

# **The Next Generation: In the Wake of the Genocide**

A Report on the Impact of the Gujarat Pogrom  
on Children and the Young

by an independent team of citizens  
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This report is a tribute to the children of Gujarat.

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## Introduction

This is a report on the ways in which children and the young have been affected by the carnage unleashed in Gujarat since February 27<sup>th</sup> 2002. It also addresses the systematic build up to the genocide, as well as the possible long term outcome of the cumulative impact . An autonomous citizens' team of three women from Calcutta carried out this assessment from May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 11<sup>th</sup> 2002, across both urban and rural areas of Gujarat.

Two unprecedented aspects of the atrocities perpetuated during the Gujarat carnage have been the gruesome targeting of women and the fact that children too have been attacked brutally as never before in the history of India. They too have been subject to rape, mutilation, murder and burning<sup>1</sup>, and to witnessing the same being done unto their family members, friends and neighbours. Minority children and youth have also been arrested on a large scale, and tortured in custody, right across Gujarat in the aftermath of the Godhra train incident. In addition to this there have been widespread problems regarding the ideological nature of text books and test papers, examinations and re-examinations. Now the prospects of access to education for large numbers of minority children too seem bleak. While there have been many substantial reports, including those of the PUCL and Citizens' Initiative centering specifically on the targeting of women, there was a critical need for focussed investigation into how children and the young have been affected.

Even as this report is being prepared, many have returned to their homes, some willingly, but most under duress. The remaining camps too will be shut down in the near future and Gujarat will probably return to an apparent state of normalcy. Yet, thousands of children have been scarred for life, and if their trauma, rage, incomprehension, and need for security and education are swept under the carpet and not addressed, such repression will inevitably result in massive eruptions of violence in the coming years. This report has been written, and recommendations made, keeping in mind the specific ways in which these recent events are likely to shape the lives of the next generation of adults and the entire social fabric of Gujarat.

The objective of this study was to assess the immediate and long term impact of

- the trauma the children have been subject to
- the arrests and custodial torture of minority children and youth
- the effect of the continuing violence on the education of students
- the implications of the large scale displacements for them
- children's perceptions of the role played by the state and the political parties, like the Bajrang Dal and the VHP, in the genocide
- the changes in children's perceptions of the other community and the role of both neighbours and "outsiders" from the other community
- the resources available (or lack thereof) for orphans and children of families now headed by women as a result of the carnage
- the role of the state departments, ministers and government in tackling the large scale and devastating impact of this violence on children's lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Often with petrol poured down their throats so that they burn faster.

This team visited 10 camps in both urban and rural areas. Nine were minority<sup>2</sup> camps, namely Shah-e-Alam, Daryakhan, Rang Avadoot Juhapara, in Ahmedabad; the Iqbal High School camp (now transferred to Satpul) in Godhra town; Hallol, Kalol and Boru village in the Panchmahal district; and Nutan Nagar and Sureli in Anand district. One was a majority community camp, in Shahpur, Ahmedabad. This approximates the ratio of the minority camps to the majority community camps, with members of the minority community comprising more than 90% of the victims in the state. We spoke primarily with individual children and youngsters in the camps. We also talked to camp organizers, relatives, activists, teachers and lawyers,, the general nature and extent of the violence unleashed in each area, the physical and psychological condition of the children when they first arrived, the games they played in the early days, the problems regarding education, examinations and arrests of students, and alternatives being considered for rehabilitation, specially in the case of communities that were too scared to go back to their original homes. The team sought to record the steps the government had taken (other than providing food, nutrition and immunization services), to ameliorate the condition of children affected by the violence, and accordingly met personnel in government departments, and the education minister Anandibehn Patel. Government threats to shut down the camps continued as did the violence and the curfews, throughout the period that this team conducted the interviews.

