

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

Women's perspectives on the violence in Gujarat

By PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyaan
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Introduction

This is an interim report of women's experiences and perspectives related to the communal violence following the Godhra incident. The report has been put together after intensive and repeated visits to the affected *bastis*, camps run by the *jamaats*, discussions with a wide spectrum of women.

The wide range of data collected reveals that the post-Godhra carnage has affected most women living in Vadodara in some way or the other. Lives of minority women have of course changed drastically. However, women from all communities are also affected by the reign of fear and the terror promoted by the state and the police. The Hindu women are caught in a fear psychosis that the 'other' will attack. A lot of this has to do with the rumours that are being systematically spread through various pamphlets and booklets. Livelihoods of all poor, working class women have been affected. The situation in the minority households is far more serious, and hunger has become an acute problem because the minority men too cannot go out to work. The deep sense of betrayal that women feel by neighbours and children 'who grew up in front of my eyes (or in my *aangan*)' is seen across classes.

The unnatural and abnormal situation has also brought out leadership qualities in many, many women. We have examples of Sherbanoo, Jahanara, Sajida, Najma, Raeesa, Lakshmiben and many others who have responded with tremendous courage and against great personal odds to protect their neighbours, their men folk, or then others in vulnerable and sensitive areas of the city. Women are also organising relief for those in camps or sheltering with families. Affected women are leading others to protest against police atrocities on themselves as well as their arrested under age sons.

The recent events have resulted in politicising many women. One section of women seems to have resolved that they have to speak out against the state sponsored genocide that they see happening around them. On the other hand, we have also observed another section of women becoming more fundamentalist and rightist--- the celebrations at the 42 temples in the city following the *shila daan* shown on the local news channels showed Hindu women dancing in mindless frenzy!

This report is organised around personal testimonies and accounts of the women whom the various fact finding teams of PUCL-Vadodara Shanti Abhiyaan interviewed and had discussions with. We have extracted these accounts from the area reports that were written up after our visits to different locations. The demands of the women are given at the end. The matter marked in bold in several testimonies contains what we considered as especially significant.

I) Events and experiences

A) Hajimiyan Ki Sara, Baranpura (Feb. 27 to March 22, 2002)

Background:

Baranpura is situated in the South Eastern part of Baroda City, within 1 kilometer of Nyaya Mandir. It lies between St. Kabir Road and Baranpura Main Road. According to some residents interviewed, Hajimiyan ki Sara is around 150 to 200 years old. It housed old archeological documents as well as precious

documents from the Kazi's Court. The history of the area is also noted because of an old Ram Temple on the corner of the Champa gali nearby. It is a locality with around 15 percent Muslim households, flanked by Gujarati Hindus and Marathis. The Hindus are Patnis, Rajputs, Pakhali, Chobdars, Machhis. The Marathi Brahmins are an educated group who 'want to keep away from all this kind of trouble'. The other Marathis are rickshaw drivers, domestic help, nurses. The Gujaratis Patnis are truck and tempo drivers and the women do domestic work. The Machhi Rajput women go out on daily wage labour to support their families.

The Muslim houses are located in two pockets, one is the Chobdar Falia on the Sant Kabir Road side. This pocket is behind Kamobala Hall. The other pocket has the Masjid and around 12 shops. As of March 15 Baranpura had two police points, one near the Chobdar Falia and the other near the Masjid.

Events:

Between February 28 and March 22, 2002, 39 Muslim houses and 19 shops were looted and burnt and one *dargah* was damaged. About 5 to 6 houses have escaped damage, probably because of their location next to Hindu properties. Around 700 persons have been rendered homeless.

Stoning of mobs has continued till March 22 when a group of around 10 house owners went with police escort to their houses for the recording of their *panchnamas*. Despite two police points in that locality, the rioting, looting and arson took place. Several persons have been identified. Complaint has been filed with the Police Commissioner on the March 8, 2002. No action has been taken to date. Neema Ahmed Gulam Kuvawala's family was the last Muslim family to leave. This family of the coal depot owners left for Madar Market at 9 pm on March 1, 2002. On March 2, Sajida Banu, another resident, heard that her father's house had been burnt and so returned in the afternoon to the area with some other people. She saw her house being set on fire by Ishwar Machhi, Soni Bhooria, Dr Thakore Patel and Vimal Thakur.

On March 8, the curfew was lifted. Sajida, Arif (Neema's brother) and a few others went back to Baranpura to check on their losses. Arif found his house still smouldering, fire brigade came and put out the fire. The Masjid wall on the side of the coal depot was still burning. On March 15, after 2 pm, 17 shops below the Masjid were broken down, looted and burnt. These shops are opposite a police point. On March 22, representatives of 8 to 10 families, around 10 people went for *panchnama* with 3 policemen and a writer. A 500 strong mob came and attacked them. They fled into the buildings. The mob set a scooter they had come on, on fire. Police were present but did not do anything. Sajida, who came to warn her family members after hearing that they were going to be attacked, was herself attacked with *talwars* by Mania Chobdar. With great difficulty and after much pleading with police, people could leave the area and go back. For three houses the *panchnama* is still incomplete because they had to flee after the mob came.

Testimonies:

Neema Ahmed Gulam Kuvawala
(Resident of Baranpur)

On Feb. 28 when all these attacks were happening, the mobs were shouting "*Hai re miyan, hai, hai*" and throwing stones. They would throw stones but stop when the police came and then start all over again. These were people from our area itself. We called out to some boys and told them to stop or we would inform the police. They came and told us "do not give all our names. We will tell you whom to name. We will not do anything to you because you are like family to us. If you want you can come and stay at our house". We were assured and so just sat inside the house and even did not bother all through the night.

