in the communal violence.

M now stays with his grandmother in Kalol. When we reached his grandmother's place, M was sitting with one of his maternal uncle (Mammu) on the parapet outside the house. The moment he saw us entering and going close to him, he started crying even before the doctor friend from our team either spoke or touched him. Anyway, our doctor friend sat at a little distance and very softly asked the boy to walk towards him. M was still crying and looking at his Mammu for support. He did not want to walk. He got up with fear on his face, tears rolling down and trying to insist that he wouldn't be able to walk. However, the doctor's soft insistence and encouragement worked. Although it was just a few steps, holding hands of his Mammu to begin with, and then holding the doctor's hands, he walked on his own. He rested his supposedly injured right leg on the floor, while walking, for the first time in the last two months. The doctor then gently pressed his leg to examine as to where exactly was it hurting him and also the extent of the pain. And to our surprise, M said it was not hurting him anywhere despite pressing. Doctor gently checked as to what extent his foot could be bent and perhaps there was some pain the child felt.

The doctor diagnosed this as probably being a case of conversion reaction, (where physically there was nothing wrong with his leg but due to psychological reasons, the child felt that he was unable to walk.) *where the child's inability to walk was not due to any physical injury but due to extreme physiological trauma.* Then the doctor told the relatives some exercises for the child and reassured them.

We were told that M's parents were burnt alive and he had witnessed this incident. His grandmother, who was looking after the child, was also detected to be suffering from severe depression.

Case Study 4

We spoke to A in VS hospital, saw her husband and children being burnt alive. She herself was recuperating from burns (face downward). She hails from Karnataka but now she can't even go back to her native state. She was very disturbed and related how women were abused and burnt. The woman spoke of sexual violence and related how burnt swords were forced into women's vaginas. She herself was traumatised. Although she did not speak much, it was obvious she had been physically abused. She was feeling very helpless, not being able to save her family members. Her cousin who was looking after her also said that people were treated mercilessly by the mob.

The UNICEF had conducted a training programme for the medical officers deputed to provide medical care at the camps. They screened 723 children, using a structured protocol, for signs of mental trauma and found that 239 children required counselling (according to the protocol) – rephrased as 'parental support' in the interim report data. In addition, 12 children required referral to a psychiatric specialist. These findings seem to underestimate the extent of trauma. We have no information about whether the symptoms recorded in the protocol were probed or only recorded if reported spontaneously. Also we have no details about which children were screened.

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No assessment of the mental state of the adults has been done. However, it is clear that heinous unprovoked personal experiences of violence and a prolonged period of unabated violence has taken a heavy toll. The extremely hostile and uncertain atmosphere resulting in an inability of people to move out, look for work and have some occupation has led to feelings of depression and anger. Uncertainty about the future and loss of faith in the civil society and the State has led to a feeling of desperation.

Our observations are corroborated by the findings of another investigation team comprising of several medical experts as well as psychiatrists. Given below are some of the quotes that highlight the situation reflecting the immense gravity of the situation and the inadequacy of the relief efforts

"Unending violence, constant terror, official apathy and uncertainty make their future fragile. There is an urgent need to step up humanitarian efforts ..The psychological impact on victims of the communal violence is immense. Aid workers have cited an urgent need for counseling to help the victims cope with their trauma " - report facilitated by Oxfam India and Bangalore Initiative for Peace and Relief.

Sociologist Susan Vishwanathan told Channel newsasia, "The psychological degradation that comes from watching people closest to you being killed, raped, mutilated, ravaged. These [are] far greater than that of loss of material possessions." ("Refugees in Gujarat camps pray for more relief aids," Channel newsasia)

Rape victims are also in desperate need of psychological support." ("We Have No Orders to Save You"; State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat - report by Human Rights Watch.)

The appalling response of the State to acknowledging the extent and impact of sexual assault has been discussed extensively in the last few days. What effect the failure to even register an FIR of a heinous crime on oneself can have on the mental state a woman is more than obvious as total denial and utter callousness characterize the State machinery.

The attitude of the medical professionals and the camp volunteers towards the mental health needs of the inmates was strikingly different. The medical officers providing medical care at the camp consistently undermined the importance of dealing with psychological trauma. At the vigilance meeting of the medical officers deputed to the relief camps, which we attended, they constantly cited the above-mentioned UNICEF study to indicate that the scale of the problem is very small. It appeared quite clearly that they did not want to engage themselves with the problem of providing counseling and wanted to limit their intervention to treating their physical ailments. There was clear indication that there was a strong reluctance to acknowledge that any such problem exists. Additionally, as a senior official commented the doctors attending the camps are 'not capable' of assessing or treating symptoms of psychological distress.

A senior Govt, health administrator also opined, "the camp inmates do not have brains to understand that they are suffering from stress and mental trauma".

On the other hand, the camp volunteers were extremely concerned about the mental state of the survivors. They spent several hours talking to the people and listening to them. In several places, they had organized makeshift schools for the children and also games. Their role in providing

emotional support to the survivors is very important. However, given that they have already spent more than two months providing support, they themselves are feeling fatigued. In this context, such volunteers would benefit from some training inputs and appropriate referral support for seriously disturbed cases. These volunteers themselves need to be able to discuss and share with others about the mental health trauma, which they are witnessing and counseling on a daily basis.

S, a young woman, who works as a primary school teacher has been volunteering her services at a relief camp in Amdavad for the last two months. She said, "What they (camp inmates) want now is to be able to go home. They are tired and depressed. We give them food and clothes, but there is nothing that belongs to them, what they can call their own." Later she also talked of how it was getting increasingly difficult for her to cope.

D. Profile of general illnesses among the camp inmates

We gained some idea of the profile of general illnesses among camp inmates, based on our experience of conducting treatment sessions at some of the rural camps.

We treated over 100 patients at Kalol camp, and about 80 patients at Fatepura camp during the treatment sessions conducted by us. Most of the patients we saw were children and women.

- The common health problems encountered among children were:
Diarrhea, cold and cough, viral fever, conjunctivitis, bronchopneumonia, amoebiasis, scabies, dermatitis, infected small wounds and ear infections.
- Among adults (mostly women), common general illnesses encountered were:
Headache and bodyache, anaemia, backache, asthma and chronic bronchitis, piles, constipation, eczema, conjunctivitis, loss of appetite, amoebic dysentery, acidity and stomatitis.
- Special conditions seen by us, such as psychological problems and problems related to womens' reproductive health are described in the separate sections on these problems.

E. Long term rehabilitation needs

Given the massive scale of physical and psychological injury inflicted upon the victims of violence, there is a major need to plan and implement rehabilitation measures.

Some of the issues, which emerged in this regard, are outlined below.

i)Physiotherapy, disability prevention and prostheses

During our visits to the camps and hospitals, we met several persons with sequelae of injuries. We met young men with amputations of the hand or foot, burn victims and persons with post-fracture disabilities.

Such persons suffering from various forms of disabilities obviously need regular physiotherapy from trained specialists, which is presently largely unavailable. Especially those with burns require physiotherapy to prevent disability due to contractors. Those with amputations and orthopedic disabilities may also require prostheses.

Case Study 5:

Y is an adolescent aged 16 years, from Naroda Patiya whom we met in the Shah Alam camp on 16 April. According to his description, a frenzied mob of several thousand people attacked Y and his family on 28 February. They were beaten up while the police looked on passively. Later, the mob used acid to burn Y and his father. His father's face was burnt and now Y is suffering from acid burns below the waist. The police admitted him to the civil hospital on 28 February. He received medication and treatment at the hospital and is now back at the camp. Y observed that 24-25 burn cases were admitted along with him.

ii) Counselling, psychological and social support

The scale and depth of psychological trauma undergone by the victims of violence has already been described above. Post traumatic stress disorder is prevalent, especially among women and children who have suffered or witnessed horrific physical violence and sexual abuse. Sensitive counseling and psychological support to such victims for a sustained period of time is of utmost importance. Counseling for the survivors of sexual assault (see section below) and for traumatized and bereaved children needs special attention. While family and community members may participate in this process, there is a clear need for regular professional intervention. Community volunteers in the camps are even presently trying to give some informal counseling to victims in an extremely difficult situation. However, there is a definite need for training and continuing support to such volunteers, so that they can assist in the counseling process more effectively.

Besides this, it may be kept in mind that continuing fear and anxiety compounds the mental trauma already undergone by the victims. Keeping this in mind, there is a need to create definitive and effective safety mechanisms for victims and their families, so that they may return to normal as soon as possible.

The continuing, very real perception of injustice having being perpetrated on a massive scale, aggravates the existing psychological trauma of victims. This underlines the need for legal and social assistance to the victims, to get redressal and justice.

Thus for medically assisting the survivors of psycho-social trauma, the treatment centers invariably should have both components integrated by making the medical work itself a legal investigation and record for the benefit of the survivor, and by creating strong support and referral structures for availing of protection and rehabilitation.

iii) Compensation

The state government has initiated the process of awarding compensation to the victims of violence, and in Amdavad, surveys have already started and different categories of loss have been formulated.

However, it is suggested that a framework of reparation should be used to decide compensation. This would ensure that compensation would take into account not only loss of property, but also the trauma suffered by victims. An independent committee should decide the compensation amounts based on such guidelines.

iv) Shelter and Livelihood

Certain guidelines need to be followed in this regard:

- The state should allocate land to people who want to shift from camps into safe localities of their choice. Using the monetary compensation for damage to their houses, they could reconstruct their houses in such areas.
- As long as people do not want to relocate, they should be allowed to remain in the camps.
- The camps should not be dismantled without consultation with camp organisers and the victims living in camps.

A differential rehabilitation package should be formulated for those who wish to return to their original places of residence and those who do not want to go back for fear of further attacks. For single women, the state should provide separate housing if need be, as was done after the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, where single women got free flats.

To ensure complete safety of the people who want to return to their houses and localities, state action to effectively control and inhibit mob or individual attacks needs to be enforced. Peace and security need to be restored in these localities, with a clear perception that anyone instigating violence will be strictly punished. Those guilty for the incidents which have taken place need to be given exemplary punishment, failing which there will be no real deterrent to violence and no real rehabilitation.

Various activities to restore livelihood to people who have been dislocated by the violence is an essential component of the rehabilitation process. Livelihood programmes should be designed, keeping in account the concerns and capacities of the affected community, and should facilitate the transition from relief to rehabilitation.

Telephone connections with a helpline should be made available to disabled persons, especially women. This would improve communications between the community and the external world and ensure security, trust building and referrals.

IV. Health problems specific to women

While interviewing women in the relief camps, we specifically investigated into the health problems faced by them.

Pregnant and lactating women

Although there is official provision for supplementary food for pregnant and lactating women, we did not actually find any such provision in the camps that we visited. A few women who had delivered recently were residing in the camps. Camp volunteers informed us that it was extremely difficult to care for them in the open camps while living in tents. Milk powder was supplied to families, which was used for children, infants as well as pregnant women. A dai expressed her concern for the pregnant and lactating women. She had assisted in many of the deliveries. In fact, people from the neighbouring areas prepared 'sira' -- a healthy diet for the mother. However, they could not sustain it for long, because they too are not earning these days. She felt more nutrition and vitamins (shakti ka botal) are needed. Women also require sanitary napkins.

There was no provision for bathing in the tents itself and the common bathrooms would have to be used. One can only imagine how difficult it must have been to care for the newly delivered mothers and neonates. In one camp, we were told that the tent used to house the new mothers itself had become overcrowded because several women delivered at the same time.

Overall physiological and psychological problems

Hygiene related problems were noticeable among women. Especially, in the rural areas, there were numerous cases of reproductive and urinary tract infections. Several cases of polymenorrhea, dysmenorrhea and menstrual irregularity were encountered among women inmates in the camps which we visited. The onset of these problems was related to the violence and shifting to the camps. The severe psychological and physical stress which women have undergone is likely to be responsible for such changes in the menstrual cycle. Chronic vaginal discharge (vaginal infections) was also reported by several women.

V. Survivors of sexual assault

A. Profile of the survivors

Muslim women and girls have been the victims of most brutal forms of sexual violence in both urban and rural areas of Gujarat. *No fact-finding report has recorded such incident regarding Hindu women.*

There is, however, no official admission, either by police or by the health care machinery of the fact that sexual abuse was perpetrated at such a large scale. Nowhere the sexual abuse has been mentioned in the medical records of whatever kind concerning dead or surviving women. Also, there are no FIRs barring one or two cases. The issue of sexual assault remains grossly underreported in the media too.

Though it is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact number of sexual assault cases, the number is large enough to indicate that sexual assault was a widely and consciously perpetrated crime against women. Women's bodies were turned into battlefields in order to perpetrate hate and dishonour and assault the pride, dignity and integrity of the whole community. (Ref. pamphlets circulated by Sangh parivar, Communal Combat, Mar-Apr, 2002)

All accounts by the survivors indicate that everywhere women were beaten up, stripped naked, gang /mass raped, stabbed with iron rods/ swords/ sticks and then doused with petrol/ kerosene and set on fire. Many women, especially young girls were burnt alive. In case of pregnant women, there have been instances of cutting open their abdomens and then killing the fetuses. There have been cases of mutilation and disfigurement, viz, cutting off breasts, carving "Om" on foreheads, chopping of limbs, thrusting cricket bails / sticks or swords into women's vaginas. In some areas the abusers themselves stripped to further humiliate women. *All these are pointers of a pattern behind this violence.*

Large scale burning of rape victims indicates that the mobs were instructed not to leave behind any trace of evidence. All the eyewitness accounts corroborate this fact. Mobs had come prepared with weapons, petrol/ kerosene/ chemicals and gas cylinders and were shouting, "jala do, saboot mat chhodo".

Case Study 6:

In an urban camp, volunteers reported that women were brought in naked and burnt condition. Some are kept in separate room with more fans as they have sustained severe burn injuries. Two young girls, who are recently sent back from civil hospital, were gang raped and burnt. Their wounds are not yet completely healed. They have difficulty in walking, probably due to the rape since they don't have burn injuries on their legs.

One of them shows symptoms of severe depression. She comes across as a living corpse. The other girl has a son who is extremely scared by her since she threw him away from her body to save him from fire. He thinks she wanted to kill him. Camp volunteers try to cheer her up time and again.

Many women are still in a state of shock and trauma. They are not willing to talk or complain to police. Even when some victims have dared to speak out, no FIR has been lodged or arrest has taken place. Hence women have lost faith in police or state machinery. The other reason is the fear of adverse publicity their testimonies will draw. They are apprehensive about their names appearing in newspapers and on television. They have not probably complained to the health care providers as well.

Case Study 7:

B has named the rapists in her FIR but no arrests have taken place. In her case medical examination was done after six days on insistence of the collector. It confirmed rape. This is an exceptional example.) She has fractures and other wounds on her hand which are not completely healed. She is withdrawn.

B. Assessment of specific health care needs

There are many women in an urban camp who are still recovering from the burn injuries. Some women who have healed only partially have gone to their relatives. *All these women will need long-term care*, essential for burn patients, particularly for the morbidities like deformation of limbs and other body parts. Some women could not walk when they were brought in as their genitals were torn as a result of gang rapes. Even today, some of them have difficulty in walking. *Though many of them have received some primary treatment, long-term treatment remains a question mark.*

In every case of sexual abuse, RTIs, STDs including HIV and pregnancy are a possibility. No measure seems to have been taken in terms of detection and further action. A strategy needs to be urgently worked out to put some measures in place to assess the actual prevalence of RTIs/ STDs/ HIV and pregnancy. Convergence of different social action groups is required since the camp volunteers are over-worked at present. The overall task of running the camps is so overwhelming that it leaves no room for the camp volunteers to take any pro-active role in this matter.

The assessment of PTSD and actual provision of counseling are the other crucial areas that have remained hitherto neglected. Women are traumatized not only by the sexual assault but also because of the killings and brutalisation of their family members, relatives and neighbours. There is an intense sense of insecurity and frustration. Many women break down repeatedly while narrating their experience. Many show symptoms like insomnia, nightmares, complete

withdrawal, shaking and trembling, and lack of appetite. *There is an urgent need for counseling women witnesses and victims alike.*

The health care needs of survivors of sexual assault can be summarised as -

- Treatment for the injuries of all kinds, genital as well as injuries due to stabbing, cutting, beating or burning
- Assessment of the morbidities like damage to the genitals and other pelvic organs and pregnancies, RTIs/ STDs including HIV
- Psychiatric care and counseling, in particular, for PTSD

C. Availability of services to survivors

From all accounts, it is clear that in the first few days, the volunteers from the community alone organized medical help along with shelter and food. In Amdavad city, women were brought in stark naked and burnt condition. Inmates from camps that we visited corroborated this fact. In some camps, the volunteers had to bury the dead bodies that arrived in the backyard grave without any medical examination. No medical records could be kept. There is every likelihood that some of the bodies were of women assaulted sexually.

From the camps many women were sent to civil or VS hospital mostly for burn injuries. Volunteers say that these women received some treatment for rape related problems in these hospitals but probably it was not recorded in the medical documents. One Muslim woman doctor from a public hospital, however, replied that she was not aware of such atrocities. When asked about the need for assessment of morbidities and pregnancy as an outcome of rapes, she remarked that pregnancy was not a problem as the women were already married; none of them was virgin anyway! Dr Makwana, CMO, AMC did not have any information on the state of women who suffered sexual abuse or on what medical treatment they received. It is possible that he did not have any information on this topic, as it does not strictly fall under the purview of "public health". A woman volunteer, a *dai* by training, helped some women. She removed objects like cricket bats and sticks from vaginas of some women and also stitched up vaginal tears in few women. She reported mutilation of body parts in case of few women.

In one of the rural camp, women told us that many Muslim families had fled to Rajasthan for first few days. They received medical treatment in the hospital there. *However, several women reported moderate to severe RTIs to us. They expressed a strong demand for a woman gynaecologist to visit them.*

In no camp were we told of efforts to provide psychiatric counseling to these women by government doctors or ANMs. The counseling and emotional support that is available to these women is only from the camp volunteers.

Many women have gone back from the camps, mostly to the homes of their relatives and are thus lost to the follow up.

VI. State response to the Health care needs of the survivors in relief camps

As noted above, a range of health care services are required at the camps. Besides, there is large scale need of curative care at the hospitals necessarily because of the character of the violence -

physical attacks, stabbing, acid bomb attacks causing fatal burns, use of sharp instruments, fire arms. However, in reality, people with seriously or fatal injuries approached or were brought to the camps on a very large scale. There are two reasons as to why people with such serious or fatal injuries landed up in camps and not hospitals. Firstly, camps were perceived to be safer and more accessible, which would provide them security. Secondly, people were very uncertain about their own safety while trying to reach hospitals for the treatment. Continued violence in localities and around hospitals, have compounded the uncertainty and fear in minds of people regarding access to hospitals.

This complex situation actually has placed a unique challenge in front of the health care system of providing quality health care services within the camps and putting a workable referral and follow-up system in place.

In the discussion that follows, the system developed by the public health system, to reach out to the camp inmates to attend to their health care needs is described.

