

“Media Alliance Against Caste Discrimination”

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"For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill.

The eyes of all people are upon us."

-John Winthrop, 1630

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Welcome note from Jagaran Media Center (JMC)

Jagaran Media Center (JMC) is an organization set up by Dalit journalists to advocate on Dalit issues. It was established in 2000. Since its establishment, JMC has been actively involved in raising the issues of Dalits locally, nationally and internationally. Via numerous programs, JMC creates awareness amongst Dalits and non-Dalits about caste based discrimination and the consequences of this form of severe discrimination for the Dalit community. Ultimate goal of the awareness programs is to create a society without caste discrimination. JMC uses different media to achieve her goals. JMC is proactive in advocating Dalit issues by maintaining strictly neutral in. The fact that Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and Narayan Singh Pun both visited JMC office and held extensive discussion on Dalit issues during the first week of April 2003 indicates that JMC's work has been taken seriously by both the conflicting parties and that JMC is recognized as a neutral organization. Even during the State of Emergency, JMC activists worked in the most conflict affected districts.

JMC proudly presents the first issue of the E-bulletin. This monthly e-bulletin will be distributed to individuals and organizations that are directly or indirectly the stakeholders of Dalit movement. JMC will publish news, investigation reports, features and press releases related to Dalit movement in this bulletin.

We would like to acknowledge Dalit Empowerment & Inclusion Project (DEIP), for its financial support to run this campaign.

We encourage you to send your comments at e-bulletin@jagaranmedia.org.np to expand our campaign. To know further more about JMC, please visit our web page – www.jagaranmedia.org.np.

Thank you.

Rape case of Dalit Women in Saptari; More rumor than reality

In the morning of 23rd August 2005, many Dalit organizations, - activists and other human rights defenders were shocked seeing the news "25 Women Raped" in the Kantipur Daily. The news report mentioned that Maoists

raped 25 Dalit women in Saptari district. To find out what really happened that night in Saptari, a team of different human rights and Dalit organizations headed towards Saptari from Kathmandu to start a fact-finding mission. JagaranMediaCenter's (JMC) district reporting team was already present at the place of the incident. A summary of JMC's fact finding report is published below.

Date of incident: 18 August 2005

Time of incident: Mid-night

Place of incident: Saptari District, Jagatpur VDC-4, Dalit Basti

Detail of incident:

It was the night of 18 August 2005 around 9 p.m., in the Jagatpur VDC-4 of Saptari. **Devkant Yadav, Lalit Chaudhari, Pradip Gupta and Dinesh Sardar** (calling themselves Maoist) entered the village with armed weapons. All of them, except Dinesh Sardar, went to the house of **Shambhu Chaudhari**, who is a local resident of the village.

Dinesh Sardar, who called himself the Commander of Maoist, went in the house of **Kamala Devi Khanga** (name changed) who is from Dalit community. He asked her for food. She informed him that there was only rice to eat and if he wishes, she could prepare union pickle. **Dinesh** ate the food that was served. While eating the food, he told **Kamala** that a team of approx. 20 Maoists had come to the village, so no one should come out of their home. After finishing his meal, he left **Kamala Devi Khanga's** house, went to **Shambu Chaudhari's** house and drank alcohol. After a couple of hours, he returned back and raped **Kamala Devi Khanga**, keeping the gunpoint on her forehead.

Pradip Gupta, who was sleeping in the house of **Shambhu Chaudhari**, left his two other friends and came out. He went to **Santalal Chaudhari's** house and indecently assaulted his wife, 25 years old **Dahani Chaudhari**. **Dahani** started shouting at **Pradip** for coming into her house at midnight being drunk. He ran away from there and went to *Dalit Basti* (area where Dalit community lives). There he entered the house of **Gopali Khanga** and indecently assaulted her daughters in law, 29 years old **Aarati Devi** and 32 years old **Nilima Devi** (name changed). Also, he took **Gopali Khanga** in his capture and checked each and every room of her house. At the same time, he smacked **Ashok Gupta**, the son of **Jagadish Gupta** for coming out of his home during night.

