

LETTER

MADHUPUR INCIDENTS

Five members of the All-India Fact Finding team were present in Madhupur village of Salboni 1 Block of West Medinipur district of West Bengal, on 11th April 2009 from around 10 am to 12 noon. On reaching the village, the members found the villagers anxious and agitated. A group of 25-30 police personnel carrying firearms had tried to enter the village ten minutes ago. From accounts, when the women of the village resisted and refused them entry, the police threatened to beat up the women. The villagers then gathered in full strength and forced the police to leave the village.

In the presence of the fact finding team members, the villagers prepared for a procession to warn nearby villages against possible further entries by the police and the *Harmad Vahini*. People from other villages who had been informed soon joined the procession. Women participated in large numbers. They were completely peaceful, not carrying any fire-arms, and not in a mood for any confrontation. Members of the fact finding team left as the procession was beginning. Later the procession had been fired upon by the *Harmad Vahini* near Memul, a village adjacent to Madhupur. Members of the procession were forced to flee, and women in Memul had to lock themselves up in their houses. It appears that the *Harmad Vahini* also destroyed some of the houses in Memul and tried to break down doors.

Given the past experience of the villagers, it appears that the attempted entry of the police in the morning is linked to the attack by the *Harmad Vahini*, subsequently, which seems to lend credence to the fears and distrust of police by the people of Lalgah.

Vidya Das, adivasi rights activist, Agragamee, Kashipur, Orissa
Gautam Navlakha, PUDR, consulting editor, EPW
Colin Gonsalves, Supreme court lawyer, Human Rights Law Network
Budhaditya Das, student, DU
Manika Bora, student, JNU