A. Organisational system

The Gujarat state Health department and the Health department of the local government (Amdavad Municipal Corporation) are collaborating, with a clear division of labour, as regards provision of health care services to the inmates of relief camps.

As a response to the health care needs of the survivors of the communal violence at the relief camps, the authorities at the Civil hospital have put in place quite a streamlined system. Under the supervision and leadership of one of the senior officials at the Civil hospital, Sola a team of about 88 MOs (as per the official source of data) has been involved in reaching out to the relief camps. Medical officers from the government health system are deputed in rotation to form this team. Administratively, no causes for refusing deputation are accepted. Medical officers may request for change of the schedule but cannot abstain from being part of this state organized medical relief work. The medical relief team is now being strengthened with 20 more MOs. *But we did not observe a single woman doctor in this reasonably large medical relief team.*

Besides this team, there are mobile vans for medical relief work, supported by ESIS. Thus, according to the official data another 21 MOs from ESIS are involved in the relief work.

Composition of the teams visiting camps: Teams, each consisting of 1- 3 MOs, 2-4 male Multi Purpose Workers (MPWs) / nurses and a pharmacist, are deployed for visiting the camps. They are expected to visit the camps at least once in two days. The camps which are larger in terms of number of inmates are expected to be visited daily. The teams provide clinical services and referral.

In addition, there were 12 teams available for visiting on call for MLA constituencies. Teams of officials for public health issues like drinking water, sanitation, immunization etc. have also been constituted.

Planning the camp visits: The entire relief team along with their in-charge meet daily at the Civil hospital, Sola to review the work and assess the health situation. This meeting is also to discuss the problems that are being faced by the MOs and others while engaged in relief work. The daily logistics are planned a day in advance. The schedules – team members, time schedule, names of the camps to be visited - are shared with all the members of this larger relief team.

Logistics are decided on the basis of distance from Sola Civil Hospital and number of inmates. Security is sought for if needed, and if a camp is considered sensitive then this is a factor that affects the regularity of visits.

Health care service profile and record keeping: We were told that each camp inmate has a Health Card issued by the health department. We could not get the sample health card at the Civil hospital at Sola. Also, such cards were not found with the camp inmates when we visited. Some such gaps between the official sources and the ground realities at the camps perhaps exist.

Saturday is an immunization day for all the camps. Generally, the MOs would get the instructions about the significance of maintaining the cold chain and the use of disposable syringes as regards the immunizations. They were clearly told to dispose of the vaccines in case cold chain is disturbed for any unavoidable reasons. DPT, Polio, Measles for children and Tetanus toxoid (TT) for pregnant women are being offered. We were told that the pregnant women and lactating mothers are being provided extra food through ICDS. However, our interactions with the inmates of the camps, both from the urban and rural areas, indicate that these services were inadequate and not all camps were benefited of these services.

MOs reported that there has been no major outbreak of communicable diseases among the inmates. This was in contradiction with our observations in some of the camps (see above).

Protection to the medical relief teams visiting to the camps: It was reported that department of police has offered security measures to these teams visiting the camps. In the routine vigilance committee meeting that we attended, MOs categorically mentioned that till date they did not ever feel threatened inside the relief camps while providing health care services. However, at times the curfew bound areas on the way to the camps have proved an obstacle for them to reach camps as per the schedule. Anyway, the in-charge requested the MOs during the meeting, that he be informed if any team felt the need to have security, and appropriate arrangements would be made.

B. Adequacy and regularity of medical staff

It is certainly commendable to have such a system in place, which is expected to reach out to the camps. Such teams would also refer cases to the appropriate hospitals when necessary. The team of about 60-70 medical professionals does seem to be impressive. However, it needs to be seen in the light of the health care needs of the people affected due to the violence. For example, there are about 68 relief camps in Ahmadabad city alone, as per the records at Health Dept, AMC. We were able to get recent (daily updated) information regarding 48 of these camps from the AMC, according to which there were 55186 inmates in these camps, or an average of 1150 inmates per camp. Although the number of inmates at the various camps fluctuates almost daily, taking the above average, the total number for 68 camps would have been above 70,000.

The teams of about 2/3 MOs makes it possible to form about 20-25 teams daily visiting about 20-25 camps or double if two camps are visited in a day. This means that camps would be visited either daily or once in two days. There are no other health care service providers, such as, nurses or other paramedics based at the camps as part of the public health care service provision. Given the fear among the inmates about getting out of the camps for anything including health care needs, this creates a gap in services. The inmates are left to look after themselves regarding their health care needs, between visits by teams.

Another fact we observed was the differing levels of services being provided to various camps. Certain larger or 'high profile' camps received more regular inputs, while especially the rural camps were significantly underserved in the respect.

Perceptions of camp inmates about the services being provided were somewhat varied. On one hand, the visits by the teams were appreciated as being one regular service which they were receiving in a situation when they could not move out. However, the actual time spent by the staff in the camp was perceived as being inadequate. Another complaint concerned the range of drugs for various conditions available with the teams. There was a perception that the range was limited, which was borne out by the requests for various drugs for patients, being received from the camps by the Citizens Initiative. Several emergency care medicines not available with the ambulatory care team.

On the converse side, insecurity to the staff causing irregularity in visits to sensitive areas like Juhapura, is acknowledged by the inmates.

In most of the *rural camps* we visited, medical services were perceived as being much more inadequate. We were told that government doctors visited them very irregularly if at all and that the drugs dispensed were of an extremely limited range.

The picture seemed unsatisfactory as far as outreach of or follow up with *specialized health care services* were concerned. The relief team was also not constituted keeping this point in mind. The constraints and time pressures can be understood on part of the government officials, but the fact remains that the inmates are virtually without attention of specialized health care services when required. For example, those who have been treated for injuries of brutal attacks and are cured may require physiotherapy and follow-up services to avoid permanent disabilities. There is hardly any follow up with specialist teams, such as, pediatricians for children; gynaecologists for women; psychiatrists and counselors for those with mental health problems; physicians for women, adolescents and the elderly and orthopedic specialists and physiotherapists for injuries.

A simple issue, but of much significance to the users of services, was the question of privacy while getting examined which was not taken account of in the camps. In fact, one wonders how women were examined in such overcrowded camps, without compromising on their privacy. Also, auxiliary services such as mobile laboratories and X-ray facilities were not found to be available.

Fresh Training to meet specific health care needs of riot survivors: Medical relief work in such context would require a different approach and also additional skills. For example, to be able to assess mental health care needs of the violence affected. However, except one training conducted by UNICEF (as discussed in the section on mental health in this report) to assess mental health care needs among children, there were no efforts.

Funds: We were told that the special relief funds of Rs 2 lakhs/day have been budgeted for health care service provision. In addition, there are some funds available from international voluntary agencies such as UNICEF.

C. Service provision by the state at a glance

Based on the data obtained from the health department, AMC and from the authorities at the State Health department run Civil hospital, Sola following is the profile of the health care services offered and camps/population covered.

Human power available to provide health care services to 57 camps (as on April 25, '02)

<i>Type of human resources</i>	<i>From the state department</i>	<i>From the ESIS</i>	<i>Total</i>
Medical officers (MOs)	88	21	109
Paramedic staff	71	21	92

- Health cards issued to patients – 74,277

Cumulative figures regarding patients seen in camps as on 25 April, 2002

- Total Male adult patients (new) – 78,868
- Total Female adult patients (new) – 1,03,554
- Total child patients (new) – 88,483
- New injuries treated – 3,023
- New cases of Diarrhoea / Gastroenteritis – 11,820
- New cases of Acute respiratory infections (below 5 yrs) – 16,690
- New cases of fever – 15,640
- 'Other' cases (new) – 2,13,659
- Referrals – 679
- Total new cases seen – 2,70,815

Some features emerge from these rather bare figures. Firstly, the vast majority (almost 80%) of cases have been classified as 'other' with no further breakup. We have no way of knowing what the majority of patients seen were suffering from! This points to a need for refining the recording system. Secondly, only 0.25% of the new patients seen were referred, which is an extremely low proportion, given the types of injuries and mental health problems suffered by the victims. This confirms our impression that referral linkages were poorly developed. Thirdly, women are clearly the single largest category of patients, and women and children together constitute over 70% of the new patients. Special services for these groups, including gynecologic and pediatric services, are clearly required.

VII. Voluntary response to the health care needs of camp inmates

Besides the central responsibility of public agencies, voluntary initiatives have a complementary yet critical role to play in providing relief in crisis situations. We found that volunteers from within the Muslim community have risen to the occasion and have been making commendable, strenuous attempts to cope with a situation where the entire community is under tremendous pressure. However, broader voluntary relief efforts from beyond the Muslim community have been strangely muted, with certain notable and exemplary exceptions.

A. Voluntary health care efforts from within the Muslim community

In the initial days (February 28th to March 5th), the local volunteers provided the only medical care available to the survivors. We heard reports of burns victims too being treated in the camp itself. In one camp, stab and sword wounds had been sutured by a paramedic. The mostly seriously injured had to be shifted to hospital, often under difficult and dangerous circumstances. This too was largely organized by the camp volunteers.

In most of the camps we visited, one person has been involved in providing medical care to the inmates. In some camps that we visited, we found one or more such persons.

Jahangir nagar – pharmacist

Daryakhan Ghummat – operation theatre assistant

Shah Alam – Midwife

Fatepura – assistant in medical store

In the Godhra camp however, we found that there was provision of 24 hour medical care provided voluntarily by a team of trained doctors from Godhra, working as a Rescue Relief Committee. There was a full fledged medical unit in place here. In the urban camps, mainly Muslim doctors, (including many non-allopaths) in the surrounding area have been providing free medical care to those inmates of the camps who came to their clinics. In most of the village camps, there was virtually no health care available, except for the brief visits by the CHC staff made once a day. Women themselves had conducted several deliveries in the camps. In some cases, women had used the dai delivery kits supplied by the UNICEF and Red Cross.

In both Amdavad and Godhra, we found that some hospitals and nursing homes belonging to Muslim Trusts or doctors had made their services available free of charge for survivors. However, the problem of referral was made even more difficult due to the continuing violence. Patients were unwilling to venture out of the camps and travel to the hospitals, in both the rural and urban areas.

There did not appear to be any organised effort on the part of the public health services to tie up with such efforts from within the community. The public health system could have more effectively provided referral support and drug supply to help such initiatives within the camps. The exception was Godhra where we found a level of collaboration between official and voluntary medical agencies.

Medical care for those who were not in the camps, but staying with relatives was also difficult to obtain. The sudden imposition of curfew in different parts of Amdavad prevented many of them from reaching hospitals.

B. Health care efforts from the broader voluntary sector

Efforts by voluntary agencies from outside the Muslim community were very inadequate, with just a few agencies standing out due to their committed efforts. While, in the initial phase, international agencies such the Red Cross and UNICEF have provided some services, many other agencies are conspicuous by their absence. *This situation was sharply in contrast to the relief efforts initiated immediately after the earthquake in Kutch in January 2001.*

Large charitable trusts and NGOs within Gujarat, known for their charitable work otherwise, did not deem it fit to respond to the humanitarian crisis. One major exception has been the Citizen's Initiative, a network of non-governmental organisations, which has been largely involved in supplying drugs to camp organisers as and when they requested for them. They were not in a position to provide actual medical care in the camps since they did not have medical experts as part of their network. However, they were playing an important role in sustaining the efforts of the local volunteers, providing transport for those who needed to be shifted to hospitals and making arrangements for treatment, both at the government and private hospitals. Similarly, in rural camps in Panchmahals and Dahod, ANANDI, an NGO working with rural and tribal women, has been reaching out to the relief camps and making attempts to make available referral support to those with serious health problems.

SAHRWARU is an NGO based in Amdavad, working with the urban poor, which has been involved in intensive relief work with specific urban slum communities. Notably, we found that the presence of such non religious organisations was very important in establishing links with the government institutions and also in dialoguing with state officials.

We would like to place on record the exemplary initiatives observed by us, such as Citizen's Initiative and ANANDI, and logistical support for medical relief from Xavier's Social Service Society. Besides these notable exceptions, in the nine camps that we visited and the large number of people we talked to, we found a paucity of involvement of developmental agencies, NGOs, membership clubs, community health organisations or medical associations, to make organised efforts to provide humanitarian medical care to those affected by violence.

VIII. Provision of medical services to the survivors by public hospitals

Besides the provision of health care in the camps, hospitals have an indispensable role in providing medical care to those who have more serious or special health problems. In this regard, we mainly gathered information in Amdavad city, and focussed our attention on the role of public hospitals. We obtained various kinds of information through discussions with camp inmates (who had accessed hospital services), interviews of staff and patients in hospitals, and discussions with doctors working in various hospitals.

Amdavad is characterized by fairly large number of government hospitals, both run by the Amdavad Municipal Corporation (LG, VS, SCL) and by the state government – two civil hospitals.

On the whole, the impression we obtained from almost all sources, including the camp inmates, indicated that individual doctors working in hospitals have worked strenuously, often around the clock, to deal with the large number of violence victims. This needs to be placed on record, and *the efforts of many committed doctors, nurses and hospital staff to provide care to victims in a demanding situation needs to be appreciated.*

However, there have been many larger forces and factors at work, which have been responsible for restricting the effectiveness of hospitals in providing care especially to the minority community. *The sanctity of hospitals as humanitarian spaces, where all should be able to receive treatment without fear, has been violated.* In some situations, doctors were even pressurized or threatened for making efforts to treat minority patients (see the section regarding attacks on doctors and hospitals). We formed certain impressions about specific issues that have emerged concerning public hospitals during this crisis, which are outlined below.

A. Religion-wise segregation of hospitals

A senior medical consultant from L.G. Hospital told us that informally, both the hospital authorities and common people have to some extent segregated hospitals according to the religion of patients to whom they mainly provide services. He told us that there is an unwritten guideline that if patients of the other religion land up, they should be transferred to a 'safer' hospital. This segregation, which has become accentuated during the recent violence, is partly related to the geographical location of hospitals; certain hospitals which are located in Hindu majority areas are not so frequently accessed by Muslim patients.

On the whole, there was an impression among camp inmates that V.S. hospital is a comparatively 'safe' hospital for Muslims. However, certain other hospitals have not been accessed by Muslims as frequently during the violence. There was a case in the Civil Hospital during the 1992 communal violence, when a Muslim burns patient admitted in the hospital was thrown off the roof of the hospital. Such incidents naturally tend to create a feeling of insecurity among Muslim patients regarding certain hospitals.

B. Mobs creating terror and Muslim patients being unable to access hospitals

Patients, hospital staff and doctors – all told us about the events of large mobs, usually of the majority community, gathering in front of some hospitals or in the hospital compounds, especially during the initial days after the outbreak of violence. These mobs were intimidating to Muslims attempting to bring new patients to the hospital. There were instances where patients were forced to go back from the hospital gates itself, because of the mobs threatening such patients.

Case study 8

SB from relief camp No. 78, took her son having a sword injury, to V.S. hospital on 22nd April. A large group of persons gathered outside the hospital told her – “the doctors inside are very busy....your son cannot be treated here” and said “if you go inside you will get killed”. She came back without being able to get treatment for her son at the hospital. Later she went to a private practitioner for treatment of her son.

However, hospital authorities have provided security staff outside the hospital and even in some of the wards after the initial incidents. That this is not always sufficient is borne out by the case reported below, which appeared in a major national newspaper.

The Times of India, 8 May, Amdavad

The intense communal discord raised it's ugly even at the Municipal V.S. Hospital where ambulances carrying injured persons from Juhapura were attacked by a mob. One occupant of an ambulance received a big gash on his neck.

The myth of V.S. Hospital being a safe haven for Muslim patients lay shattered as the mob prevented the entry of the two ambulances. “They are killing our people. They should not be allowed to take treatment here”, the mob reportedly shouted, blocking the way of the incoming ambulances.

Lack of access to hospitals was a problem, which was encountered at various levels, even before patients could reach the hospitals.

Lack of access to hospitals was a problem, which was encountered at various levels, even before patients could reach the hospitals.

Case study 1 (cont.):

J., a 13 year old boy with eye injury has been mentioned above in section III (Health problems among camp inmates). As described above, he was prematurely discharged from the Civil Hospital on 4th March, after operating his eye. In mid April, two (Hindu) women lawyers from a non-governmental organisation, who had visited the camp, tried to escort J. to the Nagri eye hospital. On the way, they were stopped by the police, who asked them about their religion. When told that two of them were Hindu and two were Muslim, the policeman turned them back, saying that it was not safe for a mixed group to travel further.

C. Threat of violence to patients within hospitals

We also received reports of individuals and large groups (upto 50-100 persons), at times armed, sometimes circulating in certain of the wards of hospitals. Such groups would talk in a violent

language about people of the other community, and would create an atmosphere of fear. What is even more serious are the incidents reported to us, of occasional attempts to inflict violence upon patients within the hospital. Although probably such incidents were uncommon, the very fact that a few such instances were reported is a serious issue concerning the security of patients in the hospital. It also reflects the mentality of the attackers who did not even spare seriously injured patients from violent attack.

Case study:

S. M., aged 24, is a young man whom we met in an orthopaedic ward of V.S. Hospital on 28th April. He was injured on 5th April at about 10 p.m., when a bomb was thrown at him when he was sitting at the family owned STD booth in Vatva. The bomb exploded on his right hand, severely injuring his thumb and he was brought to VS Hospital at around 12 p.m. His father recalls that at that time there was a large mob from the majority community, milling around on the ground floor of the hospital building. In the hospital there had also been brought some injured Hindu patients and their relatives from Vatva area, from near S.M.'s locality where the clashes and violence had taken place.

S.M. was taken to the operation theatre at around 3.30 a.m. and the surgeon went out to obtain the signature of his father on the operation consent form. At this time, there was no one in the OT except S.M.. Then, according to him, three persons entered the OT and asked him his name. After S.M. told them his name, one of them said 'hold him', and two of the men grabbed each of his arms. When S.M. asked them '*kya kar rahe ho*' one of them said '*operation kar rahe hain*'. Then, the third person attempted to suffocate him with a pillow (head support) kept in the OT. S.M. struggled, kicked and managed to throw them off and resist, after which the attackers fled from the OT. Shortly after this, the surgeon returned. S.M.'s right thumb was subsequently operated upon and amputated because of the severity of the damage.

According to S.M., he has not formally complained about this incident to the attending doctors because he is afraid that it might affect their attitude towards him as a patient. However he has talked to a number of persons including leaders of his community who were visiting the hospital, about the incident. He is extremely satisfied with the treatment being given by the doctors and hospital staff, and says that he has not experienced any discrimination by any hospital staff. He feels that he has been given very good medical treatment in the hospital.

Regarding the attackers, S.M. says he does not recognise any of them, and suspects that they were from outside the hospital. He says that presently security has been provided in the hospital ward. We also talked to the surgeon who had operated upon S.M., to obtain his version about this incident. He said he was unaware of this and denied that such an incident could take place.

While the incident in the above case study could not be confirmed from independent sources, there were also other reports of violence by probable outsiders entering wards and attempting to harm patients.