The next morning we called out to a vegetable vendor, because we had nothing at home, but these people did not allow him to come to our house, warned him against coming to our house. We have a police point right next to our house. That day was a Friday (March 1) when we have our *namaaz* in the afternoon. While the *namaaz* was going on, the mob went to burn a bakery near our house. The police told us of this. According to the police when they tried to stop them, they were also attacked and in fact some of

them got injured also. After this the police were thrown out from there. Then the mob entered the bakery with acid, petrol, truck tires and torches and set the whole place on fire.

After this the mob with people from the area and outside, entered a bakery that belongs to a friend of ours. Our coal depot is there. They wanted to burn the depot. Our coal depot has one older part at the back and a newer part in the front. It is made with tin sheets and is very strong and unbreakable from the front. The only way to enter it was through the coal depot next to ours, which belongs to Chandrakant Patni. They have a small garden at the back where these people entered and threw petrol and acid bottles inside our coal depot. Behind the depot is the old part of our house, which is made of wood and is very old. We have reconstructed the front part of the house and had left the old remain as it is.

When they lit the depot, it caught fire because of the acid and the petrol and the wood present there. When we went to put off the fire, they threw stones at us and did not allow us to go near it. They were also verbally abusing us all the time thus making it very difficult to do anything. As a result both the coal depot and the house caught fire and got completely burnt. Now we are left with nothing. We had everything, TV, fridge, computer. Now we have nothing.

The people in the mob gave threats to my father that they would kill him. They said that, "You did not leave when the police came to take you, now you sit and watch your house burn and then we shall kill you." My father said that, "I am anyway totally finished. What is left for me to live? You can kill me."

We were requesting the police and the fire brigade to save us from getting burnt. But they did not help. After the *namaz* I had been calling the fire station all the time but nobody came. They used to switch off the phone after every minute. The person who was at the fire station was Prafulbhai who we kept speaking to. So the fire brigade never came in there. Later one person from there told us that the P.I. from Wadi police station was not letting them enter. We left that place after 9:30 pm on March 1 but till then no one came. When we went to that area on the next Friday (on March 8 when the curfew was lifted), the fire was still burning. We called the fire brigade and then two vans came and put it off. The next Friday when we went again, we saw that the place where we kept our mattresses in the house was also still burning. So we called the fire station again. There was a police point near our house since the 1969 riots and one of the SRP persons there on that day was S. K. Pandey. The PIs who came from Wadi police station, tried to fire in the air and burst tear gas bombs to disperse the mob. But finally at 9:30 pm, they gave us police protection and brought us to Madar gate.

Our house and shops have, however, been totally looted and gutted. There were three rounds of attack. We have a cycle shop, two dress material shops. All of these had their shutters broken, their materials looted and then burnt down. We are a large joint family and have had a lot of material losses. None of us have been hurt. My mother and father both have burnt hair but there is no other injury.

My brother was, however, threatened to be killed. On the day there was a Gujarat *bandh*, my brother was going for his afternoon *namaz* when he saw three of his friends – Vijay, Akhtar and Deepak Soni talking amongst themselves that they would finish him when he came back. Vijay was standing with weapons and Deepak was also there. We heard this and four of us were also waiting to watch out and call out to my brother. Two of us were at the window and two downstairs. But my brother only came with the police and so they could not do anything. **All three of them were friends of my brother and all had been part of a function on January 26 on communal harmony!**

Sajida Bano

(Resident of Baranpura)

My name is Sajida Bano Zakir Husain Sheikh, age 32 years. I run a sewing class. My address is behind Hajiniya Kamuwada Hall, Baranpura. Currently I am living in Qureshi Mohalla.

The incident occurred on 28 February at 1.30 pm. I have been living in Baranpura for the past 10 years. When the 27th Godhra incident happened, the rickshawallas in their *mohalla* told us what had happened.

They said there was '*Garma garmi*' (in the air/Baranpura/Baroda) and it's likely to happen in Baranpura.

On 27th night there was trouble. There was no support from the police. There are 30 Muslim houses and surrounding houses belong to Hindus. On 28th, at 11.30 am, there was stone throwing from Manjula Khuchachand High School and once there was firing as well. In the evening at 8.30, all the Hindus surrounded (the area) (about 2000 people) and the police was with them as well. The mob comprised of people from neighboring mohallas. They stated sloganeering in our language (?) but the Muslims men realised it was not our people. There was firing in the air 2-4 times, the lights outside were switched off. People in the GEB themselves switched off the street lights. I know the person who did this, and we have filed a complaint as well. In the evening, people moved their relatives of all ages and children to the houses of their relatives, and the next morning at 5 they themselves left.

On the afternoon of the 28th after 1.30 the looting had already started. The entire *mohalla* was looted and there were three houses in the *mohalla* where there were to be weddings which therefore had grain, gold and clothes which were also looted. In each of the houses, 15-20 people live. This kind of thing has happened to us so many times before, but that doesn't mean we can leave our houses, businesses and *mohallas* and go away. We have to even think of staying with relatives, because there's been such wide-scale looting. When this happened, there was one lady who stayed on in Baranpura for 3 days but now lives in Macchipith.

