

The Andhra Pradesh Police are famous for what are internationally known as extra-judicial killings. Killing in police custody and in fake 'encounters' are very common practices of the A P Police. From 1984 till today there have been 70 deaths in police custody, and there have been 64 deaths in 'encounters' since the beginning of 1983. The civil liberties organisations and the Press have been agitating about these killings making it necessary for the Government to order judicial enquiries into atleast cases of lock-up deaths, if not 'encounter' killings. Numerous writ petitions concerning lock-up deaths and 'encounter' deaths have been filed in the A.P. High Court as well as the Supreme Court of India, both by APCLC and by relatives of the victims. Thus, police killings in the form of lock-up deaths and 'encounter' deaths have turned into a nuisance for the Government.

As a consequence the police, no doubt with the connivance of the Government, are slowly perfecting a new method of killing. This is the infamous 'missing' phenomenon of Latin America, where thousands of democratic and leftist opponents of the military regimes of countries like Chile and Argentina have been abducted, killed and the dead bodies secretly disposed of, by the police or the military. There has been an international furore against such killings, led by Amnesty International. The convenience with such killings is that there is no evidence of the crime left, no dead body, no inquest, no ballistics report, no postmortem report and no magisterial enquiry. Thus there is little possibility of the crime being proved in a court of law.

We are very much perturbed to see that this ugly practice of the Latin American dictatorships is being borrowed in democratic India by N. T. Rama Rao's government, which is being hailed as a democratic alternative to the Congress-I. In recent months there have been 11 such cases in our State. 10 of the victims are activists of the CPI-ML groups and one is an ordinary criminal suspect, Nageshwara Rao of Hyderabad. His case is well known because the High Court ordered an enquiry into it and forced the SHO, Chikkadpally to pay damages of Rs.40,000/- to the bereaved family. Nageswar Rao, suspected of a bicycle theft, was arrested on

12th May 1985, seen in Chikkadpally P.S. for about one week by many people, including the local MLA, and disappeared later. The Police claimed that he had escaped from custody but the High Court did not believe them. In the remaining 10 cases, whose details we give below, no such minimal justice has been done.

We first give details of two cases in which some proof of the arrest is available.

1. Velpula Venkateswarlu (alias Prakash), R/o Warangal. Prakash gave up his political activity and voluntarily surrendered and went to jail in June 1986. He was accused of nine criminal cases. He was released on bail on 31st March 1987. The police arrested him immediately at the jail gates and remanded him to jail in a fresh charge. He was released on bail once again on 8th April, 1987. Once again the police arrested him and remanded him in a fresh case. He obtained bail for the third time and was released on 18th April, 1987. Again the police abducted him at the jail gates and he has been 'missing' ever since. The details of his abduction are as follows :

Prakash's mother Somanarsamma was waiting at the jail gates to take her son home. The time was about 7.00 PM. The SI of Hanamkonda Police Station, Liaquat Ali Khan and CI of Hanamkonda Police Station, Md. Shamim, came in a jeep, and as Prakash was coming out of the jail gates, they asked him to get into the jeep. The jeep went towards Hanamkonda. Somanarsamma went to Hanamkonda P.S., but Prakash was not there. She went home. At night an acquaintance told her that her son was in Shyampet Police Station. Next morning she went to Shyampet P.S. and saw her son. He spoke to her and told her to meet the S.P. and talk to him. Her husband Lakshamaiah met the S.P. Mr. Venkatramudu five days later, alongwith a Telugu Desam leader, Chandulal, M.L.A. of Mulug. The S.P. acknowledged Prakash's arrest and told them that the Bond papers had been signed and Prakash would be released. Lakshmaiah and Somanarsamma again met the SP 18 days later and he said he would verify and asked them to come a week later. They met him again on 25th May 1987 but this time he denied Prakash's arrest and said that after his release on 18th April 1987 the police know nothing of his whereabouts. This statement is clearly inconsistent with his first statement,

It shows that originally his intention had been to release Prakash but later he was killed and the body disposed of.