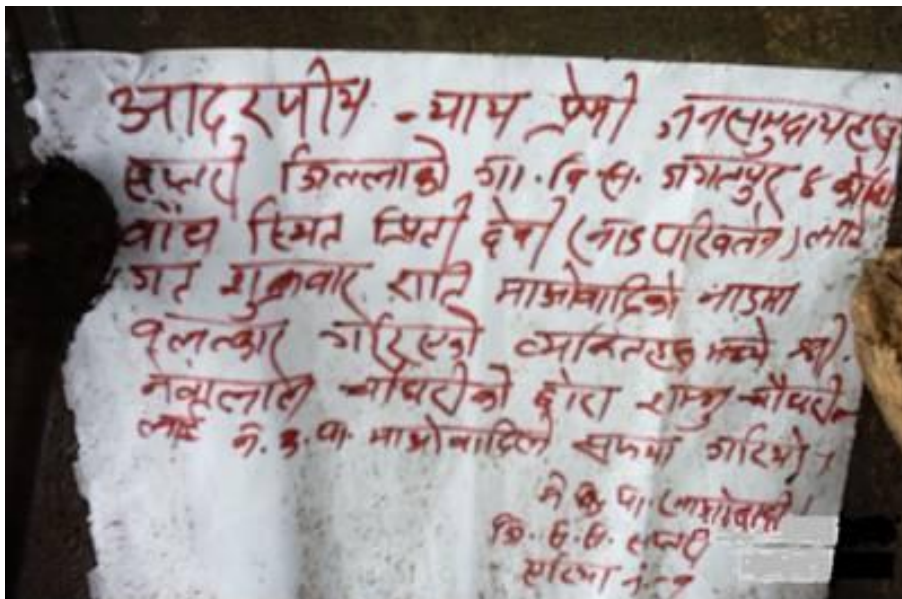
Next day, the 19th of August 2005, the news spread in the entire village and **Dinesh Sardar** scampered from **Kamala Devi's** house early in the morning. **Kamala Devi's** mother in law disclosed that Maoists raped her daughter in law the night before.

Devkant Yadav and **Lalit Chaudhari**, who were sleeping in the house of **Shambhu Chaudhari** came to village to know the truth. Since all the villagers were found very aggressive, both of them also scampered from the village.

Role of Maoists:

After the news came to knowledge of Maoists, Maoists Leaders of the local area, **Bhola Chaudhari** and **Jakir Miya** came to Dalit Basti. They took **Dinesh Sardar** in their control. They asked Dinesh to apologize to the victim in front of all the villagers and promised that they would take action against the culprit. **Pradip Gupta** had already escaped from the village. District Secretary of Maoists **Avash** in a Press Release mentioned that there was no involvement of Maoists in this case and also committed for action against the culprit.

On the 25th of August, the death body of **Shambhu Chaudhari** was found in Mahuli Bazar. There was a letter attached to his body, written by the Maoist. The letter stated that he was killed by Maoist for raping Priti Devi (known by JMC as Kamala Devi) and for using the name of the Maoists.



Local residents say that the direct involvement of **Shambhu Chaudhari** in the rape case is not seen. Why have the Maoists killed him? For the villagers it is a strange matter. **Dinesh Sardar**, who was responsible for the rape, is in control of Maoists and the action against him is yet not publicized.

Our conclusions:

- oThe group involved in the case called themselves Maoists.
- oOne man raped one Dalit woman.
- oOne other man indecently assaulted three women (2 Dalit and one so-called 'higher caste'). The same man hit a male from the village.
- oLocal Maoists Leader forced the rapist to apologize to the victim, in front of the villagers.
- oOn the death body of Shambhu Chaudhari, who was killed in the allegation of rape, a letter was attached. This letter informs that he was killed by Maoists.
- oVictims say that the Maoists were involved in the incident.
- oJMC therefore concludes that there was direct or indirect involvement of Maoists in this case.

Our recommendations:

- oKamala Devi Khanga should be given psychological relief. To avoid this type of horrific incident in future, she has to be provided with legal aid for punishing the culprit. In the meantime, JMC demands that the government compensates her along with medical treatment.
- oThe Maoists declared that their name has been involved in this incident, but that they were not involved. The Maoists have to publicize the real facts and they have to take action against the real guilty. Furthermore they have to commit that they won't allow such incident to repeat again.
- oWe would like to appeal to all the media houses to be more realistic while publicizing such sensitive news. They should be aware that, the news reports should reflect reality.