On 2nd March, while we were there at the relatives, our house was set on fire by Ishwarbhai's son and I saw this. On 28th they had fired to set it on fire but they were unsuccessful so they returned, and the house burnt down. When we go back now, the mobs run after us to beat us. On 22 March, when we went to get *panchnamas* done with the DCP's men (1 writer, 3 police), everyone was able to get it done except for 2-3 houses. Then a mob of around 500 people came to beat ('kill', *marva mate*) them. **When I came to know about this, I went to warn them that they had been surrounded from all 4 sides.** The people had the police with them and there was a police point as well in spite of which they didn't do anything, not even 'stop'. The ones who came to attack us were from the neighboring *falia* and I know them. (they came from Machhi *falia*) behind Sant Kabir Kamuwada Hall, Machhi Mohalla, Baranpura. Bhaya (Machi), (2) Bhuriyo (Soni), (3) Mochi, (4) Ramesh, (5) Dr. Thakor's son, (6) Hardik and Vimal, and (7) Maniyo. He lives in Chobdar Mohalla his father's name is Ranjeet. This incident occurred on 2 March 30, 2002

Behind the temple in Baranpura, there is a younger brother of a Marathi. He attacked me, I was saved. So I went to Gendigate (PS) for police help. They told me there are people (police) further up, go there. When I went there, there was no police. There is a point in front of Sundar Panwallah where they were standing and watching. Everyone (?) attacked two sons of Nalbundala's. The people at the point were not in uniform, because they felt that nobody would come there now.

This has happened so many times. In 1969 and in 1992 when they burnt only the doors, at that time we stayed away for 2 months and then returned. Whenever we are attacked, if our sons face them, then the police makes them a target. The police point has been there for 10 years but they do nothing. **We do not need the police point. It doesn't make a difference.** They desire all the Muslims leave but that is not going to happen. We will return, whether after 2 or 6 months. We could, but we think ten times people before attacking them (we can retaliate) but we don't, because they have become "*khaufwaad*" – they are thirsty for Muslim lives. **Even though all this has happened, I will go back. If we have the support we will all go back.** Our children's studies are being armed/getting disturbed. We recently spent a lot of money on our *masjid* – if it has been destroyed entirely. They found bombs in the *masjid* which didn't burst. God was kind to us, we were all saved – We were lucky otherwise we would have been killed alive. If we go there they tell us that "we" are going to kill them, but they themselves are armed and run after us to attack us. **We had good relations with our neighbours, we used to visit each at festivals and on other occasions. We would invite them. Amara thee moon fervi lidu chhe. (now they have turned their faces away from us).**

B) BEST BAKERY, DABHOI ROAD

(March 1, 2002)

Background:

Hanuman Tekri is located on Dabhoi Road on the outskirts of Baroda. It is a lower middle class and poor neighbourhood. Most of the residents are Hindus with very few Muslim families. The *basti* consists of small houses and very narrow lanes. The houses mostly have tin roofs and very few were more than 1 storied. The Best Bakery was one of the few structures, which had more than one story.

Habibulla Abdul Rauf, the owner of the Bakery died of natural causes 10 days before the incident. He had started his bakery a few years ago, but the family was not staying in the same locality. They shifted to this area only 6 months before this incident. All other Muslims staying in the area had already left their houses before this incident. Only this family was staying because they were assured of safety by Jayantibhai Chaiwala, who is an influential person of the area. The Bakery was looted and burnt over March 1 & 2; 14 of the 24 members of the extended household were hacked/burnt to death while others escaped with serious injuries.

Testimony of Zahira Sheikh (daughter of Habibulla Abdul Rauf): In the morning of 1st March, Jayantibhai Chaiwala, who runs a chai shop, and is also a sanitation contractor, came over when all the tension began, and assured us that nothing would happen to us. He said, "*Fikr mat karna, hum log hai.*" [The plot on which the bakery stands was bought from Jayanti's brother. It was an illegal transaction, since it was not registered land. The family migrated from Bombay about 20 yrs ago, and Zahira's father first used to work in Iqbalbhai's bakery, after which he branched out on his own. They used to stay at Navapura, and moved into the bakery only about 6 months ago.]

Nothing untoward happened during the day, but my uncle, fearing something, had told us all not to go out of the house. Around 8.30 at night, the mob came from Ganeshnagar side. They were shouting loudly - making sounds like adivasis. They had swords (*talwar*), bottles, stones, tins of petrol and kerosene, and were beating metal plates (*thalis*). There were about 200-300 men and boys. The two well-built persons were leading the mob. One of them was wearing yellow striped jersey and other was wearing khakhi shirt. They were looking very fierce. I don't know their names but can recognise them if presented before me. The mob was talking to us in Hindi, not Gujarati.

When we saw all this, my uncle ran inside and locked the doors. We ran upstairs. Soon, Lal Mohammed's timber shop in front was burnt down. We had heard some rumours earlier in the day that it was going to be burnt. So when it was actually burnt, we started getting really scared. At first, they looted the bakery. The mob began pulling out all the things. Then they set fire to the room on the ground floor. The room was full of wood, which we had just got fresh stocks of. The room began to burn easily. We were all on the terrace, but my uncle (whose leg was hurt) went down to the first floor. My sister went with him to help him. But the mob came up, sprinkled petrol and set fire to the room. They got burnt in it. Firoze Pathan (a 'chacha') and his wife and children, who used to live next door, were also in their house and all of them are burnt.

The whole night we were on the terrace, and the mob kept pelting stones at us, abusing us and trying to make us come down. They kept trying to put a ladder from behind the house to reach us, but the walls were too hot. The whole night, the mob surrounded the house and kept abusing us (ma-behen ki gaali). The Hindu who lived at the back of our house also began to throw stones. Champak Policewala, the Hindu neighbour who had promised to help us when my father died, did nothing to help us.

