

NAXAL-PHOBIA RETURNS

Police Terror in Punjab

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Now-a-days, the Punjab Police is too much preoccupied with Naxalite-phobia. Some months ago the DGP himself came out with an extremely irresponsible statement, branding the 17 mass organizations of farmers and agri-labour as front organizations of the Naxalites/Maoists, because they have been consistently fighting against the anti-people and anti-national policies of the rulers. The police arrested Surjit Singh Phul, President of Bharti Kisan Union Krantikari, subjected him to severe torture at the Joint Interrogation Center Amritsar and slapped on him a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. During the agitation against PSEB unbundling, Dr Darshan Pal of the Revolutionary Democratic Front, was illegally detained and interrogated by the police. In May 2010, a poster jointly brought out by various communist revolutionary parties appeared in the state. Thereafter many activists of Krantikari Pendu Mazdoor Union were arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. One of them, Dilbag Singh from Zira has been even charged under S.121-A IPC (attempting to wage war against the State), which attracts a punishment of life imprisonment, despite there being absolutely no such evidence against him. It goes to the credit of democratic revolutionary movement in Punjab that it has massively resisted all these attempts by mobilizing various sections of the people. A large number of prominent intellectuals of Punjab under the leadership of noted people's dramatist Gursharan Singh formed a 'Democratic Front Against Operation Green Hunt' and held state-wide conventions in 15 main cities and 20 villages/towns, which were addressed among by Himanshu Kumar, Gandhian Social Worker from Dantewada. The state police kept close surveillance on these conventions, and attempted to video record the proceedings by smuggling their agents under the garb of fictitious press/TV reporters. They even attempted to video photograph all the audiences. When the organizers objected to it a case under Section 384 (dacoity), 506 (intimidation), 148, 149 IPC (rioting armed with deadly weapons) was got registered at Giddarbaha Distt Mukatsar against members of the Democratic Front and Himanshu Kumar.

In continuation with this, on 28.7.2010, at about 07.00 pm Daljit Singh, aged about 60 years, resident of Hazura Kapura Basti, Bathinda was abducted from his house by 15/20 armed policemen in plain clothes, posing as members of a power theft checking team. His wife Sunder Pal Kaur, who is employed as Senior Telephone Supervisor in BSNL at Bathinda raised hue and cry and a large number of neighbourers assembled. On being asked the plain-clothes men refused to divulge their identity but some people in the crowd recognized them to be from CIA Police Station Bathinda. They refused to tell under which FIR or offence Daljit Singh was being arrested or where he is to be kept and when he shall be produced in court. When contacted, the SSP Bathinda expressed total ignorance about the incident. The people apprehended that the armed abductors, who were in fact policemen in mufti, might cause physical harm to Daljit Singh or implicate him in some false criminal case. Advocate N K Jeet, President Lok Morcha Punjab, Advocate Balwant Singh Dhillon, President, Lawyers For Justice & Democratic Rights, and Gurdeep Singh, Editor, AJ DI AWAZ, a Punjabi Daily, immediately brought this incident to the notice of press, Human Rights Commission, Punjab & Haryana High

Court, DGP Punjab, Chief Secretary Govt of Punjab & other authorities. They contacted the SHO Police Station CIA Staff Bathinda, who admitted, having taken Daljit Singh in custody and demanded his identity proof. A large number of people along with the Corporator of the area went to the police station. The police, in order to scare away the people alleged that the said Daljit Singh is in fact Jagdish Kumar, a Naxalite leader, who has been underground since 1992, and is inciting the people in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh etc to join the Naxalite movement. They further alleged that he has assumed a false name to conceal his real identity. The people asked the police officials, to disclose the offence and FIR under which he has been arrested. The police did not have any reply. When the people expressed their apprehension that Daljit Singh might be implicated in some false criminal case or physically liquidated, the police agreed to record his formal arrest, but said that the offences under which he was to be charged were yet to be determined and shall be added afterwards in consultation with the IG of Police.

The police afterwards registered a case (FIR No. 35 dated 28.7.2010) at Police Station Thermal Bathinda against him under section 420 (Cheating), 467, 468, 471 of the IPC, on the allegation that he changed his name from Jagdish Kumar to Daljit Singh and got prepared Ration Card & other documents in the said name. However the police failed to provide any information as to who he has cheated and in which manner. On 29.7.2010, the police presented him in the court of K K Singla JMJC Bathinda and sought his police remand for 10 days for affecting recoveries of the documents such as Ration Card etc. The Ration Card was immediately placed on record of the court. Thereafter no ground was left for seeking police remand. Then the police came out with another story. They claimed that Daljit Singh is a Naxalite leader and a special team of the Intelligence Bureau has arrived from Chandigarh to interrogate him and as such he should be sent to police custody. The court after hearing the arguments granted police remand for one day, with the rider that the while interrogating, the police should bear in mind that the accused is an arthritis & heart patient and he should be provided with medical care and necessary medicines. In police remand, Daljit Singh was subjected to lengthy and strenuous interrogation by the officials of the IB, Intelligence Wing of the Punjab Police and various other agencies.

In order to cause a scare amongst the people, the police resorted to spreading lies and disinformation. In a press note issued by the District police, Daljit Singh was described as a top Naxalite leader of CPRCP (ML) who has taken command of the organization after the death of Harbhajan Singh Sohi. He was further accused of having remained underground for the last 40 years under an assumed name and inciting various organizations of farmers, agri-labour, and employees etc to resort to agitations against the Govt policies and indulge in violence. Despite this, hundreds of people including a large number of women came to the court to express moral support and solidarity with Daljit Singh when on 30.7.2010; he was again produced in the court. Earlier residents of Hazura Kapura Basti held rallies to condemn his illegal arrest and false implication and had decided to stand with and support his family. The 'Maoist' and the 'Naxalite' tag put on him by the police, did not scare them.

On 30.7.2010, the Police sought his police remand for 10 days on the plea that he was to be interrogated by the Intelligence sleuths at Joint Interrogation Center at Amritsar, as he was a Maoist. The police even claimed to have recovered some Maoist literature from him. This plea was vigorously opposed by the defense lawyers stating that the police cannot indulge in a fishing inquiry and shall have to limit its investigation to the accusations made in the FIR. They further pleaded that changing name is not an

offence. Moreover he has been using the changed name for the last three decades and it has been duly recorded in the service record of his wife as well as birth and school record of his children. The court refused to remand him in police custody and instead sent him to judicial custody for 14 days.

Although under mass pressure, the police attack has been temporarily repulsed, but there is every possibility that Daljit Singh may be falsely implicated in a fresh criminal case or named as an accused in any pending criminal case at Bathinda or at any other place in Punjab or in any other state, to subject him to physical torture. The police is also looking for Jaspal Jassi, Editor of a revolutionary democratic monthly magazine 'SURAKH REKHA', currently being published from Bathinda. Their intention is to silence all the pro-people voices of dissent. □□□