There were times when we could not bear to continue our conversations with children. Some were tiny adults who seemed to have learnt the importance of narrating to the world the terrible horrors they had witnessed. They would talk to us stoically, then suddenly bury head in arm, when it came to the rape of a mother or an aunt. Others would break down howling when reminded of a beloved cat that had been brained by a hostile neighbour or a buffalo that had disappeared. Every minority camp also had at least one or two who sat with head drooping into neck after giving us his/her name and that of the only surviving parent or grandparent. We did not get the testimonies of these children directly from them – at such times we turned to a volunteer with whom the child had shared his/her experiences, or an adult who had been with the child through the horrors. In such circumstances coming across a furious child, or a child with fear in her eyes, was a relief. There have been more than 50,000<sup>3</sup> affected children in camps alone in Gujarat since February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

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<sup>2</sup> In this report this term refers to the single largest minority community in India.

<sup>3</sup> The official estimate, procured from the office of the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service in Gandhinagar) states that as of 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2002, there were 1,11,167 people living in camps across the state, of whom 42,103 were children, 20,005 girls and 22,097 boys. The unofficial estimate of the total population in the camps was approximately two lakhs. In each camp approximately one third of the members are under 18 years of age.

## Experiences of Carnage

*In Gujarat hundreds of children now look at you with blank eyes and “delightful” smiles frozen on their faces. The only time they express themselves is in the dread of night when they wake up screaming in terror. The violence they have experienced is unspeakable, ruthless the cruelty. What meaning will they find in the savage present that we have bequeathed to them - if they regain the capacity to do so – and how will they in turn shape it?*

### ENDURING TRAUMA – WITNESSING RAPES, MURDERS, BURNING

In every minority camp the organizers and parents told us that when the children first arrived, they were severely traumatized; they could not sleep – and if they did, then they woke up howling with fear in the middle of the night. Many had gone completely silent, others would cry quietly through the day, while some would play, re-enacting amongst themselves the attacks and murders, the violence and arson, that they had survived. While some children interacted with us normally, most in each camp still showed signs of acute depression and trauma.

In Shahpur, the majority camp, the children were initially a bit wary, then they relaxed in warm and friendly conversation, specially after the organizers left us alone with them. One striking factor about the majority camps is that, unlike the minority camps, these are populated only by the poorest sections of the community<sup>4</sup>. Most of the people in these camps left their homes in a fear exodus, either as the fires in the neighbouring minority areas which had been set ablaze threatened to destroy their homes, or in anticipation of retaliatory attacks. As a result, some of the children in the Shahpur camp had actually seen their homes burnt, or even looted “by sword wielding men”, but were confused about the identity of these men. Some said they were the same who attacked their neighbours of the other community, others said they were *miyas*. None of the children had witnessed a single murder, rape or burning of any human being. This team did not see any such evidence of trauma in these children: however, their narratives, like those of minority children, were rife with confusion about the role played by neighbours of the other community, and questions of trust and hostility. Hence we include their testimonies in the appendix, in “Perceptions of the young regarding the “other” community/neighbours”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> In some of the better off sections neighbouring the minority community areas, the former were warned to evacuate before the latter were set on fire.

<sup>5</sup> This team did not come across any information regarding arrests or any police action against children of the majority community, or of any significant ways in which their education had been affected either by actions of the political parties or the state (the focus of the next two sections of this report). Hence there is nothing to report on them in the next two sections either.

### **Saddam Hussain: 8 yrs., from Ranadikpur village, Panchmahals district.**

As we talked to various other people, Saddam sat with us, a cheerful grin on his face. It took us time to realize that this grin never left his face – it was the wall he had set up between himself and the world. The patches of eczema on his arms betrayed the traumatized state of his mind. Latifabehn, one of the camp organizers, told us: “He just sits there silently; he talks if you feed him.” His brothers, Mohsin (12 years) and Yakub (10 years), flanking him protectively, one on either side, maintained a stoical silence right through. Latifabehn gave Saddam a thick nutrition tablet to chew on, and he started to talk:



“I used to live with my mother Amina Bibi and these two brothers. When the *plâ* arrived in our village, my brothers were not there. My mother had 60 rupees with her. When the tola of 30-40 men attacked us, she stuffed the 60 rupees into my hand and pushed me into a run. I ran. But then I saw the men get hold of the women and I could not make myself run any more..... I hid myself.....(his eyes started to wander into space)...then.....then they stripped my mother naked.....” As he uttered “*usko nanga kar diya*”, his grin broadened, then he clamped his eyes shut and buried his face in his arm. It was painful to see this child lift his head again, very soon, and try

to continue. We could not bear to hear him narrate the rest himself and stopped him.