2. Dr. S.M.Prasad and B.Krishna Prasad (alias Prakash).

Dr. Prasad was a medical practitioner of Rajahmundry and Krishna Prasad (alias Prakash) was a native of Korutla, Karimnagar District, running a motor cycle repair shop at Jagdalpur, Madhya Pradesh. They were both involved with a Naxalite group. On 12th October 1986, they were arrested at New Kanaka Durga Lodge, Hanumanpet, Vijayawada. The Telugu daily 'Udayam', in its Vijayawada edition, reported on 17th October 1987 that a youth by name Prakash had been arrested at the above mentioned lodge and was being interrogated at 3 Town P.S., Vijayawada.

On the same day the S.I., Korutla, met Krishna Prasad's father B. Narayana a contractor of Korutla and made enquiries about his son's activities. He told Mr. Narayana that the boy had been picked up at Vijayawada. On 20th October 1986, at Jagdalpur, the local police and Andhra Police raided the house of Krishna Prasad and took his wife Pushpalata to the Police Station. They told her that her husband had been arrested at Vijayawada and would soon be brought to Jagdalpur. However, to this day neither her husband nor Dr. Prasad has been produced in any court or released. They are both 'missing'.

The following are the other cases, for which only bare information is available.

3. Vellanki Chenchu Naidu and Venkateshwarlu. On 12th December 1986 these two young men were picked up at the RTC bus stand in Kavali, Nellore District, by plain clothes Police men. People who were in the bus stand at that time saw two youth being taken away by plain clothesmen but they can identify neither the youth nor the police men. Chenchu Naidu's father filed a Habeas Corpus petition in the High Court, to which the police have replied denying the arrest. Both the young men are 'missing' for the last six months.

4. Yakaiah student of ITI, Warangal. He was arrested on November <sup>16</sup> 1985 at Warangal. He was kept in Hanumakonda Police Station for ~~10-15~~<sup>45</sup> 15 days. Afterwards he has been 'missing', for more than a year and a half.

5. Benjamin (alias Sekhar) and Sukhjeevan Reddy (alias Sanjeev). These two young men were picked up by the Police in Balanagar Industrial Area on 30th October 1985. A large number of local residents witnessed the arrest. Their organisation, the Radical Students Union, filed a Habeas Corpus petition in the High Court but the police denied the arrest. They are 'missing' ever since for more than a year and a half.

6. Swarnalata. There was an 'encounter' in the Chintapalli Agency Area, near the Village of Lankapokala, in Visakhapatnam District, on 26th April 1987. A young man died in the 'encounter'. Accompanying him were some more people, including a girl by name Swarnalata. The girl has been 'missing' ever since. The local police have boasted to the Bagata tribals of the area that they have killed a 'woman Naxalite'. However, the police have not announced her death to the Press as an 'encounter'. She remains a 'missing' case.

7. Yadagiri R/o Kazipet Darga, Warangal, and worker at Students' Mess, Regional Engineering College. According to the police, Yadagiri is supposed to have been a witness to the criminal conspiracy that allegedly took place at the Regional Engineering College, to kill the S.I. of Kazipet, Mr. Yadagiri Reddy. In September 1985, the police arrested Yadagiri, took him all the way to Yellendu forest, threatened to kill him, and forced him to give a sworn statement (under Sec.164 Cr.P.C.) before the Munsif Magistrate, Yellendu, confessing that he was a witness to the conspiracy, and implicating some people as conspirators.

In February this year, the police arrested Yadagiri again from his residence at Kazipet Darga. His wife Venkata Lakshmi is a witness to the arrest. Yadagiri has been missing ever since. Another youth whom the police arrested recently was told by the police that Yadagiri had been killed.

CONCLUSION :

We wish to stress that the 8 incidents recounted above, involving 11 victims, are not accidental happenings but part of a deliberate policy of the Telugu Desam Government. The Government is obviously of the opinion that through such methods of disposing of inconvenient people, the headache of Court cases, writ petitions, judicial enquiries

and thorough investigations by the Press or Civil Liberties Organisations, can be avoided. We warn the public that once this trend is allowed to set in with the CPI-ML groups, it will soon extend to ordinary criminal suspects and then to all opponents of the ruling party. Then we will hear less about lock-up deaths and 'encounters', regarding which there is atleast some possibility of investigation, and more about mysterious cases of 'missing' people.

DEMAND :

We demand that the Telugu Desam Government, if it is honestly committed to the democratic values the Chief Minister talks about, should issue a strict warning to the police not to indulge in such unlawful killings, and should order a judicial enquiry into the 11 deaths listed above.

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Hyderabad.



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