50 Internally Displaced Dalit families rehabilitated in Baglung district

Baglung, August 7 2005

Dalits who were displaced out of Bungadobhan Syaula village of Baglung and living in district HQ have been rehabilitated. They returned to their village on Aug 7 after walking for three days from the HQ. The district Maoist leadership has said action has been taken against local party workers involved. It has also expressed its commitment not to repeat such mistakes in the future. The initiative for rehabilitation was taken after the Maoists conceded before human rights activists and journalists that they committed a mistake by displacing them. They have also started process of returning property of *Dalits* they had captured. And, 50 *Dalits* are now leading a normal life in areas in which they have struck their roots for generations.

In order to rehabilitate them, human rights activists and journalists had held several rounds of discussions with the Maoist district leadership. In an Aug-10 discussion at Syaula inhabited by *Dalits*, the *Dalits* had fearlessly narrated their harrowing tale of excesses they underwent in front of the Maoist district secretary Anil and member Mukti. The discussion lasted for

close to four hours. The *Dalits* had, without any fear, described how they were beaten up when they refused to go with them. At the end of the discussion, Anil gave assurances to the victims that their property will be returned, action will be taken against the workers who commit excesses, no one will be forcibly made Maoists and such incidents will not repeat in the future.

The local Maoist workers had accused the *Dalits* of not sending their children to war and escaping from their control. The *Dalits* were beaten up also to settle the old scores. And, this led to the displacement. After 12 *Dalits* were severely beaten up at different times on different charges, they had escaped to the district HQ overnight. The *Dalits* who reached the district HQ in groups had said their houses will be bombed by the Maoist workers in case they leaked out the news of the beating they were subjected to to their leaders.

After they were forced to leave their property and possessions back in the village, they found themselves in the lurch. To begin with, Nepal Red Cross Society, Baglung, JagaranMediaCenter and DDC had provided them some relief. Later they started working as wage laborers. As up to 10 people were forced to live in a small room and were reeling under the exorbitant price, they were seeking ways to return to their homes.

JagaranMediaCenter, Federation of Nepalese Journalists and Collective Campaign for Peace had made joint efforts to rehabilitate the *Dalits*. A team comprising chairman of the Center Suvash Kumar Darnal, district reporter Purna Bahadur Bishwokarma and member of FNJ Purna Basnet had reached Syaula of Bungadobhan along with the displaced people. Reporter Purna Bahadur Bishwokarma will, at the request of the displaced, remain in the village so long as they do not feel secure. Even after this, the village will continue to be monitored.

Though belatedly, the Maoists have taken a positive initiative by creating an atmosphere to rehabilitate the displaced *Dalits*. Taking a cue from this incident, the Maoists should immediately stop beating and displacing people and bringing them forcibly on their side. They should respect basic human rights and control their extremist party workers. The act of rehabilitating thousands of members of general public and political party workers should be launched as a campaign. This will help test their commitment in practice.

Facts on Mahottari Fire incident revealed

April 2005, Mahottari

The Dalit community was thrashed by the youths from the Yadav community in Mahottari. This same youth community ignited fire on 11 houses owned by Dalits on Saturday, 26 March 2005. The conflict started after a drunken Kamallesh of so-called upper caste tried to misbehave towards Dalit women at Khuda Pipara VDC-6 of Mahottari. At the village, 52 households of Musahar (so called "low caste" from the Terai) community reside. The youth community had tried to misbehave towards Dalit women while playing Fagu/Holi festival (throwing colored paint) with them. Dalit youths repeatedly tried to convince them to stop but all their efforts went in vain.

The group of vigilante was led by the former VDC chairman Dev Chandra Yadav, who gathered hundreds of armed people, and thrashed the Dalits and put fire on their houses. He had claimed that the Dalits were hurting his son. During the clash over a dozen Dalits have been injured, including children of five years to 30-year-old woman. Few of them were receiving treatment in critical condition.

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