At 8.30 pm itself, we rang up Pani Gate police station, when Lal Mohammed's godown was burning. They said they would send someone. We kept ringing 3-4 times, and each time they said someone would come. After about an hour, the police van came to the area, but the mob ran behind Lal Mohammed's godown and hid there. The police vehicle didn't come into the lane, but turned off from the main road itself. The phone wire was cut off sometime at night.

In the morning, we kept pleading ("hum ne maafi maanga"). We pleaded for our lives, but the mob, who

had been joined by more people in the morning, just laughed. Jayantibhai told us to come down after throwing down our weapons. We told him we have no weapons, and swore on Allah's name. After a while, they put a ladder at the back and helped us come down. They snatched Rs 2000 from my brother, his watch. They kept beating us and pushing us, and brought us to the house of a Hindu (the family had been sent away or locked up - we didn't see them). The mob kept yelling, "Maaro saalon ko". They beat the boys more, and when the Hindu workers were trying to escape, they killed them with swords right there. They kept saying "rape these women", and were trying to drag us (the women) into the jungle. By that time around 11 am on

2nd March the police arrived, and fire engines also arrived (paani ki gaadi) to put out the fire. Then the fire brigade brought my naani down from the terrace where she was still hiding on the terrace.

The police took down my statement right there. Then took me and my naani to Panigate police station. The injured were taken to hospital. When they saw I was injured too (gash on my head) they took me to the hospital. I had to give a statement there too. And once more in the police station. All 3 times, I was made to sign my statement, but the statement was not read out to me, nor did I read it. I stayed in the police station till noon on 3rd March. After which Iqbal Bhai (whom the police had contacted) came to pick us up.

Some of the people in the mob whom I could recognise were 1. Mr. Jayanti Chaiwala and his two sons Lala and one other son (name not known), 2. Mr. Mahesh (Jayanti's relative), 3. Mr. Munna, 4. Mr. Sanjay Thakkar, 5. Mr. Santosh Thakkar, 6. Mr. Jagadish Rattiwala, 7. Mr. Dinesh Bakeriwala, 8. Mr. Shanabhai, 9. A person known as Painter

C) BAHAR COLONY

(March 15-17, 2002)

Events:

Bahar Colony on Ajwa Road is a middle-class Muslim colony. There has been no previous history of communal disturbances, even in 1992. This time the tension started since the March 15, 2002 when a Jhoppad patti was put on fire. On the morning of March 17 lots of people started gathering and tried to set fire to the laaris at the Sardar Estate Char Rasta. And then two Muslim factories in Sardar Estate, both mainly employing Hindu employees, were set on fire. From 10 am onwards police was called. Police dismissed these calls as rumours. Finally the police arrived at 1 pm just as a group of men were returning after namaaz. **On seeing the police mobile, the women approached the vehicle to try and talk to the policemen and express their insecurity of the last three days.** The police fired into the gathering. Two young men were injured in the police firing, one died later.

Role/Experiences of Women:

The women of the minority community were most upset and angry at the police's inability to manage the mob. They wanted to request the police to place a point in their colony. The police refused to listen to them and in fact did laathi charge on them to drive them into their homes. Among others an elderly woman Ameena Memon was badly hit in the laathi charge. A police complaint was filed subsequently. To-date there is no action.

D) WADI TAI WADA

(March 15, 2002)

Events:

According to the testimonies which follow, at 10.30 pm, around 15-20 policemen, all in plain clothes and with helmets arrived in the Tai Wada area. They were led by DCP Kanani. They came into the basti after receiving a tip off that stone throwing was going on. But in fact nothing like that was happening. The stones were coming from Navapura and instead of going there, they came to Wadi Tai Wadi. According to Ibrahim, the Police Commissioner was at the Swaminarayan Mandir because there were rumours that the temple would be destroyed that night by Muslims. Shamshuddin Nausanwala heard the Commissioner telling the police force to round up Muslims. 15 vehicles were brought here for combing,

instead of being deployed where the disturbance was actually going on at Rang Mahal where a Masjid was burnt and Muslim homes were burnt. 14 women were hit that night including old women. They broke down doors of homes. They took 25 men in the combing operations. First they beat them up, right there on the road and then took them away. The beating continued for 2 hours, no weapons were found. They were arrested under sections 307 and 436. The arrestees were also beaten heavily in the lock up and the jails and were released after 7 days.

Accounts & Testimonies:

i) Hamida Bano Ibrahim (40 years): Husband is unemployed, he has had a cataract operation, her son is SSLC failed and is 18 years old.

That night she went to the latrine (which is outside the house) and was returning when the policeman told her to get into the house. She said she was in fact going to her house when he gave her gaalis and hit her.

One man hit her with a danda so hard that the right hand was fractured in 3 places. The entire night she rubbed ice on it to reduce the swelling. The next day she was taken to the Jamnabai Hospital and later to SSG Hospital by the local corporator Javedbhai. She needed four operations, a steel splint was put in. The operation took one and a half hours. Her three fingers were fractured. Hamida was satisfied with the treatment at the hospital. The police case has been registered in SSG Hospital but no action has been taken in the last two weeks, police has not come around to take any statement.