We met G. M. on 28th April in one of the wards of V.S. Hospital, where he had come for the treatment of his son's injuries. He told us about an incident on 2nd April in one section of the Trauma Ward. G.M. was attending to his injured son, and another young man named F. was also admitted in the ward for treatment of serious injuries. According to G.M., a man came in and tried to strangle F. However, one of the ward nurses saw this and raised an alarm, after which the attacker ran away.

This incident was independently cited to us by a senior doctor associated with one of the public hospitals, when we were discussing with him about the issue of security in hospitals.

Another issue, which emerged regarding hospitals related to premature discharge of Muslim patients in certain instances (see the case of J. described in Section III). While such decisions were ostensibly taken with the objective of ensuring the safety of patients, they confirm the fact that even doctors perceived that patients and their attendants were not entirely secure even within hospitals. The appropriate action by the authorities in such a situation would have been to ensure adequate security, rather than discharging the patients.

IX. Impact on health professionals

We examined the impact of the violence as well as its underlying processes on health professions in three aspects - participation of health professionals in the violence and polarization within the profession; possibility of discrimination by health professionals against patients of the minority community; attacks on the medical professionals and other losses suffered by them.

A. Participation of health professionals in the violence and polarization within the profession

We had several interviews with representatives of the medical profession, doctors from both the public and private sector, paramedical staff as well as others associated with the health field. From the interviews, our general impression has been that polarization has taken place in general within the medical profession.

Unfortunately certain medical professionals have also been involved in propagating an ideology of hatred. As members of the BJP and the VHP these professionals have also been responsible, directly or indirectly, in perpetrating grave injury to Muslims in Gujarat. They have played a role that runs counter to their professional calling as physicians and is a blot on the medical profession.

Pravin Togadia (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, International General Secretary) Jaideep Patel (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Joint Secretary, Chief), and Maya Kodnani (M.L.A, Naroda) are three notable instances of medical professionals directly involved in the carnage. Apart from making incendiary statements and provoking violence, they have been named in police complaints as assailants in different incidents in Naroda and Gomtipura in Amdavad. Although this only pertains to certain members of the profession, no cognizance has been taken of their actions and no action has been taken against them by any of the medical associations either. The role of the professional bodies, both statutory and voluntary, in safeguarding the integrity of their members is very important. The failure of these bodies to even comment on the behaviour of members of their own fraternity is inexcusable.

However, the passivity of the bodies representing the medical profession is indicative of much more deep-rooted polarization within the professionals. One doctor, who was earlier an office bearer of the IMA in Godhra reported that after a change of leadership, the current office bearers had stopped invited Muslim doctors to meetings of the local IMA. It is well known and openly acknowledged that certain medical associations have political affiliations with right wing groups. (National Medicos Organisation, Amdavad Doctors' Forum).

It is noteworthy that the Amdavad Medical Association (which has as its members 90 percent of the registered allopathic practitioners in Amdavad as its members) has not publicly condemned the attack on doctors during the violence. On being asked by us, why, unlike the earthquake,

where the AMA had immediately sent a relief team, it has not participated in the relief work in the camps, we were informed that there was a problem of safety.

The office bearer of the AMA contacted by us reported that they had sent a letter to the state government asking for security so that doctors Hindu doctors practicing in Muslim areas and vice versa could safely go to their workplaces and also provide services at the camps. He also said that police pickets should be provided outside the doctors' dispensaries to provide protection.

He asserted that 'no Muslim doctor had been attacked in Hindu areas.' On the fact that some establishments of Muslim doctors had been destroyed, he was of the opinion that the damage was accidental. He was of the opinion that they caught fire due to the fact that they were adjoining other Muslim establishments. He felt that no one would deliberately destroy medical establishments. However, our own observation seems to suggest that shops and establishments were quite systematically burnt and it is therefore very unlikely that they were accidentally destroyed or that they could not be identified as medical establishments.

The refusal of the medical associations to even acknowledge that attacks had taken place on Muslim doctors and their property, is very striking. It was very clear that the medical association does not want to take a stand in an issue where the doctors of the minority community have been the main victims.

On the other hand, the attack on Dr. Amit Mehta by unidentified persons has received substantial publicity. While the Amdavad Doctors Forum promptly issued instructions to its Hindu members to stop practicing in Muslim areas, the IMA also expressed concern for the safety of doctors only following that incident.

B. Possibility of discrimination by health professionals

During our investigation, we probed into some complaints of discrimination against Muslim patients, immediately following the carnage while seeking treatment as well as patients in general practice. We were not able to conclusively establish discrimination on a large scale, though it is possible that there may have been instances by individual doctors. We specifically asked every survivor of violence about the treatment received, institution where it was received and the experience. *We did not find any reports of blatant discrimination or neglect.* We interviewed survivors who had been treated immediately after the attacks, largely in the government hospitals – Civil Hospital, V.S. Hospital, L.G. Hospital, Amdavad and Civil Hospital, Godhra. Apart from that, some survivors had received emergency care in Al Ameen Hospital, Amdavad and some private nursing homes in Godhra.

Apart from the survivors, we spoke to several individual doctors. One senior doctor serving in a public hospital opined that there has been complete polarization in the medical profession. He talked of a 'schizophrenia' within a large section of the medical profession, whereby their political views were in support of Hindutva, however, they would continue to treat Muslim patients professionally. He felt that it was unlikely that in their professional work, this would lead to any negligence or discrimination. He had not heard of cases of overt discrimination against patients of the minority community in any public hospital. He also commented on the fact that the health workers serving in the public hospitals were 'frightened and confused' by the situations in which they had been placed, especially the nursing staff. Several other doctors, from both communities felt that there may have been delays due to the rush of patients during the height of the violence as well as attempts to prioritise patients on medical grounds. These may have been construed as

deliberate acts by the patients and their relatives. We heard of one incident where patients were refused admission in a municipal hospital, but we could not confirm it because the patients concerned were not present in the camp during our visit.

However, as noted earlier, the general atmosphere of terror surrounding the hospitals as well as the presence of Bajrang Dal and VHP activists in the hospitals itself intimidated Muslim patients from approaching the hospitals. There may have also been a process of 'self-selection' wherein Muslim patients actively avoided going to the hospitals or doctors who were known for their inclinations and might have treated them with discrimination, hence cases of overt discrimination did not come to light.

C. Attacks on medical professionals

There have been several documented attacks on health professionals and their homes, property and establishments in the early part of the violence. Of these, only one attack, on Dr. Amit Mehta, in Juhapura area of Amdavad has received publicity in the national press. We received a press note prepared by the Medicos Welfare Society, which condemned attacks on doctors on behalf of the doctors of the minority community. It had details about attacks on the following:

- (1) Lala Hospital, Modasa, which was burnt down.
- (2) Dr. Chandniwala hospital, Modasa, which was ransacked and burnt.
- (3) Dr. Haradwala Pathology Laboratory, Himmatnagar, which was looted.
- (4) Dr. Rafiq Vasiwala, Himmatnagar, whose property was damaged.
- (5) Dr. Rangwala hospital, Paldi, which was damaged
- (6) Lethal attack on Dr. Sadiq Kazi and complete damage of his car
- (7) Lethal attack on Dr. Bhavnagari and damage to his residence.
- (8) Lethal attack on Dr. Amit Mehta by unknown persons.

Of the above list, we were able to interview Dr. Amit Mehta and Dr. Sadiq Kazi.

While Dr. Amit Mehta was stabbed by an unidentified person in his dispensary, Dr. Sadiq's car was destroyed by persons very well known to him. He also had a very narrow escape from a mob while driving to Al Ameen hospital, which set fire to a couple riding on a two-wheeler just in front of him.

Both doctors blame individuals and not entire communities for the attacks on them. Dr. Sadiq categorically blamed the authorities for letting the violence continue by not taking action against troublemakers from both communities. While Dr. Sadiq continues to attend the nursing home outside which his car was attacked, Dr Amit Mehta too does not want to move his clinic from the area where he has been practicing for so many years. Both doctors have deep bonds with the communities that they have served for so long.

The danger to medical practitioners, working in areas is real. However, there is no evidence that the entire community has turned against them and would like to drive them out. The right of any medical practitioner, as of any individual, to work where he or she chooses has to be respected and protected. Any exodus of medical practitioners due to real as well as perceived dangers based on their religion will inflict irreparable damage to the profession.

Neutrality and humanitarianism are the founding principles of the medical profession. While we hear these sentiments very often from the medical association representatives interviewed by us, in practice we did not find much attempts to uphold or re-assert these values. The fact that largely Muslim doctors have been involved (voluntarily) in relief work could be interpreted (and has been) as a gesture of solidarity to their own community. However, the fact is that they are the only doctors available in the Muslim dominated areas, whereas other doctors, including both Muslim and Hindu doctors who live further away are not able to reach their workplaces or the camps. This is very well highlighted by the plight of Al Ameen hospital, which has 92 doctors on their list giving voluntary time, only 14 were Muslims and the rest Hindus. Only four doctors were coming for duty after the riots – two of them were Hindu and two Muslim doctors. The rest of the doctors were absent because of insecurity.

There is a real and pressing danger of the distortion of the sentiments of doctors who were personally affected by the violence. The portrayal of doctors as either 'Hindu doctors' or 'Muslim doctors' is itself extremely divisive. The (unwritten) policy of segregation of hospitals on religion as well as of patients within the hospital for better management of security severely damages the secular character of an institution dedicated to healing. Several Muslim doctors and other hospital staff serving in public hospitals had been given sympathetic leave immediately following the violence of February 28th even without their request. One lab technician informed us that even when she reported for duty (in a public hospital in a Hindu dominated area), she was being pressurized by her colleagues to absent herself. They felt that her presence would incite trouble and pose danger to both herself as well as other staff and patients.

Several doctors working in mixed communities reported to us that their patient load had decreased substantially after the violence because their patients cannot reach them. On the other hand, the few doctors who live and practice in the Muslim dominated areas are overworked. While, on the one hand, the violence has definitely affected the doctors economically, it also brings out the fact that those who usually utilize their services too have been affected.

An important issue that we could not cover adequately in this investigation was the health situation for those populations who are not in the camps, but are living in curfew bound localities. This is especially important because we consistently heard reports of the serious ill, convalescents and newly delivered mothers being sent to live families outside the camps.

X. Medico legal issues

During discussions with both survivors of violence and representatives of NGOs working for the victims, we came across instances and issues related to medico legal procedures, which in our opinion cast a dark shadow on the path to justice for victims. Some of these relate to the conduct of the police while in other situations there might have been pressures on doctors to 'modify' post-mortem reports. While these issues need a full-fledged investigation, we have outlined instances below, which came to our notice.

A. Inadequate medico legal procedures being followed

The legal volunteers involved in handing several of the complaints of the victims and their relatives pointed out some of the problems arising because of inadequate procedures being followed by the police. It was pointed out that despite so many deaths taking place in hospitals (70 deaths in corporation hospitals in Amdavad upto 25 April), in almost no cases are dying declarations being recorded. Most patients are victims of burns, stabbing or gunshot injury and many would be in a situation to give declarations, after having received life-stabilising treatment.

However, the hospital authorities or police are not pursuing this issue which is primarily their responsibility.

Another issue which emerged related to the police disposing off bodies prematurely, without waiting for the relatives to claim the body. The police should preserve the body for 72 hours, during which period relatives may come forward to identify and claim the body. However, the police have disposed off bodies as 'unidentified' within a day of having received them. This has led to a situation where the relatives could not see the corpse, ascertain the cause of death for themselves and follow up the case.

Finally, the National Human Rights Commission has laid down certain guidelines for conducting post-mortem examinations. There is also a provision for video-photography during the post-mortem, especially regarding custodial deaths. There is a need for the NHRC guidelines to be followed in all post-mortems being performed, and for photographs or / and video-photographic evidence to be preserved.

In addition, some of the legal volunteers helping the survivors reported to us a few situations where relatives of the deceased described the death as having been due to police firing or stabbing, while the death certificate or post-mortem report does not mention such injuries. In this context, there is a need for auditing of postmortems in such situations, with sample post-mortem reports being reviewed by a team of independent experts.

B. Destruction or unavailability of medico-legal evidence

In case of many of the rape victims, the victim was subsequently burnt to death. This led to destruction of all physical evidence and impossibility of the victim giving any testimony. Similarly, in case other rape victims, they were confined to relief camps and unable to approach a hospital immediately for examination and recording of evidence. In such cases too, because of delay in reporting due to the prevailing conditions, physical medico-legal evidence is lacking. In such situations, the testimony of relatives or eyewitnesses (where the victim was burnt to death) or the testimony of the survivors (where there was a delay in reporting forced by circumstances) needs to be given paramount importance in judging the case, keeping in view the context.

XI. Summary and Conclusions

It is estimated that over 2,000 adults and children have been killed in the Gujarat carnage since February 27, 2002. Over one lakh have been forced into relief camps, severely testing the medical community and health services. The state government has clearly failed in its duty to protect its people, and numerous reports have documented the state's complicity in the bloodshed, and its reluctance to provide adequate relief to the affected.

In such a situation, the health system is expected to: -

- 1) Save lives, provide immediate and sustained medical aid without fear or favour, without discrimination even under duress.
- 2) Provide an empathetic healing touch to those traumatised physically, mentally and socially.
- 3) Document the medical evidence of violence, which is essential for obtaining justice for the victims through the legal system.
- 4) Inform other sections of society about the pathology they witness in the process of performing their duties.

- 5) Identify measures for prevention of the morbidity and pathology, and advocate for implementation of these measures, which are often outside the purview of the health services themselves.
- 6) Maintain a non partisan stance vis-à-vis their patients as well as their professional colleagues.

Against this background, the Medico Friend Circle, a national voluntary network of health professionals and activists, conducted an investigation into the health impact of the carnage in Gujarat and the role played by the health profession.

The MFC team attempted to document the experience of survivors of the violence, their health and access to health care. It also examined the impact of the communal atmosphere on the health profession. The investigation was the result of our concern that profession should defend itself from external pressures as well as fortify itself from within, to ensure that it upholds its humanitarian traditions, and does not become complicit to human rights violations.

Team members visited various parts of Gujarat in two batches (Dr Ritu Priya, JNU, Delhi, and Ms Sarojini NB, SAMA, Delhi and convenor of MFC, Delhi, and S Srinivasan, LOCOST, Baroda, 15-18 April 2002). And Dr Abhay Shukla, and Dr Sunita Bandewar, CEHAT, Pune; Dr Dhruv Mankad, MFC, Nashik; Ms. Jayashree Velankar, Forum for Women's Health, Mumbai and Ms Neha Madhiwalla, editor, MFC Bulletin, Mumbai on April 25-29, 2002.)

The team visited a total of nine rural and urban camps and two hospitals in Amdavad, Baroda, Panchmahals and Dahod districts. Team members interviewed officials of the state health department, Amdavad Municipal Corporation, medical officers in the relief camps, private doctors as well as doctors in public hospitals, office bearers of medical associations, and representatives of voluntary organisations doing relief work. They also interacted with inmates of the camps and also people living in a violence affected community.

Health conditions in the relief camps: a general crisis

Direct impact of violence: Our interactions in the camps corroborate the evidence of massive brutality and systematic use of rape in the pattern of violence. Those who have survived are recovering from serious injuries such as gunshot wounds, extensive burns, stab wounds and lacerations. Many survivors are left with permanent disabilities resulting from paralysis, amputation of limbs and contractures. In addition, psychological trauma poses a serious problem with far-reaching consequences.

Threat of a larger epidemic: A number of outbreaks have been recorded, of measles, chickenpox, typhoid, bronchopneumonia, and thousands of children have been affected by acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Drinking water and sanitation facilities are grossly inadequate, and there is no active state health service response to improve the camp situation and prevent an epidemic of a greater magnitude.

Health system's response

The state and municipal services have collaborated in providing public health services in the camps and in various hospitals. Considering that the level of functioning of the health services, even in normal times, is inadequate and the fact that there are the additional constraints posed by the crisis situation and the communal environment, the effort has been commendable. However, this does not go beyond what is provided in normal circumstances – and is therefore highly inadequate for people's needs. The approach seems to be not comprehensive treatment but some

ad hoc measures to avoid the public outrage which would follow from complete neglect and deaths. State public health services provide immunization, some maternal and child care, and limited out-patient services. A comprehensive approach to health care in this situation would also include treatment of severe injuries, chronic illnesses, and extensive psychological trauma resulting from experiencing or witnessing truly brutal acts of violence.

Mental Health Issues: However, by ignoring the importance of psychological trauma, the services are under-estimating the scale of damage and undermining the need to rehabilitate the affected. There is no acknowledgement of the need to provide treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder – a well-known sequelae of any disaster. PTSD is accepted to be a public health issue to be tackled by health services in such situations. The only emotional support and some kind of counseling is being provided by camp volunteers, who have no training for this kind of work. The camp volunteers' own needs for support and sharing has never received any recognition.

Women's health problems Existing services do not acknowledge women's health needs. Also, the lack of privacy in camp health services prevents them from seeking treatment. There is no effort to make existing services more accessible to women. Hundreds of women have given birth in the camps, assisted largely by local volunteers, and without any facilities. These women, as well as those in curfew-bound areas, are not in a position to seek special health services.

Sexual assault The team's report corroborates other investigations' findings of large-scale and systematic sexual assault. There have also been many reports of women coming to hospitals in a condition which doctors would certainly suspect sexual assault. Yet doctors in hospitals visited by the team stated that no cases of sexual assault has been filed. In other words, doctors seem to have disregarded obvious signs of sexual assault. As a consequence, there is no medical evidence of sexual assault, on which basis women could seek justice.

Credibility of Health services: Further, the team's interactions in the camps suggested that people are losing faith in existing health services; inadequate services, given in a perfunctory manner, without a sense of commitment to people's right to treatment -- all of this has further undermined the credibility of the health services. The fact that the health professionals involved in providing health care at the camps feel that they are vulnerable (because the violence continues) further de-motivates them and inhibits them from responding to the needs of their patients with empathy.

It is also noteworthy that we did not find a mobilization of non-religious voluntary organizations of the scale that was evident after the earthquake in Gujarat in January 2001. However, the few organizations who have been involved in the relief work have done extremely good work in the face of physical danger as well as intimidation by the state and right-wing forces.

Response of the Public Hospitals

Public hospitals have been working under a constant threat of violence against Muslim patients within the precincts of the hospital. There have been instances of mobs attacking hospitals, preventing injured persons from entering their gates, and even moving around in the wards, terrorizing and even attacking patients and relatives. There is no indication that the government has made serious efforts to protect the health services, and maintain people's access to them. Despite this pressure, health professionals in the hospitals have functioned neutrally, providing treatment without discrimination on the basis of community. This is commendable.

In an abnormal situation, where there is a threat to people's safety and movement, the barriers to access to the institution has much worse repercussions. By depending on people to come to them for treatment, the services do not reach those who need them the most.