Latifabehn later told us what she had heard from him. “He saw the brutal rape of his mother. His neighbour Bilkees<sup>6</sup> and her sister were also there with Amina. They managed to run away, only to be gang raped 3 days later by another tola. He saw his mother raped successively by 3-4 men, then he saw them chop off her head and hack her body with sickle and *talwars* (swords).....After the tola left Saddam found only dead bodies around him He started to run in a frenzy. When he got tired, he would stop, buy himself some food from the 60 rupees his mother had given him, then start walking again. Ultimately he reached a police station. The police located his *mama* (maternal uncle) in Baria and handed Saddam over to him. His mama brought him to the camp where he met up with

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<sup>6</sup> Latifa said Bilkees managed to survive only because she passed out and was mistaken to be dead. When she regained consciousness, she found herself surrounded by the dead and mangled bodies of her 3 yr. old daughter, her sister, and her sister’s two day old child who had been delivered while they were on the run. The bodies were also weighed down with heavy stones. Bilkees too had found her way to this camp. She was in the next room as we talked to Saddam. Her testimony has been recorded in *The Survivors Speak*.

his two brothers. Now all three say they do not want to go anywhere else. Not “home” to Randikpur – where the 60-70 Muslim houses have all been burnt – and not to Baria with their *mama* either.”

Regarding the boys future, Latifa said firmly, “We will not force them to go where they do not want to go. They are too scared. They will stay right here with us. They can then go to the madrasah, they will be educated there and can live in the *yateemkhana* (orphanage) of the madrasah.”

“Saddam regularly weeps in his sleep. ‘I will kill them if I see them.....I was scared then, but I recognized them, they are from the nearby villages....I remember their faces.’ he says” ended Latifa.

**Source: Saddam Hussein and organizer Latifabehn, in the Iqbal Primary School camp, Godhra city. May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

### **Juned Salim Sheikh: 7 yrs. resident of Anjanwa village, Panchmahals district.**

We first met Juned, another orphan, with Saddam in the Iqbal High School camp. He sat with us with a vacant wide-eyed look, neck bent at an angle, head falling into chest, like he had lost all interest in holding it up. Nothing interested him – food, crayons and drawing sheets, conversation – he remained unresponsive with just this numbness in his eyes. The only time they flickered was when we asked him if he had anybody of his own in this camp, and he whispered, “*Dadaji*” (grandfather).

We met Abdul Rahim Ahmed, his *dadaji*, very briefly that day. *Dadaji* just said “*Uska dimag ab theek nahin hai* – Something is wrong with his mind now.....3-4 whole day he stayed hungry, kept fleeing from one place to another.....the horrors he witnessed, houses looted and burnt, 13 people killed, much more.....all this has affected his mind. Now the child asks after the cows and buffaloes, and says, ‘Is this our home’?”

Juned’s eyes haunted us through the night. Instead of setting straight out for Kalol in the morning we decided to go back to his *dadaji* first. At Iqbal High School we were told that the group from Anjanwa had left – they had been shifted to Satpul where the camp was relocating. Fortunately Latifa arrived early – she had left the housework to her daughter so she could come and meet us before we left. She showed us the way to Satpul where we found Juned and *dadaji*, Juned’s *dadi* (grandmother) Amina, their daughter Rabia, and daughter’s young son-in-law Faroukh.

Juned sat curled listlessly in *dadaji*’s lap as the latter spoke:

“Juned’s father Salim and mother Afsana had died of TB and sickness. Juned lived with us. One of his uncles, my son was killed in the attacks. His wife and children are here. They also slashed Juned’s *kaki* (paternal aunt), Maqsooda’s neck with a sword, stoned her, and killed her four year and two year old children. Then they threw them all into the well. We all used to live together.....our houses and everything we had was burnt.” At



this point Juned stirred. Dadaji lifted him onto the ground and asked him to go away to the other children.

