

Press Statement of Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM)
**On The Fake Encounter of Three Villagers in Nendra, Bijapur,
Chhattisgarh**

24th January 2024

FACAM has learned that on 19th January 2024, three villagers, Madkam Soni and Punem Nangi from Nendra (Bijapur district) along with Karam Kosa from Gotum were killed by the police in Chhattisgarh. They were going to join a protest before they were apprehended on their way and killed on the hills between their villages. The security personnel claim that three were Maoists who were killed in exchange of fire. Later, the police tried to burn their bodies which was only stopped after the people from their villages demanded the bodies be handed over to them. This incident comes as part of the escalation that began on the 1st January 2024, when the Indian state initiated Operation Kagar in Abujmarh area, as an expansion to the ongoing Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar (OSP). Operation Kagar has seen the mobilization of 3000 paramilitary personnel from other states to the 6 paramilitary camps in Abujmarh, where now for every 7 locals, there are now 3 paramilitary personnel. Operation Kagar was inaugurated with the killing of a 6-month-old infant in Bijapur district, shot dead after drunken members of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) fired on protestors, where the infant's mother was breastfeeding her. The intensification of paramilitary presence in India's resource-rich regions under the guise of countering Maoism, has served to intensify corporate loot of India's natural resources at the service of imperialist and big corporate interests. All of this is undertaken under OSP, with the paramilitary unleashing a spate of brutalities on the Adivasi peasants to force them off their lands which contain the precious ores and deposits that the imperialists and big corporates seek.

Fake encounters such as this have been made commonplace under OSP, with the killing of Sodhi Dewa and Rava Dewa in Tadmetla in September last year, one of the more recent and infamous examples. The two were stopped by the police on their way back from their relative's home, dragged to the forest and shot dead. Both were prominent and longstanding members of the village and the police's claim that they were members of the armed unit of the Maoists made little sense to the people of theirs and nearby villages who rose up in protest against this fake encounter. Nendra village's history itself is a microcosm of the brutalities the Indian state metes out in its war against people at the service of imperialist and big corporate interests. In January of 2016, the village of Nendra was taken over by the paramilitary (CRPF, DRG, Koya) as a base of operations. A joint fact-finding team of Coordination of Democratic Rights Organization (CDRO) and Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS) found that during this period in Nendra, the men were driven out of the village and the women were held hostage for the sexual gratifications of the paramilitary and the police, with over thirteen instances of gang rapes occurring in a three-day period. Threats were levied by the paramilitary officers that the village would be burned, reminding the people of the horrors of Salwa Judum and the brutal and unsuccessful Operation Green Hunt. All of this was done with the excuse of conducting combing operations in the nearby forests to curtail Maoist activities. Even when people assemble as a means of exercising their democratic rights, they are fired upon and killed, as was experienced with the killings of Madkam Soni, Punem Nangi and Karam Kosa. Corporatization and militarization go hand in hand, which is why it is so necessary for the Indian state to eliminate all forms of resistance, even if it is unarmed, so as to allow unfettered loot of India's natural resources by imperialists and big corporates as well as the grabbing of peasant land.

The electoral chest-thumping of Home Minister Amit Shah to “end the Naxal problem,” a claim he made as recently as 22nd January 2024, is manifesting itself in the intensified militarization of the region and repeated massacres of Adivasi peoples which are projected as Maoist casualties to boast its supposed successes in anti-Naxal operations. The heightened presence of the paramilitary will only lead to deaths of more infants and more fake encounters as the BJP-led Indian state, instead of recalling, intensifies its war on people. In the last 20 days alone, 65 arrests have also been made of “Maoist sympathizers and those supporting the Maoists in Bastar” per local journalists after the Maoists attacked a CRPF camp in Bijapur district, allegedly killing 35 CRPF personnel and injuring 40 others in a retaliation to Operation Kagar on 16th January 2024. On the other hand, Bastar police has partially refuted this claim. Not only has this matter been strategically silenced in mainstream media, but the arrests are also ambiguous by law too, as the mere allegation of ‘sympathizing’ with a political ideology alone is not a crime, a decision upheld by the Supreme Court and various High Courts. These arrests, instead, are part of the diktats of the Surajkund offensive part of OSP, which concluded that the state would crush “Naxalism of both the pen and gun.” This equates all forms of dissent and brands it with the redtag of Maoism. It also gives impunity to the state to arrest these so-called sympathizers to ensure that this undeclared war on people goes undocumented.

On the 22nd January gathering, Amit Shah told security personnel to “focus on ‘urban Naxals’,” a conspiracy theory-term that has become part of state parlance under the BJP government. This is an alarming situation that not only affects the resource-rich areas of the country where the people directly confront the brutalities of the Indian state’s paramilitary and corporate loot, but also the cities where the exercising of democratic rights itself becomes equated with Naxalism. The killings of Madkam Soni, Punem Nangi and Karam Kosa, Adivasi peasants killed for merely going to a protest, and the rhetoric being perpetuated by the Brahmanical Hindutva fascist state are a reminder of the threat to the democratic rights struggle for all democratic-minded, justice-oriented and peace-loving organizations and individuals.

Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM) condemns the fake encounters in Nendra, Bijapur, Chhattisgarh that took the lives of Madkam Soni, Punem Nangi and Karam Kosa.

FACAM demands an immediate judicial enquiry in the matter and an end to Operation Kagar!



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STOP Operation SAMADHAN-PRAHAR

FORUM AGAINST CORPORATIZATION AND MILITARIZATION