It is also important to comment that several ad hoc measures (which may or may not be politically motivated) that have been taken to deal with emergency situations (segregating hospitals and patients on the basis of community, giving sympathetic leave to staff belonging to the minority community) may threaten the secular character of health institutions and lead to accentuation of polarization within the profession. However, it must be noted that the responsibility of ensuring safety of patients and staff in the hospitals lies with the agencies such as the police, which have clearly been party to the violence themselves. It is apparent that while the hospitals have largely been non-discriminatory, they have been unable to mobilize support to protect their non-partisan and humanitarian role.

Impact on health professionals

Some medical professionals have also been involved in propagating an ideology of hatred. As members of the BJP and the VHP these professionals have also been responsible directly or indirectly in perpetrating grave injury to Muslims in Gujarat. They have played a role that contradicts their professional calling as providers of care.

The medical associations, which represent the medical profession, have been clearly partisan. They have made no attempts to mobilize any relief (again, in contrast to the earthquake). The condemnation of attacks on doctors followed only after Dr. Amit Mehta was attacked, although many other (Muslim) doctors' property had been destroyed earlier and they had faced physical attacks. The attack on Dr. Amit Mehta, too has been distorted and misrepresented to project that generally, doctors of the majority community are under attack by the Muslim communities whom they serve. The attempt to implicate the entire Muslim community in an attack by unidentified persons not only distorts the facts, it does injustice to Dr. Mehta's sentiments as well.

The fact that the religious identity of the professional has become significant is a dangerous sign. The neutrality and humanitarianism of the profession is important, both in actual practice and also in the people's perception. If the profession is seen to be acting in a partisan manner, or it is observed that only a certain section of the profession responds to a large scale crisis, it reflects the vulnerability of the profession to external pressures as well as sectarianism within.

On the other hand, doctors have, for the first time, not been spared during the violence. There are documented attacks on the property and person of at least 8 medical professionals. The lack of safety is a serious issue. However, ensuring their safety will not be enabled merely by providing security for them but is contingent on the return of peace.

On the whole, doctors have acted professionally within a very narrow definition of the word. While they have not actively discriminated against any community, they have not pro-actively made any attempts to safeguard the rights of their patients or even their peers. The medical profession has also not made any attempts to contribute to the process of securing justice for the survivors by documenting medical evidence or highlighting the problems that victims have faced.

Medico legal issues

Although, we could not conduct a systematic investigation into the quality of medico-legal documentation, it was evident that there have been several lapses. Post mortems were not

conducted in several cases, dying declarations were not recorded and medico-legal cases were not recorded in several cases. It remains to be seen whether these were deliberate because such lapses in documentation are common in normal times as well. However, in this situation, these lapses have serious consequences for survivors in their attempts to get compensation and punish those who inflicted violence on them.

XII. Demands and Recommendations

Our analysis of the situation has strengthened our conviction that no comprehensive public health effort or rehabilitation in Gujarat today will be complete without addressing the issue of justice. Although our recommendations specifically pertain to issues of health, health care and rehabilitation, none of these processes can be effectively implemented or sustained without the restoration of peace and normalcy in the state. This is essential for the effective operation of public health system and also to create conditions where civil society organizations can participate in the process of relief and rebuilding.

We specifically demand and recommend that:

- A. **At no cost should the relief camps be disbanded without proper rehabilitation of the survivors**, which includes not only provision of medical care and monetary compensation, but also ensuring their safety, provision of housing and restoring their livelihood.
- B. **An independent health commission** should be constituted to investigate into the health conditions in the camps, assess rehabilitation needs, probe issues related to survivors of sexual assault, evaluate the response of the state health services to the violence and its aftermath and the impact on health professionals, and examine medico legal issues emerging from the carnage.
- C. There is a need to **reinstate the sanctity of health care services as inviolable humanitarian agencies** by meting out exemplary punishment and public condemnation of attacks of them.
- D. **Security of patients as well as hospital staff within, around and during transit to the hospitals must be ensured.** A vigilance committee should be appointed for each hospital with representatives from all sections of civil society which would monitor security mechanisms and provide support to the hospitals to function in a non-partisan manner.
- E. It is imperative that the living conditions and water and sanitation facilities in the camps be improved. Additionally, there is a need to provide special nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and infants and young children.
- F. There is need to provide protection to the camps by an impartial security force, which also provides support to volunteer camp organizers for transporting patients requiring referral services or emergency care.
- G. Health services in the camps need to be strengthened – there should be resident health facilities because movement is severely restricted by the imposition of curfew as well as the threat of violence. There is an urgent need to establish effective referral facility as well as providing specialized services incl. Gynecology, mental health, physiotherapy etc

Training inputs should also be provided to the camp volunteers, who have been shouldering the responsibility of providing not merely physical, but also emotional support to the camp inmates.

- H. The health personnel must be reoriented to become sensitive to mental health issues and the specific health needs of women, including gynecology and obstetric care; This may require development of separate infrastructure for medical facility; more time to be spent by the health teams in the camps; better drug supply; transport facility for patients; improved surveillance and screening; and security to medical personnel.
- I. Survivors of sexual assault – Firstly, there is an urgency to systematically record details of the sexual atrocities. There should be explanations provided for the lapse in conducting medical examinations of women who approached hospitals in conditions where sexual assault would be very likely. Eyewitness reports and survivors testimonies should be considered for criminal prosecution. Medical care should be provided to the survivors of sexual assault.
- J. Mental health – The state authorities must acknowledge the clear evidence of large-scale psychological trauma. This trauma resulting the experience of violence is distinct from that which may result from a natural disaster. While counseling and emotional support to the survivors is extremely important, they can be effective only when the need for securing justice for the crimes committed against them is also addressed.
- K. The Medical Council of India must take heed of the blatant violation of ethics and human rights by doctors who participate in violence (ref. Article 3 of the Code of Medical Ethics, Medical Council of India). It should derecognise all doctors whose involvement in inciting or participating in violence has been proved.
- L. Communal attitudes within the profession and its associations are not in consonance with medical ethics (ref. Article 4 of the Code of Medical Ethics, Medical Council of India), ethical guidelines in the context of communal situations be developed. Indian Medical Association and parallel professional associations should not discriminate against any member of the profession on religious grounds; condemnation of attacks on all doctors, regardless of their social background, by the professional associations
- M. Apart from providing treatment, the systematic and complete documentation of medical evidence is also an ethical responsibility of the medical profession. (ref. Article 31 of Code of Medical Ethics, Medical Council of India). The National Human Rights Commission protocol for conducting autopsies should be followed. Dying declarations must be recorded in case of all seriously injured patients; There is also a need for auditing of postmortems in such situations, with sample post-mortem reports being reviewed by a team of independent experts.
- N. The police should preserve all unclaimed bodies for 72 hours under appropriate conditions. Wherever evidence has been destroyed or is unavailable because of unavoidable situations, circumstantial evidence and eyewitness accounts should be given paramount importance in adjudication.

- O. We appeal to our peers among the voluntary groups and organisations to respond to this humanitarian crisis and to lend their support to the provision of care, rehabilitation, redressal of losses and injustice.

Communal violence in Gujarat

Does the murder of more than 700 people in Gujarat (as we go to press, the killings have entered their fourth week, with every sign of continuing) merit an editorial comment in a journal on medical ethics?

It could be argued that the communal killings are a crime against humanity and not specifically within the purview of medical ethics. However, doctors have special responsibilities – both as educated professionals, and because of the services they provide. And it is here that they appear to have failed.

The medical profession has an important role to play in providing treatment and emotional support to victims of communal violence.

Some reports in the media, on the medical profession's response, have been encouraging: some have worked round the clock to provide life-saving treatment to victims of the violence. They provided treatment irrespective of religious affiliations, and despite the very real threat of violence if they treated minority patients. Indeed, our friends in Gujarat report that doctors in Ahmedabad "who have tried to do some relief work have been thwarted by the majority community goons."

The government has not provided essential health services to the thousands of displaced men, women and children living in camps, in crowded, unsanitary conditions which can trigger off epidemics. There are many burns victims who urgently need medical supplies and treatment. Survivors of this carnage have lost everything they own, have experienced the most horrendous physical and psychological traumas, and are afraid to approach public health services for fear of further persecution.

The fact that the medical associations did not galvanise themselves for relief work indicates how deeply the medical profession has been affected by the sharp communal divides being promoted by political interests.

A generalised phenomenon

Indeed, the medical community is becoming polarised, both in Gujarat and elsewhere in the country. We hear doctors confide that the minorities "needed to be taught a lesson". Some boast of how their friends participated in the violence.

We also hear that VHP secretary Praveen Togadia was once a 'renowned' cancer surgeon. "It is his legacy that is bearing fruit in the state today," according to an analysis in the press.

Both types of reports echo earlier reports of the profession's behaviour in the communal violence which has become all too common in recent years. In 1993, public hospital staff in Mumbai worked day and night despite the threat of violence, as the frenzy of killing lay just outside the campus gates, sometimes entering them. Some remember that the "hospital staff stayed scrupulously impartial in treating those sent to them, irrespective of creed." However, there were also reports of doctors denying medical care to minority patients, and of hospital staff harassing minorities and preventing them from getting treatment.

A growing threat

It has also been noted that the class, caste (and religious) backgrounds of the vast majority of health professionals "provide a fertile ground for social forces using castism and communalism" for political purposes. Indeed, some health researchers have had personal experience of the castist and communal views of some people in the profession. There is a feeling that health

Hospitals packed beyond capacity

Number of burn cases above 50, gunshot victims on the rise

By Our Correspondent

Ahmedabad, March 1: The city hospitals are collapsing under the flow of patients and straining the resources. With the number of burn victims in riots rising above 50, a temporary new ward had to be opened in the Civil Hospital. The number of floor-beds in all the hospitals in the city has gone up considerably, indicating that they are working beyond their capacity. While most of those admitted on Thursday had sustained fire burns, the new admissions on Friday showed a sharp increase in gunshot wounds. Forty new cases were already registered by 8 pm.

Patients sustaining acid burns were also admitted to the Civil Hospital. As compared to Thursday, patients injured in stone pelting inci-

ents had also increased on Friday and they were given first aid. Zubeda, a resident of Saijpur, was in a state of shock. "We were just sitting in our houses and a group of people came and forcibly pushed us in a fire," she said.

In all, the Civil Hospital, 83 new cases were admitted since 8 am which included 21 admissions in general surgery and 11 in ortho-department. About 100 new dead bodies were brought in for post-mortem. Till the latest reports, the Civil Hospital had treated 253 not-related patients and carried out 135 post-mortems.

The situation was even worse in hospitals in the curfew-hit area of the city. Doctors of the Al-Amin Hospital in Gomtipur area told the Asian Age, "We have about 20 dead bodies but cannot be moved out of our premises. We tried to transport them in our private vehicles, but at a time

was fired upon every time we made an attempt. Meanwhile, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation-run hospitals were also feeling the pressure. In all, 111 patients got admitted to the VS Hospital while 57 in Shardaaben and 76 in LG Hospital. These hospitals also received thirty nine dead bodies.

Mayor Hummatsingh Patel said that the hospitals were overburdened and the stock of essential supplies in the hospitals is dwindling. "Maninagar corporator Bharti Patel said the patients have to wait a long time before the doctors attend them."

"We had to transfer the patients from Maninagar as LG Hospital could not treat them and even after transferring them with great difficulty, we did not find a proper doctor for a long time."

The Asian Age, March 2

Medicines scarce in riot-torn Ahmedabad

By Jaimini Rao

Ahmedabad, March 2: Riots in different parts of the city has made it difficult for the residents to procure items of daily need.

Not only milk and vegetables, but medicines too were not available in the city on Friday. People had to run around to get lifesaving drugs, part of the daily medication for patients suffering from major ailment of heart, lungs or kidney.

Venturing out on the streets was out of question for those living in trouble-torn areas but even those residing in comparatively peaceful areas had to do without crucial medicines.

A resident Hasmukh Dave recalls the incident when he had to run around the streets of Ahmedabad to get saline bottles for his daughter, who was admitted to a hospital for dysentery on Tuesday afternoon.

"The riots started on Wednesday. The doctors at the hospital asked me to get saline bottles, which was out of stock in the hospital's shop. I could get the required bottles only after much difficulty," he said.

Even the 24-hour medical shops were closed on Thursday, on the day of the one-day bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

"All round the year our shop remains open 24 hours a day. But on Thursday we

had to down the shutters around 12 noon because of reports of disturbance from other parts of the city," said Mr. Dinesh Chaudhary of Hello Medicines, located near the Nehrunagar Circle.

On Thursday most of the medicine shops either remained open till noon or did not open at all.

Deepak Mistry, a resident of the Satellite area, whose mother is a patient of asthma, had a tough time finding the required inhaler for her. "I came to know of the riots in the city very late and so could not get the inhaler for my mother. My friend, who is a medical representative, somehow got it for me."

The Asian Age, March 3

Hospitals offer safe haven to victims

BY ADITI DAVE

Ahmedabad, March 2: With tension and anxiety in most areas of the city, those injured in riots and their relatives find hospitals a safe haven, away from the constant threat of mob attack.

Dr Anil Chadda, superintendent of the Civil Hospital, said: "With the prevailing tense conditions, patients and victims definitely feel safer in hospitals. They hesitate to go back to their homes. Even after being discharged, they request for an extended stay. Since we have enough facilities, keeping these patients does not create problems."

A person who was treated at the hospital for riot-related injuries, said on condition of anonymity: "I was hit on the head during stone-pelting. I was discharged on Saturday after treatment, but as I reside in a communally-sensitive area, Bapunagar, I requested the doctors to extend my stay and they conceded. It is better to stay in a hospital than in Bapunagar under the constant threat of being attacked by rowdy mob."

Besides the riot victims, those accompanying outdoor patients being treated at the hospital also find the hospital a safer place to reside. Sakina, who hails from a village in Mehsana, and whose son is undergoing post-operation care at the hospital for the last 15 days, said, "It is certainly difficult to cope up with the tense situation. My relatives cannot come here frequently and it's unadvisable for me to stay anywhere else. So, I have been staying in the hospital."

The Asian Age March 3

Riot victims live in inhuman conditions

By Sourav Mukherjee

AHMEDABAD: Cosy homes are burnt down. Flourishing businesses are locked out. Dear ones are no more. Fate of thousands of families have literally turned turtle overnight.

Packed inside a small municipal school at Sahibaug area or living out in the open under makeshift tents in Shah Alam braving fear and inhuman conditions, riot victims of Ahmedabad have been orphaned in more ways than one.

An uneasy tension hung over the Dariyakhan Ghummat area of Shahibaug. Over 3,500 riot victims from Naroda-Patia (where 65 persons were burnt alive) Gulbarg Society in Chamanpura (where at least 40 were killed), Asharwam, Meghaninagar, Dudheswar and even Gandhinagar nursed their wounds and lived in fear of the past three days of mayhem.

And, all this without a semblance of cleanliness or hygiene, medicine or doctors from the state government. Joining hands in this time of crisis are the localities who have pooled in their resources to feed and cloth the homeless and separated from their dear ones.

Toilet facility limited to two in number for a 3,500-strong crowd and a non-existent water supply have made conditions unbearable at the municipal school number 1259 at Sahibaug near Dariyakhan Ghummat.

The Times of India, March 7

Angels of mercy get down to work

SHEFALI NAUTYAL
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 5

TO those struck by tragedy, lying charred, bruised and near death in city hospitals here, they are hands of mercy. Hands that belong to individuals, entire families, groups of friends camping at the city hospitals to do their bit. Most of those helping out here do not belong to any social organisation. They work in silence, handing out food, clothes, medicines, money, and reassurance to not victims.

A man and his two teenage sons were spotted at the Burns Ward of the Civil hospital, handing out clothes to women. They left as quietly as they came. "We are not doing this for publicity," said the father when stopped outside the ward. "It is my duty as well as the duty of every God-fearing person to help the victims. I don't want it to sound like a speech. That is the job of our politicians," he said.

A group of volunteers have been passing rotis and dal from the rear gates of VS Hospital to families of victims for the last four days. "We live behind the hospital and heard that a lot of the people here do not have food to eat. We've also been told that the served here is not good," said one of the volunteers.

So they formed a group, the women of their houses started cooking dal, rotis and rice, while the men took it upon themselves to distribute it. "It is not a large scale affair. We are using the rear gate because we don't want any publicity," said the volunteer, as he sat distributing food to all who came.

"My clothes were burnt in the fire and the outfits I have left the victims, who now wear a gown that was handed to her by a patient from the next ward. "She was being discharged and while leaving, she gave me her gown and other clothes. All these days, she would share her home-cooked with us. She left yesterday. May Allah bless her," said Sabera. Mohammad Rushadji, 55, and his 70-year-old mother were brought from Chandola lake area. Rushadji's right leg



Nafisa Bibi receives food from her family members while waiting for medical help at the Shah Alam Dargah Mosque in Ahmedabad on Tuesday — Reuters

had to be amputated as it was infected by a bullet wound. "A man came to us yesterday and gave me Rs 200 to buy medicines and also promised to take us home safely," said Rushadji's mother.

The Kamdaar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal (KSSM), one

of the first organisations to start helping the needy, gave two tents, blankets and food to the camp at Aman Chowk in Baranagar. "Individuals and small organisations can't do much. The government and big organisations should come forward to help these people," said Haussala Prasad Mishra of KSSM.

The Indian Express, March 6

'Copying syndrome led mobs to burn people to death'

✓ By Raja Bose
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: The numerous incidents of people being burnt alive in Gujarat in the recent violence were a direct fallout of the Sabarmati Express being set on fire, according to psychologists. They said it was the "copying syndrome".

The tales narrated by the Godhra survivors and the images shown on television left a deep imprint on the minds of the people who later indulged in revenge seeking, said Bimla Parimu, head of M.S. University's psychology department.

"They had the fire image embedded in them, hence so many cases of people being burnt alive. It is like taking a cue, here, an environmental cue," she said.

Other psychologists also endorsed this view and added that setting people ablaze as a form of revenge was actually an "expression of a cowardly and scheming mind".

"To burn anyone to death is an easy form of murder. You do not

need a weapon, there is no evidence left behind. This is the easiest way to inflict pain and there is no physical contact," said Vadodara-based psychiatrist Yogesh Patel.

Ms Parimu said it was a sign of a criminal and pathological mind. "We all store emotions. But the way in which these emotions are expressed differ from person to person. Here, the expression has been gross," she said.

Psychologists also referred to the de-individualisation effect that a mob evoked. "When an individual is a part of a mob, he loses his identity and takes on the identity of the mob. Once de-individualisation sets in, any person, however mild or aggressive he may be, does what the mob does, leaving aside his own consciousness.

A person's anger gets converted into collective aggression," said Patel.

This was witnessed during the riots that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi, added Ms Parimu. She felt that attacks like these had a cascading effect on society, affecting everyone.

"The violence affects the people in the mob and those who are attacked. There is a third group that has the thinkers, who observe what's going on and feel that something wrong is happening. It also affects the fourth group of people in society who are the silent spectators and feel sorry and then get depressed. Such incidents can leave an entire society scarred," she said.

