

## Press Release

**7-6-2018  
Hyderabad**

The Human Rights Forum (HRF) demands that personnel of the C-60 Commandos, CRPF and regular police who participated in the killing of 40 persons including 22 Maoist armed cadre and 18 civilians on April 22 and 23, in the forest abutting the Indravati river on the Chattisgarh side and the Nainer forests of Aheri tehsil in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, be prosecuted for murder and under relevant provisions of the SC, ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. We also strongly urge the governments of Maharashtra and Chattisgarh to make concerted and sincere efforts to ascertain the identity of 10 civilians killed in this staged encounter. **Their identity is unknown to date.**

A four-member HRF fact-finding team on June 2 and 3 visited several villages in south Gadchiroli as well as the areas where the killings took place. We were able to determine that about 36 armed Maoist cadre belonging to the Aheri and Perimili armed squads had set up camp in a thickly forested grove close by the Indravati river and were assembled with Adivasis from several villages in Gadchiroli and also Bijapur district of Chattisgarh. The location, contrary to most media reports, actually falls in the forest region of Kerpe panchayat in Bhoopalapatnam block of Bijapur district in Chattisgarh. It is southwards of the Karkawad reserve forest. In all, there were about 57 persons at the camp of whom at least 21 were civilians.

At around 6.30-7 am on April 22, the security forces encircled the camp from three directions and without any warning unleashed heavy fire on the gathering. The armed Maoists were in no position to retaliate, hemmed in as they were and having been taken totally by surprise. Several camp inmates who were taking a bath or freshening up in the Indravati river were also shot dead. About 14 of them who were further downstream at a bend in the river, as well as a few others who had gone to a nearby village when the attack happened, were fortunate to escape.

In all, 34 persons, including 18 unarmed civilians, were slaughtered while six others including a senior district-level Maoist functionary Vasudev Atram were captured alive. These six were taken by the security forces the next day across the river to the Nainer forest area located in the jurisdiction of Damrancha police station of Aheri tehsil in Gadchiroli district, made to locate a 'money dump' and then liquidated in cold-blood. This spot is close to the Modumodgu village.

The toll in this carnage, the highest in any fake encounter in the country, is 40. Nineteen of the killed were women, 18 were civilians and all but one were adivasis. What is significant is that the security establishment is not even making an effort to put out the customary falsehood of 'firing in self-defence'. Rather, there has been an ugly and macabre celebration of what is in reality a mass killing, a massacre. In the normal course, the presence of such a large number of unarmed civilians should have occasioned extreme restraint by the security forces. Instead, they shot to kill and even fired around a dozen lethal grenades using UBGLs (Under Barrel Grenade Launchers).

Among those killed were eight civilian residents of Gattepalli, a village in the Kandoli panchayat of Etapalli block in Gadchiroli. Five of them were women, the youngest a 15-year old girl Bujji Karne Usendi. Also among the dead from Gattepalli is Mangesh Chundu Madavi (17), a student of class 11 at the Bhagwanth Rao Ashram School in Bhamragad. **The identity of the remaining 10 civilians killed is not known to date**, even after a good six weeks. We believe they were residents of remote forest villages in the Kerpe panchayat of Bhoopalapatnam block in Bijapur district of Chattisgarh. In fact, the place where the butchery of April 22 took place is in the jurisdiction of the Bedre police station in Bijapur district of Chattisgarh.

The killings of April 22 and 23 amount to an abhorrent violation of law and human rights. HRF calls upon all those who value democracy to raise their voice against this brazen brutality by the State. A humanist response to these callous and unlawful killings is called for, irrespective of whether one agrees or disagrees with the politics and methods of armed struggle. We believe that the Maoist movement, despite the violence that it deploys, is fundamentally a political movement that is born out of the dispossession and deprivation of the marginalised. The State does have the duty to meet the violence of the Maoists but only in a manner that is consonant with the law and the Constitution and is respectful of people's rights. It cannot trample upon those rights, mock the rule of law, or hunt down dissenters as if they are wild game. The Maoist movement must be addressed politically.

N Amar (HRF Telangana State secretary)

Y Rajesh (HRF AP State secretary)

K Sudha (HRF AP State general secretary)

VS Krishna (HRF AP&TS Coordination Committee member)