She wants to tell the Women's Commission that police have no right to lift a hand on women. They should not be allowed to get away with this. Whatever happened to her, happened. But other women should not suffer this ever. If anyone has erred, they should be punished but without any reason, police should not abuse them.

ii) Zarina (18-19 years): She had delivered hardly one month ago. The police smashed her foot with the butt of the gun and as they smashed the door open, it fell on her back. She has 3 small children. She pleaded with them 'do not take away my husband'. The police hit her on the back. 'The door that they broke down fell on my back. They took away my husband after beating him'

iii) Halima Bibi (lives opposite the Mandir): They hit my son-in-law a lot, upturned all the grain containers (atta and rice) in the house, did a lot of nuksaan (damage). They stepped on a 6 month old baby, the baby was crying a lot – put a foot on her to shut her up and said 'Let them all die'.

iv) Testimony of Naseem Bano of Rafai Mohalla: She is a Social Worker. She arranges for widows' sahai and loans for poor people.

"That day I tried to stop the police. I tried to tell them that there was no toofan in this area and do not torture the women. If I had not done this, much more would have happened. Afterwards they hit me too and gave very bad gaalis. I told them I would register a case against them. We filed a report at Jamnabai hospital. But no enquiry has been held yet. Yesterday, I was at Bawamanpura. And a kite landed at my feet. It had things written on it like 'we will burn you, we will burn your houses, your children. We will play Holi Dhuleti with your blood'. We showed this kite to the Commissioner. He responded with 'This will go on. We have to focus on you people or focus on these people?' I told him that he should do a full enquiry into this incident. 'You have to protect us'. If we take kanoon in our own hands we become gunahgaar, if we do not, we die (there is no protection)'. **I told him 'you cannot be ek tarfa'. You catch them and you catch us (do not be selective in whom you catch and arrest). We have to protect ourselves. If they come after us with talwars, we will use stones defend ourselves. You do not protect us'.** Commissioner himself says '*Aap aamne saamne lar lo*'."

v) Testimony of Shabir Khan, Businessman: On March 15, the police came thinking that firing was going on from our house. We were sleeping. The police broke open our door and took us out. The police said unspeakable gaalis and eyed our women with buri nazar. I told the police personnel that we are

businessmen, we do not participate in this sort of thing. Twelve policemen came in, 6 on one side and 6 on the other and said that if we lift our hands or cry out, they will hit us again. Obviously, I cried out when I felt the danda on my back. The policemen hit me again. The police took all 3 of us brothers and hit us. They also damaged the furniture in the house.

In the lock up the police said, we will burn you Muslims alive. No food or water was given to us in the lock up. In the lock up I heard them fabricating a case against us – a case of murder, when no murder had taken place. No weapons were found on us. A house hammer was taken away from my home as a weapon. A Police officer looked at my wife, up and down. God forbid, even if he had done something to her, I was in no position to do anything to defend/protect her. I requested him leave at least one of us brothers. He said 'No, we will burn you all alive'.

In the Central Jail where I was for 7 days, for every 5 Hindus present, there were 25 Muslims. The Hindus in the jail with me were Bhois. One was caught with astra (blade), another with gupti and another with Khanjar. He admitted to me in the jail, 'we will be released and we will also collect our saadhan from the police station. Hamaara yeh sab chatta hai'. These were his words.

I suspect that the people who came to attack my house, some were police men in plain clothes, others were not. They were from outside. I recognise the police men because I live opposite the DCP Office. **There is one Muslim officer in the DCP's office. I cannot name him. He told me that he was powerless and could not do anything to help the Muslims. I asked that one of us brothers be let out. He said I have nothing in my hands.**

Most of all, the women in this area want insaaf. They do not want ek tarfi karyavahi by the police. (Hamida). They do not want Kanani's staff in the area. They do not want Kanani in the area any more. They also wonder how Narendra Modi continues to be the CM: "removing him is our only chance for survival."

E) RAEN BASERA

(March 15, 2002)

Events:

At Rain Basera, Machchipith, under Karelilig Police Station, several women were assaulted by the police during "combing operations." Four policemen entered the basti at around 3:00 pm on March 15, 2002. They indiscriminately beat and threatened women and children, beat and arrested men, and damaged property. At least 4 men were beaten badly, and 11 arrested.

Role/Experience of Women:

All during this time, policemen let loose the coarsest abuse, with explicit sexual and religious connotations. In particular · Sabiraben Ahmedbhai Shaikh, aged 45, was beaten so badly that her left arm was swollen and bruised · Faridabanu Bachchubhai Shaikh, aged 30, Hajirabibi Gulamhusain Dhobi, aged 32, and Hamidabibi Ahmedkhan Pathan were kicked on the legs. Hajirabibi was also kicked on the chest and Faridabanu in the pubic region. Mehrunnissa, aged 18, was threatened with a sword (apparently confiscated), the point of the sword touching her abdomen. Sultana Razzakbhai, aged 18, was threatened with a rifle which was pointed and rested on her chest.

F) AALISHAAN APARTMENTS

(March 17, 2002)

Aalishan Apartment is a middle class area located near Sardar Estate cross-roads, Ajawa Road.

Events:

The jhopadis at the corner of the Char Rasta were vacated by paying off the occupants. One Muslim godown was set in flames by pouring in inflammable chemicals. A mob of at least 100 persons set fire to the jhoppad patti. The police apparently came to investigate. The women went out to see what was

happening. The police threw 2 tear gas shells as well as did laathi charge on the women. Mahmuda's son Imtiaz Shaikh was sitting in his Tata Sumo and listening to music. They pulled him out of his vehicle, beat him up badly, forcibly placed a sword in his hands and took a photo of him.