TOLL OF THOSE TORCHED

▶ Naroda-Patla: 66
▶ Chamanpura: 30
▶ Pandarvada: 30
▶ Sardarpura: 27
▶ Uda/Anand: 13
▶ Hanuman Tekri, Vadodara: 12
▶ Limdiya: 8

The Times of India, March 6

Lack of hygiene sparks gastro in Shahibaug camp

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 11

THEY are home to 36,000-odd people but hygiene at these relief camps in the city is nearly zero. With conditions like these, it's little wonder that around 35 cases of gastro-enteritis were recorded at the Shahibaug relief camp on Monday.

"Around 35 people were suffering from gastro-enteritis on Monday. We have not been able to find out the exact reason but we suppose that drinking water and the surrounding unhygienic conditions might be the reason," said a volunteer at Shahibaug camp.

Anyone entering the Shah Alam relief camp has to cover his or her nose to avoid the strong stink coming from the mobile and temporary toilets.

"The stink is so bad that almost everyone passing from here covers their nose. A few extra temporary toilets had been arranged by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corpora-

tion (AMC), but that hardly helps since there are over 7,000 people in this camp," says Shezan Bani, a volunteer at the camp.

The volunteers at the camps at Shah Alam, Gornipur, Vasna and Shahibaug also complained that the garbage was not being cleared regularly by the AMC employees and this was causing health problems.

According to residents in these camps, drinking water is also a problem. Abdul Asraf, who is currently living at the Shahibaug camp, says, "AMC provides water tankers daily but one is not really sure if the water is clean and drinkable."

However, AMC officials claim that the camps are being given clean drinking water. "AMC is also providing them with chlorine tablets as an added precaution. Trash, too, is also being cleared regularly. Anyway, we have not yet received complaints regarding cases of gastro-enteritis from any of the camps," said P A Dixit, DYMC, West Zone, Health and Hospitals.

Childhood dies a sudden death in these relief camps

MUKTA CHAKRAVORTY
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 28

THE two-year-old plays happily, unaware of the blow fate has dealt her. Afreenbano Akhtarbai Pathan, living at Shahibaug Relief Camp now, doesn't know that her father, mother and five-year-old brother were burnt alive at Gulbarg Society, Chamanpura in the riots that blazed across Gujarat.

Now an orphan, she is looked after by her uncle, Aslam Khan, who is also staying at the camp. "We were a 14-member joint family. Six people, including Afreen's parents and brother, died. Afreen survived as people from the society took some children to a nearby police station when the mob arrived," he says.

Khan says the bodies of Afreen's parents and brother were charred so badly that they could not be sent for post-mortem. "She has no inkling of the fact that her parents are dead and that she's an orphan," he adds. Relief camps in the city are at present home to children rendered orphans by the riots.

The only difference between Afreen and Parveenbanu Jahangirbai Sandhi lies in their age. Eighteen-year-old Parveenbanu — a student of H L Commerce College — has also been orphaned; her parents too were killed in Gulbarg Society.

"On February 27, when the Godhra carnage took place, our

parents feared the worst and sent me and my two younger brothers to my mama's house in Dariyakhan Colony. The next morning, I called them up to check on them. That was the last time I spoke to them. By evening, they were no more," she says. The young girl is now trying to come to terms with her responsibility. "Though our relatives have been very supportive, the responsibility of bringing up my brothers lies with me," she says gravely.

At Shahibaug Relief Camp, lives young Javed Hussain, who lost his parents at the Naroda-Patia massacre. Orphaned and homeless at 12, the boy breaks down whenever he recalls the day when his parents and sisters were burnt alive. "My father was a tailor and my mother used to assist him. Even I used to do mazdoori. When the mob arrived, I ran off to my Seth's house but they got my parents and sister," he says. Javed now lives with his uncle who also lost everything in Naroda-Patia. "Main chahata hoon ki apne mabbaap ka naam khoob roshan karoon (I want to make my parents proud of me)," he says.

Ten-year-old Mohammed Asif cries whenever he recalls how a mob hacked his father to death before dousing his body with petrol and setting it on fire. Asif's mother, Zulekha Begum, has six children to bring up. "How will I manage things on my own? I have nowhere to go to," she says.

The Indian Express, March 12

The Indian Express, March 29

While rioters get free treatment, poor are saddled with heavy bills

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Rashida (17), lay writhing in pain in the V.S. Hospital from severe burns sustained when she attempted to commit suicide, not wanting to live a terrorised life in the riot-sensitive Behrampura anymore. Sitting on her bedside, is her concerned father Mohammad Atik, a tailor, who has been forced out of business for the past two months due to unabated rioting.

Atik has already spent Rs 4,000 for his daughter's treatment. He has to borrow money since he was jobless due to the communal riots. His main worry now is how he will manage to raise more money to continue Rashida's treatment.

Just across the room, lies another riot victim with equally serious burn injuries sustained while manufacturing crude-bombs in Kalupur. His relatives flaunt mobile phones and there are stacks of medicines and surgicals reserved for him at the nurse's station. His entire treatment including the stay, medicines and any other expenses are free of cost.

In these riotous times, it seems better to be a rioter than a poor victim in the municipal hospitals in Ahmedabad. For while the riot victims, many of whom may actually be perpetrators of violence are enjoying free treatment — all at the expense of the cash-strapped municipal corporation — the irony is not lost on poor patients who are forced to pay through their nose.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has spent over Rs 2 crore on medical treatment of more than 1,700 riot-victims so far.

"It feels disgusting when you see that many rioters who got hurt in bomb-manufacturing, handling explosives or actual rioting are not spending a penny while many poor patients are saddled with bills with no respite. Let the real victims get the benefits. This is no social justice", concedes a senior doctor.

The Times of India, March 14

This doctor refused to desert his post when hell broke loose

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 14

WHEN a mob attacks, saving one's life is the only thought that runs through the mind. Not so for Dr Sadiq Kazi, Superintendent of Al-Amin Garabnawaj General Hospital, for whom duty came first. Hearing of the riots, he rushed to the hospital in Gomtipur and kept it running for three days — the only one to remain open in the area — with paramedical staff and a driver till the Army came and other doctors could reach Al-Amin. Eventually, around 300 victims were treated at the hospital.

For victims who couldn't reach either V.S. Hospital or Civil Hospital as their areas were under curfew, Al-Amin Hospital and Dr Kazi proved to be saviours.

"Travelling all the way to V.S. or Civil was impossible due to the curfew. No vehicle was available to transport the patient or dead per-

sons. All victims of Rakhial, Bapunagar and Gomtipur came to our hospital," says Kazi, adding they received almost 100 patients on the first day of the riots.

However, he says, far from helping them, the police prevented pa-

**Assisted by
paramedical staff
and a driver, Kazi
single-handedly
treated riot
victims for 3 days**

corpses. "We had only one driver who volunteered to take the bodies or patients to V.S. Hospital. But we got to know from relatives, who were travelling in the vehicle, that the police shot at the driver and arrested the other one on the charge of possessing a bomb. After that, we were unable to transport patients for further treatment," says Kazi.

This was a major problem, points out the doctor. "Patients suffering from orthopedic injuries, bullet injuries or those requiring blood transfusion had to be taken to bigger hospitals for better treatment. We did not have blood and drugs. Later, a few chemists around the hospital gave us drugs."

Al-Amin being a small hospital, there were other problems as well. "I was the only surgeon and we had to look after diagnosis, treatment and recovery of patients. The paramedical team was very helpful but there was a lot of pressure," says Kazi.

tients from being transferred to other hospitals. The second day of the riots, he claims, 22 bodies — three burnt to death by mobs and 19 who lost their lives during police firing — were being taken to V.S. Hospital as the Al-Amin hospital did not have proper facility to preserve

The Indian Express, March 15

Worst not over for victim: He waits for wife long dead

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 29

IT'S been five days since 25-year-old Munna Salim Sheikh braved a mob attack and reached Ahmedabad's V S Hospital all alone. But everytime he asks about his wife he unknowingly puts his courage to test.

The hospital hasn't told him that Geetaben, alias Mumtazbano, is dead. That she was pulled out of her flat, stripped at a bus stop and stabbed by a mob believed to include neighbours in Vasna.

At the hospital, Munna continues to ask about his wife. "The staff here does not know where she is or how she is. I hope she is alright," he says. Doctors say Munna is now in a state of delirium. He may have no idea how long he'll be in hospital, but he's sure what he'll do the moment he's discharged. "I will immediately go out in search for my wife," he says, hope in his voice.

Remembering Geetaben, he says: "She was married to a South Indian. We fell in love, she divorced her husband. I don't even know where she is now." Munna, who owns an autorickshaw, says he met Mumtaz when he was a cycle-rickshaw driver and she used to sell



Munna Salim Sheikh at V S Hospital — Express photo

idlis at Teen Darwaza. Ask him why he hasn't informed his family living in Bayayuni in Uttar Pradesh and he says: "Paise nahi hai," he says. "My mother and my siblings live at Bayayuni near Bareilly. They are not aware of the attack and that I am in hospital. How will I inform them? I do not have any money and I'm not able to move," he says.

Munna and Mumtaz were going to Sarkhej from Odhav on that fateful day. They had been doing this for the past three days to avoid getting caught in the riots. "We didn't want to get caught in the vio-

lence. We were on our scooter when the mob surrounded us," Munna says.

The couple was stopped at Guptanagar and asked their names. "Munna is a common Hindu name so I thought I might get away with it. My wife gave her maiden name but that did not satisfy the mob, who demanded that we strip," he reveals. The moment the mob realised that the couple belonged to the minority community, they were stabbed. Mumtaz died on the spot while Munna was rushed to the VS Hospital.

The Indian Express, March 30

Measles epidemic hits relief camps

By Kalpana Jain
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Contrary to the claims of the Union health ministry, a measles epidemic is raging in some of Gujarat's riot relief camps. Not only are effective antibiotics unavailable, but diseases are spreading fast as people have been forced to live in cramped and unhygienic conditions.

In an SOS sent out through activists and NGOs, doctors in the state have urged citizens across the country to help by providing antibiotics. Doctors at a Godhra camp housing about 1,500 people told this newspaper that at least 60 children had contracted measles and the only source of most of the medicines was NGOs and some donors.

Last Thursday, Union health minister C.P. Thakur and Gujarat health minister Ashok Bhatt had, amidst much fanfare, sent a truck packed with antibi-

otics and other medicines to the riot-torn state. The ministers had claimed that medicines worth Rs 8.26 crore had been sent and the state machinery had rapidly managed to control the possibility of a measles epidemic.

Mr Thakur had also claimed that due to the Modi government's efforts, the number of measles cases in five camps had been limited to only eight.

However, a doctor working in a Godhra camp said that on a single day, there were 25 cases of children with measles. Hinting at the possibility of the numbers increasing rapidly, he said although the infected children had been isolated, the chances of an epidemic remained high. "In any case, smaller children cannot be taken away from their mothers," he said.

Despite repeated telephone calls on Monday, Mr Thakur was not available for comment.

The Times of India, April 4

In Ahmedabad, even hospitals are divided along communal lines

By Radha Sharma
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: A hospital is the last place where one would expect communal polarisation. But in riot-torn Ahmedabad, even government and municipal hospitals are divided along communal lines.

In the communal carnage that followed the Godhra massacre on February 27, a total of 226 patients were brought to L.G. Hospital, Maninagar, of which 202 were Hindus and only 24 were Muslims. In stark contrast, of the 580 riot-victims admitted in V.S. Hospital, a good 80 per cent are Muslims. In the Civil Hospital, of the 362 riot-patients, 234 are Hindus and 105 Muslims.

If you thought one was reading too much into these hospital figures, there are instances that show how communalism has affected the medical services too. "I told my brother specifically to take me to Civil and not to V.S. They attacked me once... and given the big numbers in which they are present in V.S. these days, I might not have been safe there," confesses Rajesh Thakor. He has been admitted at Civil for burns sustained in an acid-bulb attack at Delhi Darwaja.

For Muslims, V.S. Hospital is the undisputed choice. There is also the consolation that this is a Congress-controlled municipal hospital, unlike Civil Hospital, which is run by the BJP government. Just last week, *Times News Network* witnessed Mohammad Sheikh almost falling at the feet of the chief district health officer at Shah-e-Alam camp, pleading that his brother be referred to V.S. Hospital. "They have referred him to Civil... but we do not go there. V.S. is safe," Mr Sheikh said.

"We have had certain Muslim riot-patients who did not want to remain here. When we insisted that they stay on, they took discharge against medical advice," confessed a senior medical official at L.G. Hospital.

A visit to V.S. Hospital and one would understand

what makes it the favourite with minorities. Muslim corporators have a major say in this Congress-run hospital. "Muslim volunteers and leaders are easily accessible here... it comes as good moral support," said a Muslim teacher from Behrampura, who is recuperating from a bullet injury at V.S. Hospital.

No wonder then, of the 14 people injured in Gomtipur firing on March 30, seven Hindu patients got admitted to L.G. Hospital while Muslim patients were brought in to V.S. Hospital despite the former being nearer to the scene of crime.

On Thursday, a pregnant Muslim lady from Naroda was brought to the Civil Hospital. As soon as she realised that she was brought to Civil Hospital, she reportedly refused to get admitted. She vanished saying that she would be safe only in V.S. Hospital.

It must be mentioned here that Civil Hospital and L.G. Hospital have a communal past. During the communal riots of the 1980s, two patients were set afire and pushed to death from a third floor ward. History repeated itself in the 1992 riots at L.G. Hospital, where yet another riot-victim was stabbed and given a fatal push from the second floor.

Incidentally, corporators of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation were at each other's throats on Saturday over the allegation by BJP leaders that Hindu riot-victims were neglected at L.G. Hospital and Shardaben municipal hospitals, while minorities were being pampered at the V.S. Hospital.

"Medical services are being communally coloured by Congress. Because minorities make a beeline for the V.S. Hospital, medical facilities are up to mark and so are stocks," alleged leader of opposition in AMC Dharmendra Shah.

When questioned, chairman of the standing committee, Badruddin Sheikh rebutted, "These allegations are baseless. We are keeping a strict vigil and replenishing stocks at all AMC-run hospitals without any discrimination".

The Times of India, April 8

Communal virus strikes doctors in Ahmedabad

By Radha Sharma
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: The Ahmedabad Doctors Forum has asked its members from the majority community not to practise in minority-dominated areas as also in minority trust-run hospitals. The Forum, which has about 100 active members in the city, warned that doctors from the majority community were not safe in those areas.

This follows the stabbing of Amit Mehta at his clinic in Juhapura on Tuesday.

"In the past too, doctors from the majority community practising in minority-dominated areas like Jamalpur and Gomtipur have been fatally attacked. Tuesday's attack on Dr Mehta should serve as a warning to doctors from the

majority community to quit practising in minority areas," Bharat Amin, a founder member of the Forum, told TNN.

Doctors from the majority community have been reluctant to go to the minority-dominated areas and Tuesday's attack has added to their fears. "I have been practising in Shahpur for the last 30 years, but will I be able to trust my patients now?" said K.R. Sanghvi, who had resumed seeing patients only a few days ago after having stayed away from his clinic for the better part of this month.

After being attacked, Dr Mehta has decided to shut shop. "I have treated patients from the minority community for more than two decades and this is what I got. I escaped, but my family does not want me to risk my life again,"

Dr Mehta told TNN from the hospital bed where he is recuperating from multiple stabs in the back, hand and other parts of his body. However, Dr Mehta emphasised that his case should not be generalised.

But an example is already being made of him for what lies in store for doctors from the majority community practising in minority-dominated areas. "We fear we will be similarly attacked. We urge the government to provide us security to practise in such sensitive areas," said president of the 200-member-strong Vejalpur-Jivraj Medical Circle, Naresh Shah.

He said that more than 50 doctors practising on the Vejalpur-Juhapura border had been forced to shut shop in the last month due to unprecedented tension in the area.

The Times of India, April 11

Docs told to stay off minority areas

RADHA SHARMA

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002 2:59:14 AM]

AHMEDABAD: "All Hindu doctors are warned that they are not safe practising in Muslim-dominated areas. They are thus requested to stop practising in such areas and also in minority trust-run hospitals with immediate effect". This message issued by the Ahmedabad Doctors' Forum, which has about 100 active members in the city, came as a direct fallout of the attack on Dr Amit Mehta, who was repeatedly stabbed in his clinic in Juhapura on Tuesday.

The incident has sent shock waves through the medical fraternity.

"In the past too, Hindu doctors practising in Muslim-dominated areas like Jamalpur and Gomtipur have been fatally attacked. And yesterday's attack on Dr Mehta should serve as a warning to Hindu doctors to quit practising in Muslim areas," ADF founder-member Dr Bharat Amin told TNN.

Already, Hindu doctors are reluctant to go to Muslim areas where their hospitals and clinics are located and this attack on one of their colleagues has only compounded their fears. "The uncertainty and insecurity is becoming too much. I have been practising in Shahpur for the past 30 years, but will I be able to trust my patients now?" asks Dr KR Sanghvi. Sanghvi had resumed seeing patients only a few days ago after having stayed away from his clinic for the better part of the month.

Dr Amit Mehta has understandably decided to give up his practice of 23 years and shut shop. "I have treated Muslim patients for more than two decades and this is what I got. I have escaped once, but my family does not want me to risk my life again," Mehta told TNN from the hospital bed where he is recuperating.

While Mehta stresses that his case should not be generalised, an example is already being made of him. "Fear is looming large that we will be similarly attacked. In such a situation, we urge the government to provide us security for practising in such sensitive areas," says president of the 200-member strong Vejalpur-Jivraj Medical Circle, Naresh Shah.

Shah said more than 50 doctors practising on the Vejalpur-Juhapura border have been forced to shut shop due to unprecedented tension.

It needs mention here that it is Hindu doctors that are mostly practising in Muslim areas what with Muslim doctors constituting a mere 2-3 per cent of the 5,000-odd medical practitioners in the city.

"Our job is most difficult. In emergencies we have to work at nights. If we go, we run the risk of being soft targets and if we don't, we tend to incur the wrath of locals. The situation is getting more precarious by the day," says a gynaecologist couple practising in Dariapur and Shahpur.

Meanwhile, the Ahmedabad Medical Association too met on Wednesday to discuss the fallout of the attack on the doctor. "We condemn this communal attack on a doctor who was giving selfless service to society without discriminating between Hindu and Muslim patients and stress that government provide security to doctors," said AMA president Bipin Patel.

To this, health minister Ashok Bhatt said, "The attack on the doctor should be treated as an attack on humanity. The respective communities should take responsibility and ensure that doctors, who have been serving the society without discrimination, are safe. The request for security by any doctor will be considered by the government and addressed."

Even doctors from the minority community have condemned the attack and said this would result in a negative fallout for the community. "Such assaults may result in a negative impact for a community that is largely dependent on Hindu doctors for treatment," said Al Amin Hospital medical superintendent Dr Siddiqi Kazi.

Significantly, there are 82 Hindu doctors attached to Al Amin, of which only three have continued their services after the riots broke out. The hospital is reportedly seeking services of doctors from other states now.