He continued, "Three days later Maqsooda was recovered from the well.....we found her still alive.....her children were dead. Juned witnessed all this with us, with his dadi and me.....his mind did not function like this earlier....now he asks, 'Is this our home?' He is mind is boggled now, earlier he used to be fine. Now he wakes up in his sleep and starts running away, he shouts, 'Run! Run!'"

Then Juned's grandmother spoke up, "My daughter Rabia's daughter-in-law, Zubeida was also killed and thrown into the well. Zubeida's 2 yr. old son Adnan was killed too." She was unwilling to comment on exactly what happened to the women in her family. Maqsooda had earlier started telling her story in the camp. She had now been sent away from the camp, to be with her husband Hanif who is elsewhere, recovering from T.B.

At this point, Rabia, who had been listening quietly, burst out, "When the tolas came, we started running for our lives. I got separated from my son Farooq and his family. Then I ran into an adivasi who asked me to remove my clothes, 'to become one with him', to take on his religion.....I pretended to agree to his demand, but asked him to give me water and clothes first.....then I managed to run away into the jungle. The next day I went to the police, took them to the well, and got the bodies pulled out of the well, got their names written.

Two year old Adnan's body was recovered with its legs cut off. When I went to lift it, the police beat me with a stick, asking me to stay away from it. [At this point Rabia voice breaks she buris her face in her hands, then pulls herself together and continued] When my daughter-in-law Zubeida's body was recovered, it was hacked into two from the abdomen down....others had arms cut off ....the police did not let me see the other bodies after that.....little Adnan's legs had been cut off....." She broke down sobbing hysterically.

While dadaji and Rabia were talking to one of us, another member of our team noticed a youth of around 22 years sitting close by with a numb look on his face. He did not answer when asked his name. Upon a repeated query; his lips moved a little but he failed to speak. Then a voice answered "I am Mohammed, he is my son Farooq. Farooq is also Juned's aunt's son."

Mohammed continued: A few days back we had celebrated Id with full vigour. Some relatives were also staying at our place. It was around 2.30 in the afternoon when Farooq saw a huge mob coming to attack us with sharp weapons in hand. We all started to run. Unluckily my family was gheraoed by the attackers. They started forcing us to utter "Jai Sia Ram". And then they plunged swords into the bodies of 5 members of our family. Their deadbodies were mauled thrown into the nearby well.

They killed Juned's aunt and her two children with swords and threw their bodies into the well. Farooq was escaping along with his wife Zubeda and son Adnan. At first they hit Farooq and snatched Adnan from his lap....."

Farooq finally opened his mouth “They snatched Adnan from me and even pulled Zubeida away. I hid myself behind the bush. From there I saw Zubeida being stripped and raped by the Bajrang Dal people. After that they killed her, cut her into two halves and threw the pieces into the well.” Tears streamed down his face momentarily, “they even killed my one and half year old Adnan and threw him into the well. Then they burnt our house.” As we left, all were crying bitterly to themselves except Farooq. One of us held his hands firmly and could feel that they were trembling – a sudden grim look in his eyes said these were the hands which had failed to save his wife, to protect little Adnan.



Dadaji said quietly, “Juned had seen all this happen.....he saw what they did to Zubeida and Adnan too....after they had thrown everybody into the well and left, Juned and I went and just sat looking into the well for hours.....we could not move.....”

Juned’s blank eyes had led us to these layers within layers of terror, grief and suppressed fury.

*Source: Juned’s grandfather Abdul Rahim Ahmed, grandmother Amina, their daughter Rabia Bano, Rabia’s husband Mohammed, and their 22 yr. old son Farooq, in the Satpul camp, Godhra city. Farooq is a helper in the construction of buildings. At other times he works in the field. According to him there were many outsiders amongst the attackers. He had lodged a F.I.R. with Santrampur Police Station. May 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002.*

**Mustafa Khan: 10 yrs, residents of Limkheda, Panchmahal.**

We met Mustafa and his brother Siraj (7), now orphaned, in the Halol camp. Their sister Rehana and brother in law Kader had also arrived, to take the boys home with them. Mustafa reminded us somewhat of Saddam – he too had a smile that ever left his face as he narrated all their gruesome experiences:

“Siraj and I used to live with our mother. Both our elder sisters are married, and both live in Pandu . On 28th February, 20 of us left Limkheda for Derol by train at 5 P.M.. We were going to a mela in Pandu. At 11 A.M. the next day we reached Derol and started walking towards Pandu. On our way we saw a huge mob coming on scooters , in tempos and tractors; they were around 1000-1500. They were carrying sharp weapons and wearing brown shorts and half sleeve shirts. All of a sudden they surrounded us. We were a little ahead of the elders. Smelling danger we all started to run. Siraj, Mohsin, Sikander, Farzaana, Ayub and I hid behind a bush by the Narmada canal. I had tried to get Nurjahan to run too, but she cried out for the mother. They stoned her foot, she fell, they caught her by the braids and dragged her away. We ran and hid behind a bush. From there we saw that the attackers had caught hold of my mother Khatuna bibi, my cousin Akbar Khan, his pregnant wife Rehana bibi, his brother Yusuf Khan (15), sister Zebun bibi, and other cousins, Aksana bibi, Zarif Khan, Sitara bibi (18), Imran Khan (15), and Nurjahan bibi (16).



The mob caught hold of them, stripped every man woman and child, and started beating them mercilessly. They raped all the women and beat up the men. They were being forced to say “Jai sia Ram”, but when they refused and started to run, they were caught and cut up with *dharias* and *talwars*. When they tried to rape my mother , one of my brothers tried to save her. He was instantly killed with a sword. Siraj shouted in fear and I shut his mouth. A thorn pricked Firmana and she was crying out of pain. I took the thorn out and asked her not to cry. Then one by one they killed all ten members of our family, cut them up and burnt them near the canal after noon. We were like dead bodies hiding in the *shamsan* (crematorium). After sunset, I told my cousins we would have to fight for life.

We started walking and finally reached a field. My little cousins started crying out of hunger and fatigue. Bhaila kaka’s wife heard them and thought it was the cry of ghosts. Then Bharila uncle came out with a torch and spotted us. They took us home, bathed us and fed us. *They are adivasis* Mustafa said. They kept us in their home for a week, sending us out everyday to tend to their cows and other animals, so that we would not be discovered. After a week , when it was not safe for us to stay there anymore, Bhaila kaka took 3 of us on his bike and dropped us at the dargah near my sister’s house. The police was then informed and the other three were escorted to Pandu later.

Siraj still wakes up screaming at night “*Mat maaro meri ammi ko!*” (Do not kill my mother). He was in her lap last – she made him run.” Mustafa smiles.

**Source: Mustafa, in the Halol camp, Panchmahal (Godhra) district. 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2002.**

**Javed Hussain : 12 yrs, resident of Naroda Patia, Ahmedabad.**

At present Javed lives in *Shah-e-Alam* Camp. His home was in Naroda Patia. Around 8000 shanties have been burnt in this area; 150 have been killed; Javed has lost his parents and sister. He recollects his memory of the fearful day:

“ I was a conductor of one large auto rickshaw. My father was a tailor but, his eyes had become weak, so he had been out of job for a long time. My mother used to work in a mill which manufactured threads. My elder sister had studied till standard five and her marriage was also fixed. I also went to school till class five but poverty forced me to start working. I used to earn around Rs 1500. My mother earned the same or a little bit more. With that we somehow managed to survive. On 28<sup>th</sup> February around 9.30 am we were in our house. Suddenly there was a loud disturbance. We saw a huge stream of people with saffron cloth tied around their head and weapons in their hands shouting “ Jai Sia Ram” and attacking our *masjid* (mosque). The name of our *masjid* is Nurani. Petrified, we all started to run in all possible directions. The Hindus were crying that we Muslims were responsible for the Godhra incident ; so they would wipe out the entire race. They started burning all our houses. They killed as many they could get hold of, with sword and *trishul* (trident); after that they poured petrol or kerosene and burnt all the bodies. My father, almost blind could not escape. At first they started throwing stones at him and then slashed his head off with a sword; they killed my mother and sister in the same manner. I was also hit with stones but I jumped behind a bush and then fell unconscious. When I gained consciousness I could see our house ablaze; the attackers had looted all our belongings. The women had been stripped and mercilessly raped. I did not utter a word. They were killing us and were forcing us to utter “ Jai Sia Ram” with them. One of our neighbours was stripped and gangraped; then they inserted an iron rod in her genital....; I became unconscious again. The attackers were mostly local people but there were also outsiders. There were no women in the Tolas (of the Bajrang Dal). When I got back my to senses I walked to a nearby Seth’s house. He sent me to a hospital. I have lost my family; it is because of the Seth ( a rich merchant) that I am still alive.”