Role/Experience of Women:

When the women resisted this action of the police, they beat the women up. Among the women beaten was a pregnant woman named Zahra. Mahmuda requested a police officer (she could not name him) to save her son from being beaten in the jail. That night he was beaten more severely.

Women faxed a complaint to the Commissioner of Police regarding police atrocities and requested the Commissioner to help them get medical check-up on 17th March but no action has been taken till today i.e. 1st April, 2002.

Mahmuda and others described how their sons and husbands have been confined to their homes from the Feb 27. Although the shops on Waghodia Road are open, and Hindu men were present, they said that no Muslim man felt safe enough to step out. No one has been able to go out to work, they said. Their laaris (selling Chinese food) are lying idle in their front yard.

G) ROSHAN NAGAR, (TULSIWADI/HATHIKHANA)

(MARCH 18, 2002)

Events:

On March 18, at 8.30 pm, the police conducted "combing operations" in the area after the jalli of Tulsiwadi Mandir was broken. A total of 58 men from this community were arrested. during the combing operations. Amongst them was a mentally challenged son of Husha Bano Mansuri. (chhokre ko kutte ki tarah maara and he is behaan.)

Role/Experiences of Women:

The women were abused verbally and physically. Several of them had haematomas and large bruises. They were extremely upset that their young children, aged between 16 and 18 years were rounded up and taken to jail by the police. The police were doing their so-called combing operations. They took away the rods of a baby's jhoola saying that these are weapons. They said things like 'tumhaare yaar ayenge, who tumhe zinda maareng,' and 'we like to beat you Muslim women a lot. We can also do ganda kaam', and 'go away to Pakistan'.

The women were extremely upset saying that the police were supposed to do their hifaasat, and instead they had sorely abused them, as well as destroyed their sense of dignity. All the women stated how their boys and men were the breadwinners. With them away, the families had not eaten for 4 days. The women repeatedly pleaded: "Give back our children. That is all we want. We will not eat until our boys and men are released".

Amongst those who were hurt by the police were

- A pregnant woman with two bullets who had to be admitted into SSG Hospital.
- Rubina, a 6 year-old-girl. Her hand was injured, swollen heavily.
- Mumtaz Bano had a black eye that she couldn't open for three days.
- A 9- month old baby whose eyes were affected because of the tear gas shell that burst at the feet of a women who was holding her baby.

Testimony of Raeesa Shaikh:

We had finished all our work and were reading the namaaz. A big tola came. They were wearing masks and helmets. We could not recognise them. Police also came at the same time. The Tulsiwadi Mandir was broken—the jaali was taken away. They came blaming us for the incident. They pulled me out of the house, rolled me around outside in the mud, beating me all the while. **We have brought up our sons with such care, taught them never to harm anyone, to be peace-loving. Now they have taken away**

these young ones. If they turn into aantankwadis (as a result of this experience in the jail) we'll be left with nothing.

Raeesa was asked whether they had lodged a police complaint with the Commissioner of Police about the atrocities committed on them. Her angry response was, 'What is the point of complaining to him when his men did all this to us? We need to complain to the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister.' Raeesa led a group of 5 women and girls from her basti to give their testimony to the NHRC.

H) BAWAMANPURA

(March 25, Day of Moharram, 7.30 pm)

Events:

This is a very poor area. People here are vegetable vendors and other daily wage earners. They have not been able to get out at all for one month.

From Bhoiwada and Bahuchawad stoning started. People started running in panic. Police arrived from the police chowky in front. They did not go to Bhoiwada, they came to the Muslim area. They came looking for the men whom they thought that the women were protecting. They barged into houses, looked under the beds, pulled out the women, beat them with their laathis and dandas. They gave vulgar gaalis. Out of the 6 policemen, 4 were drunk. Around 20-25 women were badly injured. Among them were 3 pregnant women, 2 widows and several older women. Most of the injuries were in the lower part of the body – waist and below. A few women showed us large bruises in the groin area.

Accounts:

i) Rehana Pathan (30 years old): Her husband who was 35 years old died 12 days ago, (She thinks he died because of tension of the riots), 5 daughters and 1 son. Because her husband had recently died, she was in iddat (purdah). The police men went into her purdah area, pulled her out and beat her. Her 3 year-old daughter Arbas was hit by the police.

Testimonies:

i) Zahida – (17 years old): "On March 28, I was at home. Went to throw out water after washing vessels. One man came with a talwar, two came to attack. I do not know their names but can recognise them. My brother came out behind me accidentally/incidentally and shouted to me to move. Fortunately I received only a nick, otherwise my neck would have been off."

ii) Salma: "Two days ago I went to fill water with two other women at 5.30 am. At aazaan time, they threw stones at us, threatened us with weapons, took off their pants. The police point is just saamne, 50 steps away. Police does not tell them to go back in to their area. They come into our ilaaka. Police pick up our men and take them away. We do not get saath of police." "Our children cannot play outside our own houses. Police comes and says 'go inside, its curfew.'"

iii) Kaushal Bano Mansuri (Pregnant, 9 months): "I was putting my child to sleep at 9 pm on March 23. Suddenly I found lots of policemen in my house. They did not find our men at home and started giving us gaalis. Put 2 dandas on me, one on my hand, the other on my stomach, and then saw I was pregnant and hit me in the thigh. They were all saying Kanani, Kanani. They were his staff. Only today I have started moving around. I went to the hospital. I went into the dargah and hid there. I told them I was pet se. They still said that we have to hit her. My saas also said that I am pregnant. They said 'we have to kill it before it happens.'"

iv) Noorjaan Bibi – (50 years old): "I was there with my daughter and daughter-in-law. They asked, 'where are the mard?' They hit my 35 year old pregnant daughter. She is in the 7th month. I told her to move aside. He says 'no, we have to hit her'. Then they hit my second daughter and daughter-in-law. One of them was a good man. He told them 'leave her, let her speak to us – go to the vehicle and tell them where the men are and we will leave you.'"

v) Satya Bano Syed – (60 years old): "I left the door open because I'd been told that if they find the doors closed, they think you are hiding men and they barge in. Even with my door open, they came in. I'd had a caesarian years ago. They hit my stomach so hard that 'my stitches almost opened up' (crying at lot).