VHP to reimburse medical bills of majority victims

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 2: The VHP on Tuesday said it plans to reimburse the medical bills of the members of the majority community who had been injured in the month-long communal violence in Gujarat and provide financial aid to those people who had been rendered homeless.

VHP Gujarat unit general secretary Jaideep Patel said in Ahmedabad that the organisation has begun raising funds to help the violence-hit people from the community. Asked about the purpose behind raising the fund, he said it was a "local arrangement of the organisation." The VHP would also give compensation to the next of kin of those killed in the violence, he said.

Meanwhile BJP chief K. Jana Krishnamurthy on Tuesday virtually lauded the "performance" of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi while party spokesperson Sunil Shastri said the situation in the state does not call for imposition of President's rule.

Mr Krishnamurthy toed the RSS line by saying that "no chief minister could have performed better under the circumstances."

Mr Shastri, on the other hand, wondered why the media was talking about imposition of President's rule in Gujarat as "normalcy" was being restored in the state. In an official release, Mr Shastri accused the media of "one-sided" coverage of the NHRC report and talked of the magnanimity of the karsevaks in Gujarat.

The Asian Age, April 3

Policemen in Gujarat suffer from stress-induced diseases

By Raja Bose
Times News Network

VADODARA: The reason for Ahmedabad deputy commissioner of police V.M. Pargi's sudden outburst against mediamen may not be far to find. The buck, says an expert in post-trauma stress disorder (PTSD) Dr Joep Toebosch, stops at his seniors' doors. The leader had failed to read his subordinate's mind in this time of strife, feels the Dutchman. He is working with policemen here to bring succour to their stressed minds.

Mr Toebosch feels that instances of policemen going berserk while controlling mobs, like the Sabarmati Ashram incident, are due to the state police top brass' failure to "read the mind of its forces".

"Leadership today does not mean holding aloft a gun and asking the forces to follow him on the field. That is a mediaeval concept. Today's leader has to delve into the minds of its force. Psychology plays a big role in policing today,"

says Mr Toebosch.

"And, you need not be a specialist in this field. The senior people can make out from obvious signs like a person's body language or his getting abusive that he is under psychological duress," says Mr Toebosch. He is also a trained criminologist and forensic scientist, who has taught in the police academy in his country, worked in Rwanda after the genocide and at present is working in Kutch with quake survivors.

He visited the Wadi and Navapura police stations on Monday night along with city doctors who have volunteered to provide medical help to policemen at all levels. They are suffering from stress-induced diseases. Mr Toebosch is in India as his wife is a diplomat posted at the Netherlands embassy in New Delhi. He was contacted by a city-based doctor Vijay Shah.

The team of doctors have found policemen suffering from high

blood pressure and stress related diseases like giddiness, acidity and body ache. They may have become slow in their responses. "The police officer attacking mediamen was a case of the right guy getting overstressed at the wrong moment. His bosses should have sensed and read the change in his behaviour," says Mr Toebosch.

He feels that the police forces are "overworked" all over the world. "That's not an abnormality. It is only when they have to continually work for long hours do they begin to show signs of cracking up," he says.

He feels that those doing long night shifts are more prone to stress. "The whole night, they may be doing nothing but they are all waiting for something to happen. They are on a psychological high alert and this is causing them more stress. This would not happen if they did some work while waiting for calls, like yoga or perhaps play some games," he says.

The Times of India, April 17

2,000 villages in Gujarat face drinking water scarcity

Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Even though the state government has prepared a master plan to deal with the drinking water crisis, more than 2,000 villages of Saurashtra, north Gujarat and Panchmahals will experience drinking water shortage this summer.

The worst-affected districts include Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Amreli and Jamnagar in the Saurashtra region. While in north Gujarat, Banaskantha, Patan and Mehsana will bear the brunt. Panchmahals too will be reeling under the shortage of drinking water.

State water supply minister Narottam Patel told *Times News Network* that though the water supply position has improved in these districts in the last two years, some of the interior villages would have to be supplied water by tankers.

More than 800 villages in these regions have been identified as critical and the district authorities have made arrangements for supply of drinking water, mainly in Bhavnagar, Amreli, Jamnagar and Rajkot.

He said that in north Gujarat district the ground water level has sunk and the fluoride content has increased alarmingly, posing a health hazard for several villages in the bordering districts of Patan and Banskanatha. The position in Mehsana is equally bad and potable water would have to be supplied to villages.

The state government, he said, has laid two major drinking water pipelines to supply water in the semi-

arid districts of Saurashtra from Mahi and Narmada. While exuding the hope that the second pipeline would be fully functional in June, the minister said that the water would be supplied to water starved districts of Jamnagar and Kutch.

Referring to the water crisis in Rajkot and Jamnagar, Mr Patel said that the water supply department could supply more water if Rajkot Municipal Corporation developed the city's internal pipe line network. Jamnagar needs 50 MLD of water and the state government plans to divert 20 MLD from various irrigation schemes and the remaining 25 MLD would be provided by drawing water from tubewells.

"Despite huge amount of funds spent to solve drinking water, the crisis of water will continue to loom large for another couple of years, as the problem of salinity ingress coupled with sinking ground water have posed serious problems".

In the first phase, the government has so far spent more than Rs 3,000 crore on laying two major pipelines for Saurashtra and expressed the hope that it would solve the drinking water problem of more than 3,500 villages.

Mr Patel said that the government has plans to cover around 8,215 villages through pipeline projects based on the Narmada project. A sum of Rs 8,500 crore will be spent on these projects in next two to three years, he added.

The Times of India, April 17

Now, riots rage in minds of Gujarat victims

■ Cases of vertigo, insomnia, nausea, stress on the rise

SHEFALI NAUTIYAL
AHMEDABAD, MAY 2

HOME is gone, but not the fear. For victims of the Gujarat riots, incessant fear of further attacks drives them to hospitals for a quick fix. Every night, doctors at Chhipa General Welfare Hospital in Jamalpur get at least a couple of patients who need to be given sedatives. "We have been receiving 30-40 people every day with all sorts of disorders — from vertigo to blood pressure to insomnia," said Dr Usmangani Pipadwala, hospital secretary.

"Many people come to us late in the evening and say they can't sleep at home. So we give them sedatives. The next morning, they feel better," Pipadwala said.

Other than those who rush to doctors, there are others who complain of psychological and physiological disorders. "Every person here is suffering from some disorder. Only the severity differs," said psychiatrist Dr Asif Momin. He has been deluged with calls at home; his Relief Road clinic has been closed for over a



Not just refugees, even the unaffected are falling ill for fear of riots spreading further

month now.

"I receive calls from people complaining of nausea and insomnia. Some time ago, a woman rang up saying she was vomiting all day long.

Nothing was wrong with her physiologically. I think she was suffering from extreme anxiety," Momin said. "Given the tension here, how can anyone stay normal? Doctors too are disturbed."

The Indian Express, May 3

All casualties of this clash belong to one community

STAVAN DESAI
AHMEDABAD, MAY 2

THE Gujarat police might well give themselves a pat on the back for "controlling" mobs in Chandola last week but the facts seem to tell a different story. The official police release says the cops opened fire after two groups clashed. Surprisingly, all the dead and injured were members of one community. No policeman was even injured.

"They killed innocent people in Gomtipur too. But there at least there was the provocation of a constable having been killed by a mob. Who provoked them here? Why did they

open fire at us?" asked 56-year-old Sheikh Mustafa Mohammed, a resident of Chandola, while tending to the injured at V.S. Hospital.

Sheikh saw a larger conspiracy in the entire episode. "There are some who want us to leave this area as they want to acquire our land," he said.

Residents said explosions made them think they were under attack and they started hurling stones towards the source of the sound. The police, they claimed, then opened fire.

Naziabibi, a mother of seven whose right thigh bone was fractured after she was reportedly hit with the butt of a .303 rifle, said: "I was breast-feeding my 10-month-old child when a policeman entered my house and hit me with a gun."

Speaking in Hindi and Bengali, she added: "Do you think I would have joined the mob leaving my seven children alone in the house? I care more for them than anything else in the world."

Shirinabibi, a widow who received a bullet injury on her right thigh, said: "I went out of the



SECOND TAKE CHANDOLA

house to console my neighbour as her husband had just been hit by a bullet. And just as I went out of the house, I felt as if I had been hit by a sharp stone. I ran back inside the house and found that I was bleeding profusely." Among the injured was 15-year-old Dala Sheikh who was hit by a shrapnel. The boy said he was at his doorstep when people gathered after the explosions. "I was frightened to step out. Just then the police came. I saw them open fire at the fleeing men," he alleged.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (J Division) R.D. Odedra denied the charges. "It is human nature not to accept one's mistakes. People will say what they want to. After all, policemen have a responsibility and there is no reason to take such action on women and children."

The Indian Express, May 3

Communalism loses, concern wins in hospitals

Victims don't hold ill-feelings, hatred towards each other but share grief

BY SHRAMANA GANGULY

Ahmedabad, March 4: Their identity as Hindus and Muslims made them victims of communal riots that gripped the state since the Godhra train carnage. Despite being victims of communal hatred, it is remarkable that victims from both the communities, who are presently undergoing treatment at the Civil Hospital, do not harbour ill-feelings against each other. Rather, they give a patient hearing to each other and share their grief.

"Communal hatred would not lead us anywhere. It never helped anyone before, nor will it ever lead

us anywhere," said 30-something Mahesh Solanki, who is nursing burn injuries on his face and hands at the hospital since February 28.

Mr Solanki was moving in his neighbourhood at SRPF quarters in Naroda on that day when he realised that a mob, whose identity he failed to ascertain, had thrown a bomb at him. Instinctively, as he had tried to pick it up to throw it elsewhere, it went off. "I am sorry for what is happening to everyone," he said. "Not that I am not upset by what happened to me, but it is the larger interest of the society which comes first," he added.

Similarly, Ms Afreen — mother

of two — and Mr Saurav who are receiving treatment in the C2 ward echoed that communal hatred did not spare their children and they can not think of revenge considering it will lead to more bloodshed, especially of the innocent.

"Attacking and killing people of a 'rival community' is no resort," added Ms Farzana Ayub Khan, 35, of Naroda.

Despite being witness to the death of her husband and her 13-year-old daughter Farhana, she believes that communal harmony is the need of the hour.

Ms Farzana and her younger daughter Reşma have survived

their burn injuries and hope that things get back to normal so that they can start afresh.

"We are no foreigners in this land. What could we possibly achieve by resorting to violence?"

says 50-year-old Mohammed Hanif, who has lost his five children in the Naroda massacre.

Mr Ramji Chauhan, 28, of Girdharnagar, Shahibaug, fought his tears as he narrated the inhuman attitude of his attackers who threw acid and petrol on him and set him afire.

"I wonder how this enmity cropped up considering that during the earthquake, there were several

Muslims who came to help the quake victims at the Civil Hospital here. It is possible that some of them were part of the mob that attacked me," he remarked.

Mr Chauhan informed that no sooner the Godhra massacre was reported, he had asked his Muslim friends to shift to safer places. "At times, the anger overwhelms me and I feel like retaliating by striking those who profess communal hatred," he says.

"But then I wonder what is the use of all this. Many more innocents like me would continue to die if each one of us thinks like this," he quips.

The Asian Age, May 5

Ambulances attacked by mobs in Gujarat

Eight killed in fresh violence in Ahmedabad

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Communal violence spilled over to the V. S. Hospital on Tuesday afternoon as a mob attacked two ambulances carrying riot victims outside the casualty ward of the hospital and stabbed a 22-year-old youth who was accompanying his brother injured in police firing.

Earlier, in fresh incidents of communal violence, eight people were killed, two of them burnt alive, prompting imposition of curfew in the riot-torn localities.

The notion of V. S. Hospital being a safe haven for patients of the minority community lay shattered as the mob prevented the ambulances carrying two dead and two injured in the rioting at Juhapura from entering the hospital. "They are killing our people. They should not be allowed to take treatment here", the mob reportedly shouted, blocking the way of the incoming ambulances.

"I got down from the ambulance thinking that the people had come to help take the patients out. As soon as I stepped out, these people started beating me up and one of them slashed me on the neck," a victim told this paper. He escaped and hid in a toilet in the adjoining building.

While one of the ambulances turned away and moved to the Riaz Hospital in Juhapura, patients in the other ambulance fled to Kagdiwad. "From there, we called a Congress leader who arranged for safe passage to the hospital," said a person who was accompanying the body of his nephew killed in police firing in Juhapura. The attack on the ambulances took place just as the shift at the hospital was changing. The hospital's res-

ident medical officer, Dinesh Chandana said that the incident was sparked off by outsiders and was immediately brought under control. The attack, has however, unnerved patients. "If they can attack an ambulance escorted by a police jeep, we can also be attacked. It is getting risky here. I have planned to shift my brother elsewhere," the sister of a patient with severe burn injuries said.

Hospital sources said that the atmosphere in the hospital was tense after a meeting between NGOs and officials of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. During this meeting, one representative reportedly accused the doctors of being communally biased and deliberately amputating limbs when there was no need to do so.

This statement angered a top AMC official who walked out of the meeting with the doctors. Shortly afterwards, a mob stormed in and threatened the representative who had made the statement.

In an incident near the railway station, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, an ITI lecturer was stabbed, pulled down from his scooter and burnt alive by a mob at around 10.45 am. The incident triggered off retaliatory action in the adjoining Juhapura area

where a camel-cart driver, going to deliver a cargo of iron rods, was waylaid and stabbed to death. His body was later set on fire by the mob. The mobs then spilled over to the streets where they set a truck on the Sarkhej highway on fire at around 1 pm. The police then entered the minority dominated area and opened fire killing two persons.

Refugee camps in Dahod shut down

By Akshaya Mukul
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: While home minister L. K. Advani told the Lok Sabha that there is no information on relief camps being closed in Gujarat, TNN has evidence to prove the contrary.

TNN is in possession of a letter written by Dahod collector S. R. Pandor on April 26 to mamlatdars of Dahod, Jhalod and Limkheda asking them to close two relief camps, which were set up on March 6 through a government order after the communal riots began. The letter says that "people should be asked to go back since they have been given relief and assistance to build houses." Mamlatdars were asked to intimate coordinators of the relief camps so that they be closed by April 28.

The two camps which have closed since the order came are the Gulistan Relief Committee Camp I and II. The first one had 964 inmates and the second one 994.

The Times of India, May 8

Jaundice, typhoid plague camps

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, May 8: At least 30 cases of jaundice and typhoid have been detected in the last 48 hours at three relief camps in Ahmedabad. However, the government is yet to confirm the cases.

Scores of camp inmates from across the city are suffering from jaundice, cholera, diarrhoea and other health ailments. The soaring temperature, lack of safe drinking water and hygiene at the camps might prove a major problem in days to come.

Significantly, the reluctance of camp inmates to venture out of the camps for treatment is proving to be a major hurdle in treatment. "We have about seven cases of jaundice and five cases of typhoid but the people here are not willing to go out of the camps for treatment. The heat and the lack of water have taken their toll," one of the camp organisers of Chartoda Kabrastan relief camp in Gomtipur, Siraj Khan told *The Asian Age*.

His 12-year-old nephew Asif Rangrej is suffering from typhoid, but his mother Sabeera is adamant about not taking him to any hospital.

"Times are really bad and after Tuesday's incident of stabbing in V.S. Hospital, I do not think I will feel safe in any hospital," she said.

Kusumbibi, who is herself suffering from jaundice has *mantrela dora* tied around her neck. "We need to have faith. It will cure us," she said.

In the nearby Bakarshah Roza relief camp, at least four children are ill and many children are severely malnourished. Ten-month old Sameer Hussain is suffering from diarrhoea for more than a week. His father, Safikun Khan, refuses to take him out of the camp for more treatment.

Similarly, 10-month-old Mosin Hussain is suffering from jaundice and his two-year-old brother is also not keeping well.

"Doctors ask us to get their blood tested. We have to go to private clinics for this, which we cannot afford," their mother, Jetur Hussain said.



HARD TALK: Muslim women confront a policeman in a riot-hit neighbourhood of Ahmedabad on Wednesday. (Reuters)

The Asian Age May 9

'Health services in Gujarat inadequate'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MAY 13

SHE is barely nine years old, and is one of the many who found refuge from rioting mobs in an Ahmedabad relief camp. While some are worried that the camp may close down, she is impassive. For, she has already lost everything. Her father and brother were burnt in front of her even as she made futile attempts to put off the fire with a blanket. Today, she roams around listlessly, stares vacantly when spoken to, and clutches scraps of the burnt blanket in her tiny fingers. There is no one who can help her get over her post-traumatic stress disorder.



Mrinal Gore joined several women's organisations at Fort on Monday to observe a one-day fast to protest the atrocities on Muslim women in Gujarat riots — Ganesh Shirsekar

THIS is just one instance of the "grossly inadequate" state of health services being provided to riot-victims by state and municipal health institutions in Gujarat. These were revealed by a study on the impact of the Gujarat carnage on public health, carried out by Medico Friend Circle, a national voluntary network of medical professionals and activists.

"The services provided are not comprehensive by any stretch of imagination. They give immunisation, some material and childcare and limited out-patient services, but make no active effort to provide water, sanitation facilities, treatment for severe injuries and specialised counselling to help victims get over psychological trauma. Worse, there are mobs hanging around hospitals, to try and hurt those who come to seek help," said Dr Ritu Priya, a member of the NGO's delegation.

Dr Priya added that women who had been raped were left with long-standing psychological disorders including depressions and suicidal tendencies.

The NGO's report demands comprehensive health and rehabilitation effort by the Gujarat government.

It's other demands are continuance of the relief camps, a detailed enquiry into the conditions inside the camps by an independent health commission, recording of cases of sexual violence and provision of psychological support to the riot-victims.

Today, the NGO released its findings and a report at a press meet at Marathi Patrakar Sangh.

According to the report, health services being provided to victims in refugee camps and state-run hospitals are only 'perfunctory' and pale in comparison to what was undertaken in the aftermath of last year's earthquakes in the state.

The Indian Express, May 14

Centre admits to measles outbreak

By Kalpana Jain
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: It's official now. The Vajpayee government on Tuesday admitted to 40 children being infected with measles in one camp in Godhra alone, contradicting its earlier claim that only eight cases had occurred in relief camps throughout Gujarat. The Centre has also decided to press the Modi government to decentralise the distribution of medicines rather than insisting that sick riot victims or their family members come in person to medical centres to collect their medicines.

Union health minister C.P. Thakur, while confirming a report in this newspaper on Monday of measles outbreak in Godhra camp, said fresh instructions had been issued to the state to ensure that all children in the camp are vaccinated. He said an additional grant of Rs 2 crore had been provided from the PM's relief fund to implement health measures. Earlier, Rs 1 crore had been given.

He said that while children had been immunised

earlier, the outbreak could have occurred due to fresh additions to these camps, who remained without vaccinations. "We have now asked the state to hold vaccination camps everyday to cover any new admissions," Mr Thakur added that initially, some amongst the Muslims were wary of taking the vaccines as well.

Interestingly, an official press release issued later in the evening again contradicted Mr Thakur's conversation with TNN. It categorically denied any measles outbreak even though it added subsequently that "only 34 cases of measles have been reported in Godhra."

