

JHARKHAND

Yet Another Fake Encounter

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In the afternoon on July 5, 2010, the joint security forces of JAP and SAF under the leadership of E H Siddique, the officer-in-charge of Tamar Police Station arrived to Gunti village and picked up 45-year-old Etwa Munda of Papirdah village that comes under Tamar police station of Ranchi district in Jharkhand, when he was in the house of his relative Manav Munda. The police also caught a girl Bengi Kumari and escorted both of them towards Jabla pahari (forest). After sometime, the villagers heard the sound of firing and rushed toward the spot. They were shocked to see the dead body of Etwa Munda lying on the ground. The police framed the cold-blooded murder of Etwa Munda as a result of an encounter between the police and the Maoists. The police also depicted him as a hardcore Maoist who was very close to the Maoist Zonal commander Kundan Pahan. Perhaps, Etwa Munda was not an innocent person but under which laws the police killed him in a fake encounter is the question needs to be answered.

Since the villagers were fully aware of the cold-blooded murder of Etwa Munda, the police spared Bengi Kumari and threatened the villagers and family members of the deceased for keeping quiet. However, the villagers wanted to raise the issue and they approached a local activist Xavier Soy and told him about the fake encounter. Meanwhile, when the police came to know about Xavier Soy's acts of attempting to unearth the fact of the fake encounter and encouraging the villagers for raising the issue, the police put Xavier Soy with his school going son behind the bars alleging them of keeping the Maoist literature in their house. The police also do not allow the outsiders especially the Human Rights Activists and the Journalists to roam in the area so that the truth remained buried. Finally, the police succeeded in shutting up the villagers' mouths and in framing the cold-blooded murder as a genuine case of encounter between the police and the Maoists. Amidst this, Tamar police again picked up another villager Rajesh Singh Munda of Papridah village on August 1, 2010 before the dawn from his village when he was sleeping. The police took him near Koja River in Heso forest and gunned down after branding him as a hardcore Maoist and aide of the Maoist Zonal Commander Kundan Pahan. The former Jharkhand chief Minister Arjun Munda raised the question and demanded for the CBI inquiry alleging that the Police killed Rajesh Singh Munda in a cold-blooded murder. He also said that the Naxalism would grow if innocent villagers were being coined as Naxalites and killed in fake encounters. He further said that the police kill innocent Adivasis precisely because they are voiceless. Perhaps, this is the first time in Jharkhand when a political leader has raised questions against the coldblooded murder. Obviously, the most of the people keep quiet on the case of fake encounter because the licensed killings are not only accepted in this so-called civilized society but the vested interests also applaud for it, award the killers and make them heroes. It would be very interesting to know whether Etwa Munda and Rajesh Singh Munda were members of the Maoist groups. The circumstances suggest that they were not the members of the Maoist groups. For instance, the Maoists had called off 'India Blockade' on July 7th after alleged killing of their leader Azad. Similarly, on 8 August 2010, they shut down Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhatisgarh and West Bengal

against the arrest of Maoist leader Rajesh alias Udayji from Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand. However, they did not even issue a statement after brutal killings of Etwa Munda and Rajesh Singh Munda by the Security Forces, which is a clear indication that they were not the members of the Maoist groups. However, the villagers do not deny Etwa Munda's involvement in some illegal activities but denied him being the member of Maoist groups. Perhaps, Rajesh Singh Munda was completely innocent. Indeed, the police often conduct fake encounters for ensuring medal, award and promotion but now the things have changed. The purposes of cold-blooded murders are entirely different in the red corridor. The Security forces have been organizing the fake encounters in the forests with the intention of frightening the villagers so that they can stop supporting the Maoists. It is to show the brave work of the security forces to the city dwellers, especially the middle class for getting their support for the bigger assault against the Maoists. It is also to bring back the lost moral ground of the security forces. And of course, it is to shield their failures and to justify the so-called anti-Naxal operations of the Indian government. For instance, on July 1, 2010 the Police had organized a mass meeting at Sarjormdih village near Bunda police station of Ranchi district in Jharkhand against the Maoists, where 3000 villagers of 24 villages had participated and challenged the Maoists. Instead of surrendering, the Maoists killed Sandu Munda on July 3, who was the first speaker in the meeting. The police had instigated the villagers for going against the Maoists without ensuring their security, therefore the Jharkhand Police had faced heavy criticism. Given the circumstantial evidences, the police killed Etwa Munda and Rajesh Singh Munda in cold-blooded murders and depicted them as hardcore Maoists. The people just followed the media's story and kept quiet.