I) QURESHI JAMAAT KHAANA CAMP

Some Accounts:

i) Rashida from Indira Nagar, Railway Colony, Dabhoi Road is a young woman in her early 30s. She

recounted how members of 6 families (around 20 persons) escaped from the homes and hid in the forest for 2 days without food and water. Only after 2 days could they summon up enough courage to get out from the forest in search of shelter.

ii) Bano Bibi Amirbhai of No. 70 Jhanda Chowk, Kisanwadi, Mumtaz Bibi, Rafika Bibi Nizambhai of No. 75, Banu Bibi of No. 76, Mumtaz of No. 64, Gubhan Bibi of No. 625, Tahira Bibi of No. 73, Noorbanu Iqbal of Hussaini Chowk No. 99, all narrated how they came from Kisanwadi. They said that Ramdas Pillai and Lakshmben, his wife, helped the Muslims in Kisanwadi, gave them protection. They described how 500 odd persons took shelter in Lakshmben's house for over 20 hours while the mobs swarmed the area. The women/girls described with pain and disbelief how their homes have been destroyed and looted. The mobs visited their homes repeatedly until the damage was total.

Two young girls at the camp were brides/brides-to-be. All their dowry (vessels, clothes, jewelry) has been destroyed and looted. One of the girls will be getting married from the camp this week. The bridegroom's family lives in Pani Gate.

The Kisanwadi women stated in no uncertain terms that they can never think of going back to live in their homes at Kisanwadi. They are utterly fearful of consequences. They think they will be subjected to sexual violence, if they go back. One young woman stated how she wakes up at night with nightmares of how she escaped.

iii) Nagmabi, from Muhammed Talao, Shastri Nagar, is a widow with four small children, looked like they were all under 6 years. They youngest is one and has TB. (We saw his medical papers with diagnosis). She is the only person from this area in this camp. She had taken her tiny child to SSG Hospital for treatment. Ghulambhai who dispenses medicines at the Hospital, arranged for her to be stowed away in an ambulance with her children and transported to Jamnalal Hospital at Pani Gate. She found her way to this shelter from Jamnalal Hospital.

Concerns Expressed:

The women recognized and identified most of the people who attacked them at home. Vishnu Prajapati, Kishor Marathi, Santosh Hajam, Jogi, Chandrakant, Uma, Dhamma, Rahul, Karia, Jayanti, Pappu, Subhash, Natu are some of the names mentioned by them. Banobibi, of Kisanwadi, said 'Chandu Plumber had made a list of all the Muslim houses a few months ago. Ramesh Stickerwala also looted our houses.' 'Vishnu Prajapati called up his friends from all over and told them Godhra had 30 hindu deaths, we have to do 60 deaths. **'These were boys who grew up in front of us.'**

The women were concerned about their future. They could not see beyond the camp. 'How long will we stay here?' 'How long will they feed us?' They want us to help them to be rehabilitated together in a separate Muslim locality. 'Ek jathe mein mar jave' is more acceptable than going back to Kisanwadi!

The women could not stop talking. Initially I was a bit hesitant as an outsider to be instrumental in having them relieve their memories. But they stated that they felt good to talk. They were all very insistent that we go and visit their houses – many of them made us write down their addresses. They said 'Go inside and see everything'. It is as if we are their only link with their maternal past and their homes. Another notable thing was that many, many women shook our hands as we left as if desperate for physical contact.

J) TANDALJA CAMP

The people who had taken shelter in the camp run by the Chistia Masjid Committee had come from more than 60 places of Baroda city as well as surrounding villages like, Bajwa, Gotri, Bhayali gaon, Jawaharnagar, Payal Society, Makarpura, Maneja, G.I.D.C. Road, Indira Nagar, Behind Makarpura Depot, Danteswar (Anupam Nagar), Ghaghrotia, Kapurai Chowkdi, Tarsali, Panvad, Sanjay Nagar, etc. The number of people who have taken shelter in this camp runs up to thousands. The people here are offered meals twice in a day. They are given shelter in a large new apartment that is under construction in this area. Some of the people have now gone to stay in their relatives' houses after relative peace in the area.