Taking action on a report in this newspaper on the lack of availability of medicines in Godhra camp, Mr Thakur said the Centre, working through the Indian Red Cross in Ahmedabad, will expand its area and cover the regional camps as well. He said that although the starting point of the violence was Godhra, the Centre's work was concentrated in Ahmedabad as the situation in Godhra had improved considerably. In fact, the camp at Godhra was to be dismantled.

The Times of India, May 25

Vociferous protest against Gujarat communal riots

By OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 4: Hundreds of journalists, activists and students on Monday took to the streets to condemn the ongoing Gujarat violence and demanded the dismissal of the Narendra Modi government.

Senior editors, including N. Ram of the *Frontline* newsmagazine, Dilip Padgaonkar of *The Times of India*, authors Khushwant Singh and Arundhati Roy, veteran Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande and representative of Hindi Writers' Association Vishnu Nagar joined the procession which started from the Press Club of India and culminated at Jantar Mantar.

The participants in the march attacked the Modi government for its failure to stop the communal flare-up and held the

partisan role played by the state machinery responsible for the law and order breakdown.

Mr Padgaonkar said that the state government in Gujarat did not even allow the media to cover the events of arson and looting in the state.

He said that the march was an expression of solidarity of the media which was being hampered to carry out its job in Gujarat.

The senior editor said that it was unfortunate that the state government had chosen to blame the media for abetting violence.

Mr N. Ram was also critical of the role played by the state government in the cycle of violence which was allowed to continue unabated for two long days.

He said that the situation could have easily been brought under control by the

state government.

"The Narendra Modi government should resign," he said.

The marchers raised slogans demanding a ban on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and called for checking the activities of the right wing groups.

Arundhati Roy said that religion had nothing to do with the violence in Gujarat. She said that it was more of politics than a Hindu-Muslim clash.

She blamed the state government for playing an irresponsible role in the entire episode.

The students in the procession were represented by members of the JNU Students' Union.

Demanding the dismissal of the Modi government, the student body called for Gujarat being declared a "disturbed area."

JNU also demanded stopping of movement of Ramsevakas in Ayodhya.

The representatives of Jamia Teachers Association issued an appeal asking the Central and state governments to take firm action against those responsible for violence in Gujarat.

The scribes were particularly agitated over the attempts by the Gujarat government to attack the media.

Deputy bureau chief of *The Times of India* Sidharth Vardarajan said that media should boycott the right wing forces. "Media should not be allowed to be used as an instrument by the fascist forces," he said.

Political editor and chief of bureau of *The Asian Age* Seema Mustafa said that there was need to expose the media persons who were playing in the hands of right wing forces.

The Asian Age, March 5

Women sing songs for peace in Gujarat

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, March 8: "Mandir bhi lelo, Masjid bhi lelo. Par hamare lahu se na khelo." (Take away the temple and the mosque. But do not play with our blood). This was one of the songs sung at a peace meeting at Sabarmati Ashram on Friday. On the occasion of International Women's Day, Ahmedabad Women's Action Group organised a peace meeting there called "Women for Peace."

Apart from these songs to emphasise the need for peace in the city that is still recovering from communal riots, speeches and discussions were also on agenda.

"We knew peace was the theme of the International Women's Day this time all over the world with the September 11 incident in the US, the subsequent Afghanistan turmoil and the ongoing Middle East crisis. However, since Gujarat is usually a peaceful state, we did not feel the need to ask for peace. Now, after the riots, we feel we must ask first for peace," chairperson of AWAG Ila Pathak said.

Ms Pathak said the peace of Gujarat was so disturbed that women were frightened to come out on the streets. With food becoming scarce, women of poor households were bound to suffer more as they had a small share in the food even in normal times.

The Asian Age March 9

Gandhians to rally with NGOs for peace today

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, March 4: A group of citizens including Gandhian Chinu Vaidya, former Union minister Y.K. Alagh and members from the NGO sector will lead a peace march on Tuesday. The rally will start from Kochrab Ashram in Paldi area in Ahmedabad at 3 pm and end at Gandhi Ashram.

Addressing a press conference, former Union minister Y.K. Alagh said it is a responsibility of the state government to protect the lives and property of citizens and the Gujarat government has failed to do it.

Talking about the demand made by several quarters that President's rule be imposed in the state, Mr Alagh said, "Any government that does not know how to tackle the situation has no right to stay in power. Such a government has no ethical or moral right to be in the office." Mr Vaidya, while agreeing that the Godhra rail attack was pre-planned, said, "There is definitely some agency that has been instigating the mobs. Such agencies which operate on religious lines should not be allowed to function."

Mr Alagh too condemned the Godhra attack and said the criminals behind the conspiracy should be brought to books. He was of the opinion that these riots are creating negative image of the state. "The real work on hands is to build up the confidence of the people and we will now try to provide relief to the affected people," Mr Alagh said.

Secretary of Ahmedabad Women's Action Group Ms Ila Pathak said, "Even the NGO sector was shocked at the incident. But we have been planning peace initiative since Saturday."

Sukhdev Patel of Janpath and Sudarshan Iyengar, director of Gujarat Institute of Development Research, social activist and senior journalist Mr Digant Oza and senior journalist Mr Batuk Vora are also part of this group.

The Asian Age, March 5

Concerned Mumbai citizens get together to help Gujarat victims

By Our Correspondent

More than a month after the riots began in Gujarat, the terror has not subsided. After the tension on March 15, in Mumbai life goes on as usual. However, some concerned citizens have decided not to close their eyes to the carnage across the state border and have decided to do something to help.

Centre for Social Action

The Centre has just completed massive earthquake relief work in Gujarat where a substantial amount was collected. Fr Rocky Banz said: "We are working through our partners there. We are working in relief camps, counselling people and helping kids go back to school. If there are volunteers willing to go over there we could put them in

touch with the people there.

Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal

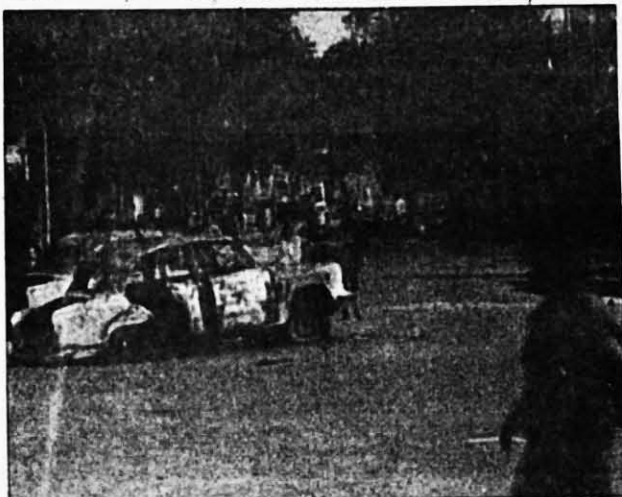
Responding to the need of the hour, this organisation in co-operation with the Gujarat Lok Samiti and Gujarat Sarvodaya Mandal has undertaken the task of providing relief and rehabilitation to riot victims. Various organisations were approached for donations, and responded by contributing Rs 1 lakh each. The money will be handed over to Gandhian Mr Chunnibhai Vaidya, who has already started relief work, which will need at least Rs 200 crore.

Donations can be sent to Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal, 299, Tardeo Road, Nana Chowk, Mumbai-400007. Tel No. — 3872061/3884527.

The Bombay Catholic Sabha

As part of its 'Campaign for Communal Harmony', the Sabha has asked its units to organise fund raising measures within their parish networks in aid of the victims of communalism. Mr Lavy A. D'Costa, general secretary, said: "We have managed to collect Rs 1.5 lakh in donations. It is a small amount which we will hand over to the Gujarat Education Society."

The Sabha also requests citizens to be signatories to the Pledge for Communal Harmony, which will be handed over to the President with copies to the Prime Minister and Home Minister. The pledge reads as follows: "Our great nation has always prided itself on its unique diversity of religious cultures and traditions. This fabric of religious tolerance and secularism nurtured over the ages is under serious threat today in the context of the prevailing situation. We pledge to strengthen the forces of



Help for a strife-torn Gujarat. □ ASIAN AGE

secularism and work towards building amity and preserving communal harmony in our beloved country." Donations, as well as the pledge duly signed, can be sent to The Bombay Catholic Sabha, c/o St Michael's Church, Mahim, Mumbai. For details call: 4463853/4446632

College of Social Work

Professor Lambe of the College of Social Work said: "There are a loose group of people working towards the cause. We are looking at communal issues on a long term basis." The college was already associated with Pratham, an organisation working for the education of children. Since many schools have closed down since the riots, volunteers are now working with the staff and children traumatised by the recent events, specially providing recreational activities that

serve a therapeutic purpose. "We already have a large number of drawings which are very telling," she said. She added: "We are thinking of increasing the capacity of mohalla committees as was done in Mumbai after the riots to prevent violence." While berating the lack of a fund for relief of the kind that was instituted during the earthquake, she pointed out that the need of the hour was for volunteers to listen to the people and help build their confidence.

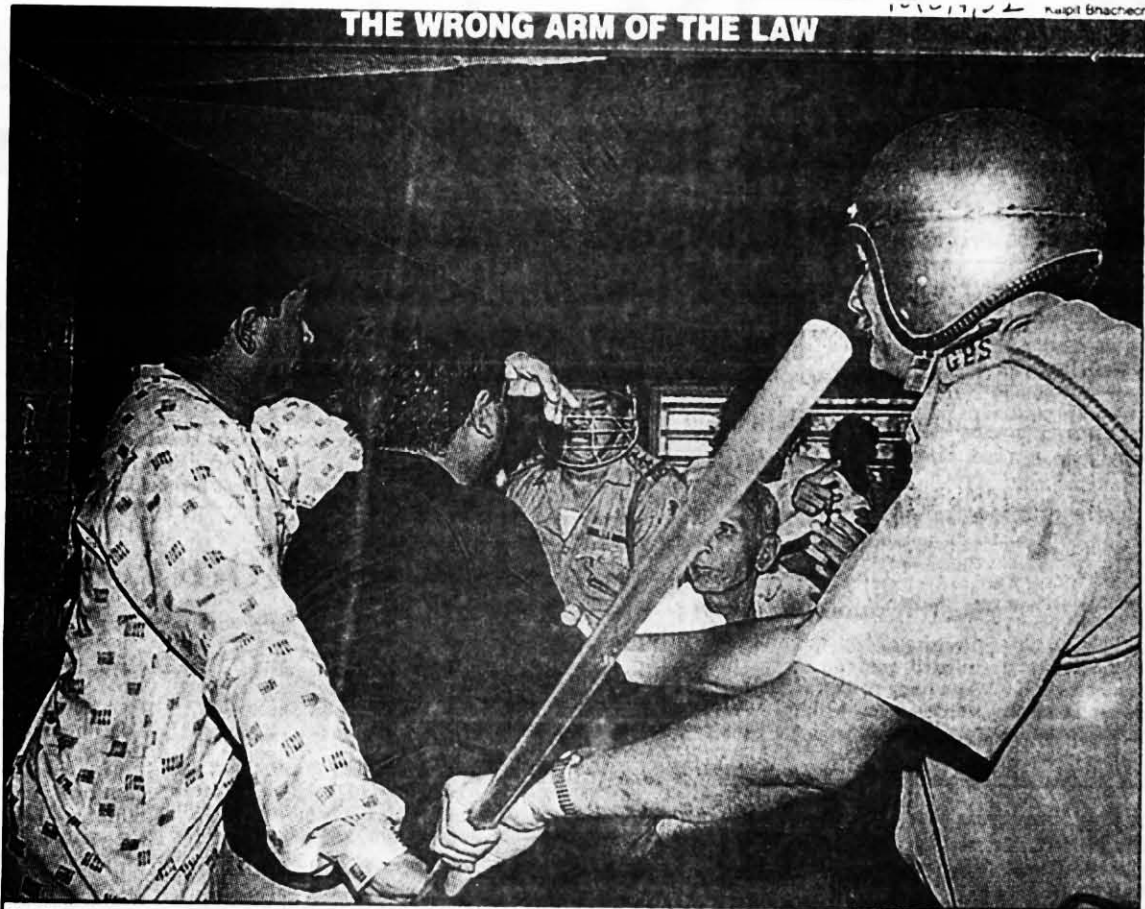
Aawaaz-e-Nizwaan

After visiting riot-affected areas in Gujarat, this group came to the conclusion that they had witnessed the "genocide of a community" with "the involvement of the state". Ms Hasina Khan said: "We are thinking about how to undertake relief work when a large number of people cannot go back to

their homes and often, where the places can be lived in, when there is no sense of security. There were also cases of sexual harassment and molestation of women." While economic support and legal action was necessary, Ms Khan advised secular minded people in Mumbai to be vigilant and raise their voices against communalism.

Raza Academy

The Academy along with the All-India Sunni Jammat-ul-Ulema have collected donations, clothes, medicines and food for the victims of riot affected areas in Gujarat. Maulana Mohammed Saeed Noorie, general secretary, said: "We have already sent food to Ahmedabad and we will be sending stock to Rajkot, and Baroda as well. We will go there in a few days with medicines and other articles that have been collected."



Police wield lathis inside the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad during a protest against the presence of Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar at a peace meeting on Sunday.

Police run riot at peace meeting in Gujarat

Mediapersons bear brunt of attack

By Shyam Parekh
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Several journalists were injured, some of them seriously, in an unprovoked attack by the Gujarat police at the Sabarmati Ashram here on Sunday.

The journalists were covering two peace committee meetings being held at the ashram. They were assaulted with lathis and rifle butts. Several cameras were smashed by the police personnel.

The trouble initially started when a violent mob—comprising activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morcha, the Congress and the National Council for Civil Liberties—started gathering at the ashram, protesting the presence of Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar at one of the meetings. The demonstrators hurled abuses at Ms Patkar, who was already in tears requesting them not to disturb the meeting.

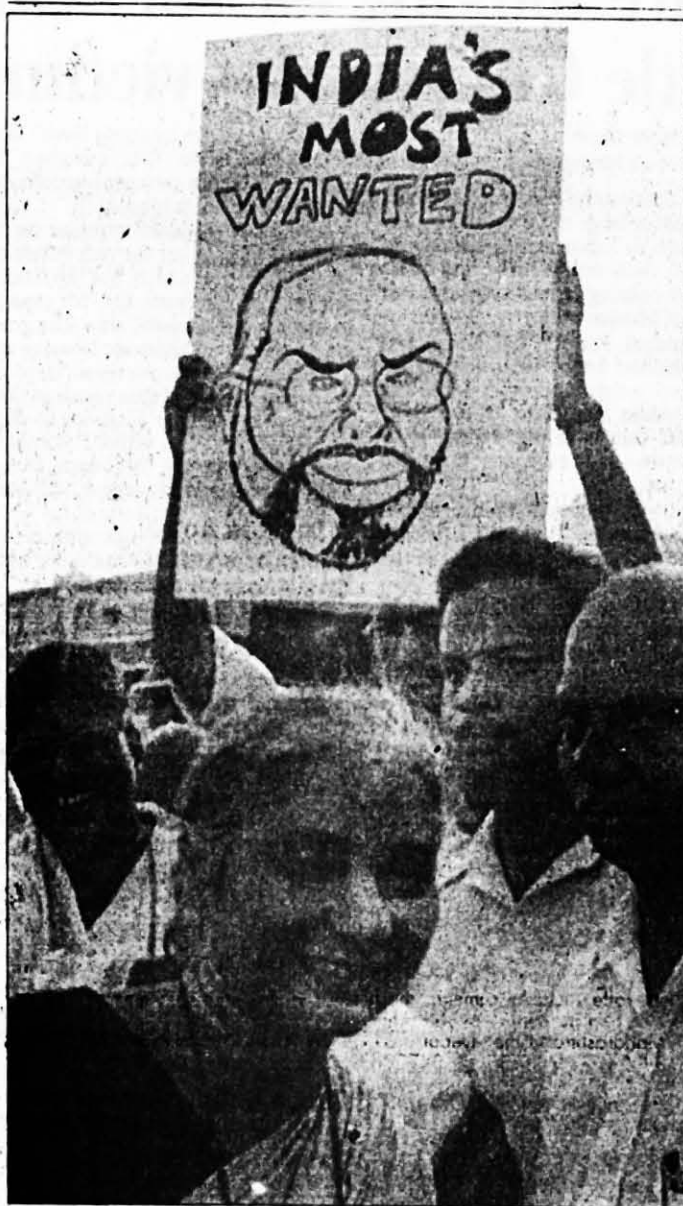
When Mallika Sarabhai tried to intervene, she was asked to drive out Ms Patkar. Later, she too was threatened. Activists accompa-

nying Ms Sarabhai then locked her up at the exhibition hall, even as the mob threatened to get hold of her and Ms Patkar. Deputy commissioner of police V.M. Pargi then suggested that she be cordoned off and whisked away in a police vehicle.

Immediately, the police personnel present at the ashram started driving away everybody. They also asked the mediapersons to leave, leading to a heated argument between Mr Pargi and the journalists. After this, NDTV cameraman Pranav and Aaj Tak correspondent Dhimant Purohit and the entire ETV crew were beaten up mercilessly. A *Times of India* photographer was hit with rifle butts on his ribs and kicked repeatedly. Pranav became unconscious after the assault. Additional commissioner of police Shivanand Jha then arrived at the spot and the reporters started telling him what had transpired. Even as Mr Jha was being briefed, Mr Pargi led a second charge against the journalists. Mr Jha then intervened and shouted at the policemen to stop their attack.



Mallika Sarabhai addresses a peace meet at Sabarmati Ashram on Sunday.



VOICE OF PROTEST: Activist of the Narmada Bachao Andolan Medha Patkar participates in a rally organised by Samajik Ekta Manch. The rally was flagged off at Azad Maidan and taken to Girgaum Chowpatty on Monday. A memorandum addressed to the President was submitted to the Governor in protest against the violence that unfolded at the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. □ Gajanan Dudhalkar

The Asian Age, April 9

NGOs are looking for safe villages to resettle Gujarat riot victims

By Rajiv Shah
Times News Network

HIMMATNAGAR (Sabarkantha): As it is increasingly becoming clear that a large number of riot victims living in relief camps in Sabarkantha district are in no mood to return to their original dwellings, voluntary organisations are coming forward to work out plans to resettle them in Muslim majority villages.

Safe villages like Satnagar, Panpur, Ilol, Kanai and Parabda have been identified for resettlement and so have Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods in towns like Himmatnagar, Modasa and Idar. Meanwhile, those running the relief camps in the district have begun stating the obvious—that refugees can't live permanently in the camps.

The view is getting strong, they will have to either return or be resettled elsewhere. But with less than five per cent of the 12,000-odd displaced living in the camps having so far returned—mostly townsfolk who had reached the camps out of fear—the problem of where to resettle the rest is now bothering camp managers. Rich Muslims have moved into rented houses away from their houses. As for the rest, with no official help forthcoming, alternate arrangements will have to be made.