Since the so-called anti-Naxal operations have very clear link to the corporate interest therefore one should understand the media's silence on the state sponsored human rights violations. Meanwhile, it is very strange to know about the silence of Human Rights Groups on humiliation, molestation, torture, rape and cold-blooded murder by the Security Forces during the ongoing anti-Naxal operations in the state of Jharkhand who ensure their bread and butter in the name of promotion and protection of the human rights. Perhaps, these human rights groups are afraid of the state agencies since anyone who raises the issues of human rights violation in the red corridor is coined as a Maoists supporter. But does it mean they should keep silence? However, the Indian constitution, does not deny the right to life to anyone residing in the country. Similarly, Union Home Minister P Chidambaram while responding to a question of alleged killing of Maoist leader Azad in the Parliament said, "Whether somebody is a good man or bad man, he should not be killed in a fake encounter." He further said, "When I took the charge of my ministry, I made it clear that there would be no fake encounter killings by central agency". What does it mean? It clearly means the Indian State has been carrying on the fake encounters, which must be a serious concern for all peace loving people. Therefore, the CBI enquiry should be established in all the cases of encounters taken place in the so-called red corridor since January 1, 2001 to 15 of August 2010. If it happens the people of the country would be shocked to hear that how the security forces have killed the innocent people in the fake encounters.

There are some very significant points in the so-called encounter cases. Interestingly, when the police kill any person either in a genuine or fake encounter, the person is coined as the top Maoist (area commander or zonal commander) and when the Maoists attack on police the most affected are small policemen. Why are the police not able to target the guerillas though they are always able to target the top guns of the Maoists? Similarly, whenever police catch a person, he is propagated as a hardcore Maoist. The

strange thing is at the end of the day police fail to provide sufficient evidence in the court and the most of the so-called hardcore Maoists are acquitted due to lack of evidence. What does it mean? It clearly means the police victimize the innocent people and put them behind the bars. Can the Indian State tell its people that how many Maoists were convicted during the last four decades? The peculiar thing in every case of encounter is the Maoists fire more bullets on the security forces than the security forces fire on the Maoists. Ironically, security force gets injury and the Maoists are killed. Therefore, it is very difficult to understand the puzzle of encounter. Precisely, because though security forces are so smart but at the same time they are not able to cleanse the Maoists. In the case of Rajesh Singh Munda, the police claim of the Maoists firing 300 rounds of bullets on the Police and the Police fired merely 150 rounds in their response. However, Rajesh Munda was shot dead and not a single police man got injury. Of course, no Indian would like its soldier to be injured but people have to understand the logic of so-called 'encounter'.

The so-called educated people who always raised the questions on intention of the Human Rights Groups and attempted to brand them as the Maoists overground, Maoist sympathizers and supporters must understand that they are the concerned and tax payer citizens of India, who have also given their mandate to the Indian State for promoting, protecting and ensuring everyone's constitutional rights. Therefore, even if the Maoists create problems in the country, the responsibility lies with the Indian State.

However, whether Etwa Munda and Rajesh Singh Munda were innocent or guilty, their constitutional rights - right to life was taken away by the mighty guns and the state is responsible for it, therefore it must tell its people the truth.

While addressing the nation on 63rd Independence Day, the Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh said that his government is committed to protect its every citizen. Therefore one would like to question whether Etwa Munda and Rajesh Singh Munda were Indian citizens too? Is Indian government committed to protect only the corporate sharks, politicians and bigwigs? Or whether the Indian State is also committed to protect the common men? If so then it must stop handing over the livelihood resources of the common men to corporate sharks and stop the operation green hunt, which is hunting the innocent rather than cleansing the Maoists. □□□