Accounts:

i) Meherunissa Fakir Mohammad of Panvad: Some 7 families consisting of 40 people have come from Panvad and Kawant. We talked to Meherunissa Fakir Mohammad who said, “ we fled the place taking almost nothing but the clothes that we had worn. On 11-3-02 they burnt Panvad. They had phoned Kawant the same day and had threatened that they would come there next day on 12-3-02. We had gone to seek police help but the police officer said that they were short of staff. There are about 200 houses in both Panvad and Kawant. Some Hindus in the area had paid around Rs.1000 to 1200 to the Adivasis to get our houses burnt. A mob consisting of around 4000 Adivasis had come. Initially they pelted stones but later on they started shooting with arrows that burnt because they had ends soaked in kerosene and cloth. We then went and asked the police for protection for taking us to a safe place. They gave us a jeep (M 7-8) that had about 5/6 policemen. **We our selves arranged 5/6 jeeps and followed the police van.** When we reached Bodeli there was curfew in the area. Some Hindus refused to shelter us in Bodeli citing the curfew as an excuse but their reluctance was perhaps more due to the fact that they didn't want to shelter Muslims coming from outside. **The D.D.O. asked us to make our own arrangements and leave the place in 2 hours.** We finally landed up in Tandelja Camp. Here they give us meals in the daytime and in the evening. But, how long this will continue? Now we don't want to go back to the same place.

ii) Salma Begum Mehboob Ali of Vadsar Road: We also talked to Salma Begum Mehboob Ali who stays near the railway crossing at Vadsar Road. Near the crossing there were 7 Muslim houses out of which 6 have been looted and 1 has been burnt. The earlier day some people had come and they were sticking Hanuman photos on the walls of the Hindu houses. When Salma Begum asked them why they were sticking these photos they said she wouldn't understand. The day all this happened the people hid them selves in the cemetery. A mob came in the night and burnt down all the shops and the laaries. The next day they came and looted the houses. There was no help from the police. Rather they were helping the mob. **The police were asking why they were burning Muslim property and not the Muslims.** The local people know who burnt and looted the shops and houses and they give rewards to such people. They recognize Manoj, Yogesh, and Maradi. Bajrang Dal is behind all this mob fury. Now we don't want to go back to the same place.

iii) Mehmudaben Sikandarbai & Faridaben Yakubhai of Gotri Village: We met Mehmudaben Sikandarbai and Faridaben Yakubhai from Gotri village. They stayed in Khodiyar Nagar behind Ambika Nagar. During the conversation they said that the mob looted the houses before setting them on fire. The mob had also pelted stones. A Hindu woman had saved her. She had also come with nothing but the sari she had worn. The mob had people from Sevasi and Astodia. They were asking us to leave everything and go away from that place. **We do not intend to go back to the place. Since we are here in the camp we feel safe but even here we mostly stay awake in the night.**

iv) Sairabanu of Anupamnagar, Danteshwar: When we talked to Sairabanu who had come from Anupam Nagar in Danteswar she told us that there were about 16 Muslim houses all in a row in that street. All were slum houses. There were 3 marriages in Sairabanu's family for which she had made arrangements. All the three dowries were inside the house. The mob came and looted all the houses. Every household has suffered a loss of around Rs. 20,000. She doesn't want to go back to the place. She also said how in Avdhut Nagar in Makarpura some Hindus called people to take their belongings back but when people went there they were attacked. 3 people got burnt and 19 others were injured. Some people knew Jayaben Thakkar so they went to the Police and took her name to lodge an F.I.R. with the Makarpura Police Station. Police has taken down certain things but has not come back to us. The people in the mob had tied handkerchiefs round their faces and therefore unrecognizable. They were chanting Har Har Mahadev. Some Hindus who came to help us were scolded by the mob people and were warned. They went to the police line for safety but they were cornered by a group of young boys. There were around 60 of them. They had surrounded us from all sides. When the police came, they were asked not to fire because the mob had also some boys from the police line. Finally we were allowed to leave the place on the request of Abdul Chacha, a resident of the police lines.

Concern Over Children:

All the women in this camp felt that they are safe as long as this camp continues but they were worried about their future. Although most of them were concerned about their settlement and rehabilitation, one thing that preoccupied them immediately was the education of their children. There are about 250 to 300 children in this camp. Since these children have been out of schools, the women felt that it would be better if some one comes here to teach these children.

II) PERSISTENT THEMES

- Fear of future, in terms of death, dislocation and destruction of remaining property.
- Concern for children's well-being & education.
- Concern for relatives and friends, particularly earning members who have been arrested and others who are missing.
- Uncertainty about livelihood; especially about life after relief-camps.
- Loss of faith in the neighbourhood community and local leadership.
- Outrage at insults to Quran and demolition/damage to various Masjids/Dargahs.
- Anger and bewilderment at the role played by the state machinery, especially the police.
- Reiteration of loyalty to Gujarat and India with emphasis on their family/community's contribution.
- Humiliation and sense of violation, personal as well as collective, at the explicit religio-sexual overtones of the mob and police behaviour.

III) DEMANDS

Women have moved into leadership positions in the course of the "riots." For example, on March 17 in Bahaar Colony, women collectively gheraoed the police when they went around arbitrarily abusing and arresting men folk. Women, like Sajida of Bawamanpura, showed great courage and resilience in the face of a daunting situation. Further, since curfew was often lifted for women alone, many women managed important work outside the home in addition to their household chores. Irrespective of the tension between the two communities, some women of both communities took grave risks to save lives. Many women helped out in terms of everyday necessities.

Overall, the women demand:

- Ensure a swift return to normalcy in the state.
- Ensure security of life and livelihood.
- Negotiate between adivasis, Hindus and Muslims.
- Ensure justice.
- Remove biased police and state personnel, including the CM.

The Compensation and Relief package announced by the Government of Gujarat hardly reflects the concerns of the women. While the monetary and material compensation and rehabilitation announced by the government is important (though extremely inadequate), it does not address women's daily livelihood concerns nor the issues of how betrayal of trust and sense of extreme insecurity can be compensated. The issues of social rehabilitation are totally ignored by the state and national governments till now. And social rehabilitation is what is foremost in women's minds right now.

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