A case in point is the 71 riot victims from Sardarpura village of Mehsana district, living at the Panpur-Patia relief camp near here for two months. They will never go back to reoccupy their homes where their forefathers lived. Terrified, seeing 42 people being burnt alive in front of their eyes, the victims will now be resettled in Satnagar village, about 10 km from here.

Efforts are being made to acquire and build 20 houses for the Sardarpura victims in Satnagar. The construction work will begin soon. Currently living in a tented accommodation in the camp, Khatijabibi, an elderly survivor said, with tears rolling from her eyes,

"What will we do by going back? We have lost everything." She is the lone guardian for Salma, 7, and Dilavar, 5, whose parents were charred to death during the March 1 carnage.

Says Ibrahim Sheikh, another survivor, "We worked as sharecroppers for the rich Patels on their farms. We were their trusted men, but the trust has been broken. We want an alternate site. We cannot risk going back to the same residential area. The government is refusing to give us an alternate housing site."

Sheikh and other survivors have no work and have to live on doles and free meals in the camp. "The government has put up no plans to engage them in any wage-earning work either," complains Anis Patel, a social worker from Vadodara. But government officials insist that Sardarpura villagers must return to their district. "They hope for a better deal from the Centre, that is why they continue to stay in the camp. Once they return, they fear they would not be able to bargain," alleges a district official.

The situation is the same with regard to the 150 families of Kidiad village of Malpur taluka, living in two relief camps in Panpur-Patia and Modasa town. With uncertainty over the fate of the 62 "missing" persons from Kidiad after they became victims of arson while travelling in a small truck on March 1 in the Panchmahals, and their houses destroyed, plans are on to resettle them in Panpur-Patia and Modasa. "They do not want to go back," says Usman Lala, who runs the Makhdum relief camp at Modasa.

Similarly, the terrified victims of two other villages, Dhansura and Fardi, do not wish to return to their homes. Their properties were set on fire, so they want to stay in Muslim-dominated areas in Modasa. In fact, arrangements are being made to build 140 houses in the neighbourhood of the majority area of Modasa town. At Panpur-Patia, too, land is being acquired to resettle about 300 families. The village panchayat has agreed to provide the land.

The Times of India, April 30

HOW HAS THE CARNAGE IN GUJARAT AFFECTED MUSLIM WOMEN?

A National Women's Panel Investigates

**Sponsored by
Citizen's Initiative, Ahmedabad**

**Dr. Syeda Hameed, Muslim Women's Forum, Delhi; Ruth Manorama, National Alliance of Women, Bangalore;
Sheba George, Sahrwaru, Ahmedabad; Mallini Ghose, Nirantar, Delhi; Farah Naqvi, Independent Journalist,
Delhi; Mari Thekkum, ACCORD, Tamil Nadu**

*Gujarat ke firaq se hai khaar khaar dil
Betaah hai seenay mane atash bahar dil
Marham nahin hai iske zakhm ka jahan mane
Shamshir e hijr se jo hua hai figar dil*

Vali Gujarati
Sufi saint-poet
Born in Ahmedabad circa 1650
Died in Ahmedabad 1707
Tomb razed February 28, 2002

"I always swerve a bit to the side to avoid driving over the spot where the mazaar stood. It wouldn't feel right. I know other drivers do the same."

Driver Shankar, while driving past the freshly tarred patch of road where Vali Gujarati's mazaar had been for three hundred years

INTRODUCTION

A six member team of women from Delhi, Bangalore, Tamil Nadu and Ahmedabad undertook a five-day mission to assess the impact of the continuing violence on women in Gujarat. The team visited relief camps in both rural and urban areas (Ahmedabad, Kheda, Baroda, Sabarkantha, and Panchmahals districts) and spoke to a large number of victims and a wide cross-section of opinion leaders, activists, social workers, policemen, members of the administration, media, and leaders in the minority and majority community, including Maya Kodnani, BJP MLA from Naroda Patia (Ahmedabad), area which has seen extreme violence. Maya Kodnani has been named as an accused in the FIR. The fact-finding was conducted under conditions of continuing violence and curfew in many parts of the State.

The team has been shaken and numbed by the scale and brutality of the violence that is still continuing in Gujarat. Despite reading news reports, the team members were totally unprepared for what they saw and heard; for the fear in the eyes and sentiments of ordinary women and children whose basic human right to live a life of dignity has been snatched away from them. We have been alarmed by the evidence of state and police complicity in human rights violations and mass murder of this magnitude, and numbed by testimonies of women who were brutalized in the presence of the police. We found equally appalling the abdication of the State in its duty to protect a certain section of its citizens. Maya Kodanani, with no trace of remorse or any expression of failure stated categorically that there was absolutely nothing the state could do. The construction of the events of the 28th and 1st as a natural outpouring of anger of the Hindu community goes against all the evidence we gathered. (add Maya Kodnani here)

Many of the victims in relief camps are women, among them many who have survived the most bestial forms of sexual violence including rape, gang rape, mass rape, stripping, insertion of objects into their body, stripping, molestations. A majority of rape victims have been burnt alive. There are women whose livelihoods have been snatched from them, and mothers who are struggling to keep their children alive under the most appalling health conditions in relief camps. There are children who have seen what no child should see – trauma is writ large in their eyes. These women and their families have been living under appalling conditions as refugees and no concrete steps have been taken by the government to restore normalcy.

We found:

- The impact of the violence on women has not been systematically assessed.
- There has been a clear invisibilization of the issue of the sexual violence that has been perpetrated.
- The situation in Gujarat is not normal. Large sections of the cities are under curfew, Muslims are living in fear.
- The trends towards ghettoization are alarming and need to be addressed but not by sending people back home without ensuring security.

Section I

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The fact-finding team found compelling evidence of the most extreme form of sexual violence against women during the first few days of the carnage – Ahmedabad on Feb 28 and March 1 and rural areas up to March 3, 2002. The testimonies point to the extremely brutal and depraved forms of the violence here. The team is in no doubt that crimes against women were part of the organised violence that was unleashed in the post-Godhra carnage. Given that data on crimes against women has not been systematically collected it is, impossible to ascertain the extent of the outrage. We believe, however that crimes against women have been grossly under-reported. For instance in Panchmahals district only one FIR has been filed, though we heard of scores of other cases. In fact there has been a complete invisibilisation of the issue in the media¹.

This is compounded by the apathy of the law-enforcement agencies and the indifference of political representatives. In our interview with Maya Kodnani, BJP MLA from Naroda Patia², where several brutal gang rapes and rapes of minor girls have been reported (see testimonies below) she was indifferent and even bemused. When questioned about the reported rapes she said - *Accha, kya ye sach hai? Suna hai. Ek police ne mujhe bataya ki aise hua hai par usne dekha nahin*. (Is this true? One policeman mentioned this to me but he had not seen anything) She has not investigated further.

Given the gravity of the situation, it is incomprehensible that the National Commission for Women had not visited the State even once, indicating a complete institutional breakdown as far as issues such as violence against women are concerned. As the district collector Panchmahals, clearly told us "Maintaining Law and order is my primary concern. It is not possible for me to look into cases of sexual violence. If something is brought to my notice (like the Bilkees case, see below) I can take action. But nothing more than that. NGO's should take on this job I would welcome their involvement."

During our visits to the camps, we were virtually flooded with detailed testimonies from rape victims themselves and from eyewitnesses - both activists and family members who witnessed the crime. For instance, in the short time we spent at Halol camp (Panchmahals district) we were able to get information about four incidents of rape. We were told about Sultani's rape by her aunt Rukaiya and sister-in-law Ruksana. We went and met Sultani at the Halol camp and recorded her testimony. Women from Delol reported the rape of 13 year old Yasmin. Yasmin is dead and the eyewitness (who told the women the story), a young boy by the name of Javed has now returned to his native village. Mohammad bhai, witnessed the rape of six girls. 4 young boys reported the stripping and brutalisation of a family of 11 from Limkheda. We also watched a documentary film where women spoke of witnessing rapes. In the film we saw slogans like *Muslims Quit India or we will **** your mothers* written on the walls of charred houses.

Given the fact that we gathered this information in such a short span of time we believe that this is just the tip of the iceberg. We reproduce below only the testimonies that we were able to crosscheck and verify personally or through other reports. But several incidents came to light that still need to be followed up.

A. Testimonies of Sexual Violence

WITNESSING MASS RAPE (INCLUDING MINOR GIRLS)

¹ For a discussion of the issue of sexual violence and the media, see Sub section B.

² Further details in Section on Role of the State

NARODA PATIA, AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 28, 2002³

The mob started chasing us with burning tyres after we were forced to leave Gangotri society. It was then that they raped many girls. We saw about 8-10 rapes. We saw them strip 16 year old Mehrunissa. They were stripping themselves and beckoning to the girls. Then they raped them right there on the road. We saw a girl's vagina being slit open. Then they were burnt. Now there is no evidence.

Kulsum Bibi, Shah e Alam Camp, March 27, 2002

I saw Farzana being raped by Guddu Chara. Farzana was about 13 years old. She was a resident was a Hussain Nagar. They put a *savta* (rod) in Farzana's stomach. She was later burnt. 12 year old Noorjahan was also raped. The rapists were Guddu, Suresh and Naresh Chara and Haria. I also saw Bhawani Singh, who works in the State Transport (ST) department kill 5 men and a boy.

Azharuddin, 13 years, witnessed the rapes while hiding on the terrace of Gangotri Society. The Chara basti is located just behind Jawan Nagar. The Charas we were told were into petty thievery and controlled the illicit liquor market.

The mob, which came from Chara Nagar and Kuber Nagar, started burning people at around 6 O' clock in the evening. The mob stripped all the girls of the locality, including my 22-year-old daughter, and raped them. My daughter was engaged to be married. 7 members of my family were burnt including my wife (aged 40), my sons (aged 18, 14 and 7 and my daughters (aged 2, 4) and 22). My eldest daughter who later died in the civil hospital told me that those who raped her were wearing shorts. They hit her on the head and then burnt her. She died of 80% burn injuries".

Abdul Usman, Testimony recorded by Citizens Initiative

A RAPE VICTIM'S ACCOUNT - SULTANI SPEAKS VILLAGE ERAL, TALUKA KALOL, PANCHMAHALS DISTRICT⁴

On the afternoon of the 28th to escape the violent mob, about 40 of us got on to a tempo, wanting to escape to Kalol. My husband Feroze was driving the tempo. Just outside Kalol a Maruti car was blocking the road. A mob was lying in wait. Feroze had to swerve. The tempo overturned. As we got out they started attacking us. People started running in all directions. Some of us ran towards the river. I fell behind as I was carrying my son, Faizan. The men caught me from behind and threw me on the ground. Faizan fell from my arms and started crying. My clothes were stripped by the men and I was left stark naked. One by one the men raped me. All the while I could hear my son crying. I lost count after 3. They then cut my foot with a sharp weapon and left me there in that state.

Sultani, Kalol Camp, Panchmahals District, March 30, 2002

- We had heard about Sultani's case from her relatives who were in Halol camp. The details and sequence of events of both testimonies matched.
- Sultani has not undergone a medical examination. Her leg had been swollen for three weeks as a result of the injury inflicted by a sharp weapon but is healing now.
- No FIR has been filed though a written statement has been submitted to the DSP. In her statement she names some men from the mob (Jitu Shah- PDS Shop owner of Delol village, Ashok Patel alias Don Dadhi of Ramnath village)
- When we spoke with her and her sister-in-law they both said they were feeling numb and lost as they did not know where to go from the Camp. She categorically stated that they could not go back to her village. She was terribly worried about the future especially her children's. Sultani has still not been told that her husband had died in the attack. She believes he is missing.

³ Several people have testified to witnessing these rapes. See Annexure 1.1 for an additional corroborating testimony.

⁴ See Annexure 1.2 for detailed testimony

**A MOTHER'S ACCOUNT OF HER DAUGHTERS RAPE
VILLAGE ERAL, TALUKA KALOL, PANCHMAHALS DISTRICT, MARCH 3, 2002⁵**

My father-in-law a retired schoolteacher refused to leave the village with the other Muslim families who fled to Kalol on the 28th. He believed no one would harm us. From the 28th about 13 members of my family sought refuge in various people's houses and the fields. On Sunday afternoon (March 3) the hut we were hiding in was attacked. We ran in different directions and hid in the field. But the mob found some of us and started attacking. I could hear various members of my family shouting for mercy as they were attacked. I recognized two people from my village - Gano Baria and Sunil - pulling away my daughter Shabana. She screamed telling the men to get off her and leave her alone. The screams of and cries of Rukaiya, Suhana, Shabana, begging for their *izzat* could clearly be heard. My daughter was screaming in pain asking the men to leave her alone. My mind was seething with fear and fury. I could do nothing to help my daughter from being assaulted sexually and tortured to death. My daughter was like a flower, still to experience life. Why did they have to do this to her? What kind of men are these? The monsters tore my beloved daughter to pieces. After a while, the mob was saying "cut them to pieces, leave no evidence." I saw fires being lit. After some time the mob started leaving. And it became quiet.

Medina Mustafa Ismail Sheikh, Kalol camp, Panchmahals district, March 30, 2002

- Medina's testimony has been corroborated by the other two living witnesses - Mehboob and Khushboo. Khushboo in her testimony recounted how her grandfather (Medina's father-in-law) and Huriben were killed. She also narrated how Rukaiya's pajamas were taken off and then one by one the men started "poking her in the lower part with their body".
- We saw a copy of Medina's FIR, where the police has charged 5 persons with murder under section 302. Charges of rape have not been included. The FIR uses the colloquial implication 'bura kaam' rather than the specific term 'rape'. We were also given the case report prepared by the camp leaders. The names of some of the accused are mentioned in the FIR.

**GANG RAPE OF 25 YEAR OLD ZARINA, A HUSBAND'S ACCOUNT
HUSSAIN NAGAR, NARODA PATLA, AHMEDABAD. FEBRUARY 28TH, 2002**

It started at 9 am on the 28th. That's when the mobs arrived, shouting - *Mian Bhai nikalo* (Bring out the Muslims). Many of them were wearing *kesari chaddis* (saffron shorts or underwear) The mob included boys from the neighbouring buildings - Gopinath Society and Gangotri Society. I ran out of my house with the entire family - mother, father, sister, sister's daughter, my wife Zarina, my brother, my sister-in-law, and my niece... there were 11 of us. We all ran towards the Police chowki. The Police said - go towards Gopinath and Gangotri. In the melee, I was separated from my wife. What happened to her she told me later. She tried to escape the mobs by leaping over a wall. But found herself in a cul-de-sac. They gang-raped her, and cut off one arm. She was found naked. She was kept in the civil hospital for many days. Now she is recovering with her mother near the Khanpur darwaza.

Naimuddin Ibrahim Sheikh, 30 year old husband of Zarina. Shah-e-Alam Camp, March 27, 2002. His family migrated from Gulharga in Karnataka in 1971. He was born in Naroda. Naimudin's testimony was corroborated by Muntaz, who was among the women who found Zarina naked in the maidan.

**RAPE OF 13 YEAR OLD YASMIN:
VILLAGE DELOL, PANCHMAHALS DISTRICT, MARCH 1, 2002**

The extended families of Mohammad bhai and Bhuri behn (about 20) people were chased by the mob to the river. Javed and another boy who managed to escape and hide behind a bush saw the mob kill Mohammad bhai and rape Yasmin. They were about to kill the mother of the other boy who was hiding with him. So he screamed and

⁵ See Annexure 1.3 for detailed testimony

ran out from behind the bush and was caught. He was made to walk around the dead bodies that were burnt (as if around a pyre) and he was then pushed into the fire.

Narrated by women from Delol. On March 30, 2002 at Halol Camp, Panchmahals district. Javed, Mohammad bhai's nephew had come to Delol to help his uncle. He had narrated this to several of the women from Delol. Javed has returned to his village, Desar.

STRIPPING AND BRUTALISING OF AN ENTIRE FAMILY, LIMKHEDA VILLAGE. DHEROL STATION, HALOL TALUKA, PANCHMAHALS DISTRICT, FEBRUARY 28, 2002

35 year old Haseena Bibi Yasin Khan Pathan along with her entire extended family of 17 people ran from Limkheda on the morning of February 28th. At 7 am they caught the train from Limkheda Station, disembarked at Dherol Station at 10 am. That's when they encountered the mob. Every one ran helter-skelter and the family got separated. Haseena, her husband, and young daughter managed to run towards Halol. Two children – Farzana, (10 years old) and Sikandar, (7 years old) escaped into the fields. Four boys – Ayub, (age 12), Mushtaq, (age 12), Mohsin, (age 10), and Shiraj, (age 7) managed to hide behind bushes, and witnessed what happened. There was a large crowd. They were wearing pant-shirt and brandishing swords. According to Ayub the mob caught his sister Afsana, and cousins Zebu, Noorjehan, Sitara, Akbar, Rehana, Isup, Imran, Khatun (Aunt), and Zareef (brother). They were all stripped naked. And made to run towards a nearby canal. That's the last Ayub saw of them. The bodies turned up charred near the canal the following day. He doesn't recognize the mob. No FIR has been lodged.

Ayub Halol Camp, Panchmahals district. The first part of the testimony is corroborated by his mother, Haseena Bibi.

ACTIVISTS' EXPERIENCES OF DEALING WITH RAPE VICTIMS SHAH-E- ALAM RELIEF CAMP, AHMEDABAD.

Naseem and Mahmooda, from nearby Millat Nagar, work with Sharwaru, a voluntary organization. They are presently working at the Shah Alam camp. They testified that many women arrived stark naked at the camp. Men took off their shirts to cover their nakedness. Some could barely walk due to their torn genitals as a result of gang rapes. While talking to them we met Zubaida Apa, an elderly woman who has witnessed girls being gang raped. Her trauma was writ large on her face. We did not dare to rake up her pain by asking her more questions. We were told about Najma Bano who was brought to the camp unconscious, her body covered with bites and nail marks. She was bleeding profusely. Some cricket balls were removed from her vagina. Najma Bano herself was too traumatized to recount her own story. She says she does not remember anything, except being chased by the men from Gangotri Society. Accounts such as these require further follow-up.

Naseem and Mehmooda, Millat Nagar

We were told about the incidents below but have used the existing documentation.

MASS RAPE AND MURDER, NARODA PATLA⁶ FEBRUARY 28, 2002⁶

It was 6.30 by now in the evening. The mob caught husband and hit him on his head twice with the sword. They threw petrol in his eyes and then burned him. My sister-in-law was stripped and raped. She had three-month baby in her lap. They threw petrol on her and the child was taken from her lap and thrown in the fire. My brother-in-law was also struck on the head with the sword and thrown in the fire. We were at the time hiding on the terrace of a building. My mother-in-law was unable to climb the stairs so she was on the ground floor with her four-year-old grandson. She told them to take away whatever money she had but to spare the children. They took away all the money and jewelry and burnt the children with petrol. Mother-in-law was raped too. I witnessed all this. Unmarried girls from my street were stripped, raped and burnt. A 14-year-old girl was killed by piercing an iron

⁶ See Annexure I 4