

Police-backed criminals killed Purushotham: Balagopal

BOTTOMLINE



FOR THE RIGHT CAUSE: Human Rights Forum convener K Balagopal

How can anybody be killed in the heart of the city in broad daylight without the support of the police? The police claim that Purushottam, was killed due to land dispute which is ridiculous, says HR Forum convener K Balagopal to K SANTOSH PATNAIK

APCLC members, clearly indicates that the murder was committed with the connivance of the police. Moreover, Purushotham was the fifth HR activist to be killed in the State. In all the four killings, the police had failed to arrest anyone. In fact, the killers have not been identified so far.

Earlier, Purushotham was attacked with a sickle in 1998 at Mahbubnaga, but the attackers were never identified. Gaddar was shot at three years ago at Venkatapuram, Secunderabad. It has become a habit for the cops to say the killings are due to personal animosities.

So, you don't have confidence in the police investigations. Of course not. They have not arrested anyone so far. PUCL leader K G Kannabiran, former president of APCLC M T Khan besides me were attacked twice at Warangal and Nalgonda in front of the NHRC members in 1994. The police had booked cases, but did not arrest anyone.

We don't believe in the police department and its investigations.

What are the HR activists planning to do now? Purushotham was the third major activist in the country who was murdered by the police-backed criminal gangs. The other two being Jaleel Andrabi, a HR advocate in Kashmir, and Parag Kumar of Manav Adhikar Sangram Samiti of Assam. Our focus would be to expose the

violence of the police-sponsored private criminal gangs. Do you think Praja Bandhu which owned up responsibility for your abduction in 1989 was the name given to a non-existent outfit by the police? Obviously. They let me off after detaining me for a day and two nights. The police wanted to take revenge against me for kidnapping of constables by the PWG. Earlier, such crimes were committed by plainclothesmen in the name of Praja Bandhu and other outfits. Now, they are fully-organised. The members of private criminal gangs live in police headquarters.

The police often dub the HR activists as sympathisers of the PWG? So what? Is there any law which suggests that sympathisers of the PWG, CPI-ML should be killed? Purushotham was not a criminal. He had no weapon in his possession. He was unarmed and was killed brutally in broad daylight.

Is there an end to it? There should be a public opinion on the issue, irrespective of Naxal politics. There has to be a debate on what one thinks of arbitrary killings sponsored by the State. We have to launch an aggressive campaign against State-sponsored repression by private criminal gangs supported by the police.

The macabre killing of human rights activist T Purushotham has evoked severe outcry from various quarters, particularly from civil liberties and human rights activists. Condemning the violent incident, several HR activists raised doubts over the killing of the APCLC leader and squarely blamed the police for the "inhuman and heinous act".

Initially, these outfits consisted of plainclothesmen. Now, sizable chunk of surrendered Naxals joined these groups.

Purushotham, an advocate hailing from Mahbubnagar, was attacked with swords by four Tata Sumo-borne assailants on the fateful Thursday morning near his residence at Madhuranagar. This is the first incident in the city where a civil rights activist was murdered and the fifth in the State.

Are you saying that the surrendered Naxals recruited as members of these gangs are on the payrolls of the State? It is an open secret. The State even gave them licence to extort money from people in Warangal, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar.

You said the surrendered Naxals were given licence to kill and extort. Do you mean to say that something is wrong in the PWG? Yes. It is necessary for the Naxal groups to introspect as to how their own former cadres are turning into criminal agents of the police. However, this criticism cannot be used to condone the action of the police in encouraging criminality.

How do you justify the accusation that the police is involved in killing Purushotham? How can anybody be killed in the heart of the city in broad daylight without the support of the police? The police claim that Purushotham was killed due to land dispute which is ridiculous. He had no lands. He was a prominent HR activist and attending court as a lawyer. Purushotham received several threatening calls before he was murdered. The haste with which the body was removed from the scene of offence, despite pleas by Purushotham's wife Jyothi to wait for

Human Rights Forum convener and advocate K Balagopal alleged that the murder was the "handiwork" of the police. Balagopal was allegedly kidnapped by the police in 1989 under the garb of a non-existent organisation called Praja Bandhu as revenge for the abduction of some cops by the PWG. Excerpts from the interview:

The Civil Liberties activists are blaming the police for the killing of Purushotham, while the police attribute it to some personal animosity. What is your opinion? This is a dangerous trend. It is violence of the State against democratic activists which is being dressed up as personal animosity. The trend was started by outfits like Green Tigers and Kranti Sena. They are involved in several acts of violence.

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