

'The Idea of India'

[We publish below the political resolution passed at the two day national convention on 'Countering Fascist Forces: Defending the Idea of India, 25-26 October 2008' organised by 95 mass organisations and attended by over 750 activists and intellectuals from 18 states—Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, J&K, Punjab, Maharashtra and Chattisgarh.]

The urgency to intervene in defence of democracy, secularism and justice has never been more pressing than in the conditions prevailing in the country today.

The rise of communal fascism has emerged as a threat not only to its immediate victims but to the very long-term survival of India as a unified nation of diverse religious, linguistic and ethnic groups. The mysterious and condemnable acts of terrorism that have shaken different parts of the country have engendered a climate of fear, insecurity and fuelled the politics of communal division.

In recent months, vicious attacks have been mounted across India against religious minorities by Hindutva fascist organisations and communalism has even become the dominant tenor of public discourse. In Maharashtra the regional chauvinist forces of Bal and Raj Thackeray, both offsprings of the Hindutva politics of hate, has targeted north Indians in a bid to drive them out of the state.

The BJP, RSS and their allies in the Sangh Parivar have mounted a vicious campaign against the Christian community across India. Orissa and over 10 states have seen violent attacks on the Christian community, their institutions, religious places, property and businesses on the basis of fabricated stories and hate campaigns.

Throughout the country Muslim youth are being targeted, without any or little evidence, as responsible for the various bomb blasts taking place in the country. There is a concerted attempt by the Indian police, intelligence agencies and certain political parties to portray all members of the Muslim community as 'terrorists and extremists' - to be arbitrarily arrested, tortured and killed in fake encounters. Sections of the media instead of investigating the truth are blindly parroting these sensational and unsubstantiated claims.

Even more disturbingly the accused are being systematically denied their basic right to legal defence by some bar associations themselves which have threatened, expelled and even violently attacked lawyers who are brave enough to take up these cases. The Indian judiciary has failed to take suo moto cognizance of such attacks as being contempt of court.

All this while hard evidence available against Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Sangh outfits of their direct involvement in terror attacks is not only being ignored but actively pushed under the carpet by the Indian state. The Hindutva terrorist groups like the Bajrang Dal are openly claiming responsibility for this communal violence against Christians and are yet being allowed to go scot-free.

There is a growing feeling among religious minority communities that the Indian state and judiciary is biased against them and unwilling to provide impartial justice even in cases such as the demolition of the Babri Masjid. No action has been taken on the recommendations of the Srikrishna Commission

report following the anti-Muslim pogrom in Mumbai of 1993. Surprisingly the Nanavati Commission, has exonerated the Narendra Modi government of responsibility for the Gujarat Genocide of 2002.

Instead of confronting these fascist forces the Indian state is cracking down hard on 'soft targets' like human rights and social activists. The fundamental rights of life, liberty, freedom of speech, religion and dissent guaranteed to all citizens by the Indian Constitution are being shredded to pieces right in front of everybody's eyes.

Entire swathes of the Indian North-East and Kashmir are covered by the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) that authorises even the lowest soldier to shoot and kill civilians on mere suspicion of their being 'militants'. In Chhattisgarh, large numbers of citizens continue to be detained using the highly restrictive Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act (CSPSA). Those defending the rights of the poor, Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalised people are being falsely branded as 'extremists' and 'anti-nationals'. The state sponsored, unconstitutional 'Salwa Judum' campaign, which has unleashed horrific violence on innocent tribal populations over the past four years in the name of countering Maoism, is being justified by none other than the National Human Rights Commission itself.

All this is happening even as the forces of imperialism led by the United States, under the pretext of the so-called 'Global War on Terror', are busy re-colonising entire nations from Iraq to Afghanistan and are now targeting Pakistan in the immediate neighbourhood of India. The global media is contributing to this politics of hatred by demonising Muslims worldwide and frightening ordinary citizens into giving up their basic democratic rights everywhere.

Within the country, the pattern of elitist development has turned a vast majority of the population into second-class citizens, reinforcing with misguided policies the apartheid of the ancient and racist caste system. The ghost of the East India Company, buried long ago, is being resurrected in myriad forms and those who run the Indian state are willfully abetting the return of a neo-colonial order.

It is a state of affairs that calls upon all those who value Indian independence, democratic rights and social justice to come forward, take responsibility and resist the onslaught by fascist and imperialist forces on the foundations of national values and existence. [abridged] □□□