

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

Ahmedabad: A tale of two cities

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Our update and appeal to the President of India yesterday had encompassed the sheer extent of the humanitarian and human tragedy that has been engineered systematically by the state government in Gujarat. Until 5 p.m. on March 5, relief was actively prevented from reaching the affected areas with the government simply refusing police protection to truck drivers fearful of driving through an utterly brutalised Ahmedabad. The text of this appeal can be read at <http://www.sabrang.com>

We visited Jamalpur area this morning and met community leaders who had played a role in reaching many of the survivors to the relief camps over the past few days. Later, we spent the day at the Shah Alam Relief camp that is housing 5,500 displaced persons since Thursday night, that is, on February 27.

The tales of the survivors are hard to tell and repeat. They are tales of pre-planned and systematic attacks, by mobs of no less than 5,000 with the aid of the police and even SRPF, of killing by arson where petrol and diesel was used in a cynical manner. Young children were killed after being cut to pieces. The severing of trust and faith between communities who have lived with some of their neighbours who participated in the violence will be hard, if not impossible to repair.

Our estimates put the final figures of those dead at 2,000 all over the state. Economically, the Muslim community throughout the length and breadth of the State has been crippled. What is truly chilling about both the nature and scale of the violence is that it was systematic genocide, the ethnic cleansing of a minority community accompanied by systematic sexual violence against women and children.

Besides, the method of killing reached barbaric and de-humane proportions. This has left the hapless inmates of the relief camps victims of deep and bitter trauma and utterly terror stricken. While intellectuals debate about the likelihood and nature of the backlash, the survivors of the brute violence are so terrorised that they simply await the next round of targeted terror.

The issue of the dead being given a dignified burial looms large. Today, 129 bodies at Dariakhanki Ghumbat, Shahibag were given a mass burial around 5 p.m. There are reports of 150 bodies in a mutilated state lying in a village at Naroda Pattiya, just outside Ahmedabad. The violence in and around Surat continued today and two women belonging to the minority community were beaten to death in a village just outside Godhra.

The size of the mobs who were encouraged by chief minister Narendra Modi's verbal statements and sanction to roam the streets was between 5-15,000 and the scale of violence and barbarism suggestive of trained trishul-wielding cadres. There appears enough evidence to suggest the permanent existence of such a cadre, approximating 20-30,000, on the payroll of the Bajrang Dal-VHP-BJP, who have received training in physical attack and mental brainwashing into a dehumanising hatred.

It is otherwise simply impossible to explain how in the space of 72 hours, a 15-20 per cent minority in the state has been brutalised through violence and economically crippled, too. This is why we appeal to one and all to refer to the recent Gujarat violence as ethnic cleansing and genocide. The violence that the state witnessed was not just another communal riot.

What was most startlingly evident as we returned for the day was the dual reality of Ahmedabad, a tale of two cities. The unaffected Hindu came out on the streets and went about his business even as in at least 15 areas of the same city, 35-50,000 of it's residents lay shaken, morally and physically broken. Not a shop was open in these ghettos, people cannot step outside their homes or relief camps, for food, medicines or clothing.

What is to be the fate of us as a people if we are unable to generate an adequate enough response countrywide to this bitter reality of two cities?

The Ahmedabad Peace March

More than 1,500 Ahmedabadis from all walks of life took part in a peace march organised by a section of civil society on Tuesday, March 5. The march which began at Kochrab Ashram, where Mahatma Gandhi spent his early years, ended about five kilometres away, at the Sabarmati Ashram. The silent peace marchers collectively articulated a pressure on the state government for the immediate restoration of peace.

Justice and Reparation

A team of the People's Union for Human Rights will be visiting different parts of the city of Ahmedabad and the state of Gujarat to document the massive loss of life and property. Other groups are also collating similar information. This would collectively be the groundwork for a people's Judicial Commission into the Ethnic Cleansing in Gujarat that would be headed by Justice Krishna Iyer and of which Justice Suresh and Girishbhai Patel would be a part. The detailed collation of material and documentation has already begun.

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ANNEXURE

DETAILS OF SHAH ALAM CAMP

MARCH 6, 02

The camp is feeding 5,500 persons each day. The food requirement is

Rice	1,000 kilos per day
Dal	100 kilos per day
Sabzi	200 kilos per day
Oil	Ten Tins of 15 kilos each
Tea	Twenty kilos per day
Sugar	Fifty kilos per day
Milk	500 litres per day

They URGENTLY need: Blankets, Bedsheets, Towels

This camp needs three doctors for urgent medical attention for the whole day
They need municipal staff to clean the toilets and to construct more.

(Courtesy: www.sabrang.com)