One of Javed's cousins from Bangalore had come to meet him and would have liked to take Javed back with him. But Javed said " I am not leaving this place ; I will work hard and make my parents feel proud of me even if they are no more." Then his face too gets lost among several other thousand faces.

*Source: Javed Hussain, in the Shah-e-Alam camp in Ahmedabad. 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> May 2002.*

**Reshma: 7 yrs. Resident of Naroda Patia, Ahmedabad.**

We met this seven year old girl in Shah-e-Alam Camp. Her beautiful eyes seemed to question everybody. We felt unnerved in her gaze. But she gladly put her hand into one of ours and led the way to her mother. She has no father. Two days ago they had celebrated Id with her grandmother; her grandmother's sister, and one aunt.

" I was merrymaking with my visitors; when on 28<sup>th</sup> morning our entire area was attacked with people swaying in matadors, scooters, truck and even private cars. They were about 20/25 thousands. Suddenly they attacked us ; we are residents of Naroda Patia. First they started beating the young people with various types of weapons. They also killed them brutally. We started running on our own. I hid myself behind a bush.... My mother too was running, and no sooner had she stopped for breath ....." Reshma continues, " After killing my uncles their eyes fell on us. They started pulling my sister. My grandmother begged for their mercy, asked them to spare my sister as her marriage had been fixed. They killed my grandmother with a sword. Then they asked her sister to say "Jai Sia Ram". She refused. Many policemen were standing watching the crime. We were pleading with them to give us protection but they were indifferent to all our cries and tortures. On the contrary they started shooting at us. To save myself I hid behind a bush. From there I noticed that they had pulled my sister towards them and were doing something forcefully on her... I wanted to cry for help; someone closed my mouth. Then I watched that them burn my sister along with my grandmother and her sister."

Reshma showed us a photograph of her sister Fatema. She had beautiful expressive eyes that seemed to be dreaming of a new life ahead. I looked back at Reshma. Her eyes were dry and she was staring at the picture. I gently put my hand on her head ; she kept murmuring " I will never go back to my house; my sister is sleeping there... I will go some where else with my mother.... I will work hard and study and will look after my mother" ..... her eyes sank into oblivion again.

*Source: Reshma, in the Shah-e-Alam camp, Ahmedabad. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2002.*

**Yasmina Banu: 14 yrs, resident of Boru Villaga, Panchmahal district.**

Yasmin is a resident of a small village named Boru situated in Panchmahal district (Kalol Sub-division). The village comprises 400 Hindu families and 176 Muslim families. Tahira Bibi, who we later realized was Yasmin's mother, came to talk to us:

"On 28 February there was a sudden attack in our peaceful village. Panchayat Pradhan, Rajesh Kumar came forward to pacify the mob. But the attackers threatened him with his

life if he tried to protect the Muslims. Our Pradhan gave up hope....On the day they came again, we ran and hid ourselves in the fields in fear.... the mob started looting our houses and burning them. One neighbour was unlucky enough to come back from the field. He was burnt alive. For three days we were hiding in the field. Whenever the children cried out in hunger, we parents stifled their cries....” Tahera Bibi broke down.

Beneath a big tree, next to the charred ruins of a house, was a little girl staring at us in stupefied silence. We went up to her and asked her for her name. She stared back at us blankly. In the mean time her mother came forward with a few more people. Tahera Bibi introduced her daughter Yasmina Banu.

“My daughter is around 14 years old. In childhood she had an attack of polio, after which she began to behave a little differently from others of her age. But she could still move around slowly and speak. She would hobble around the village on her own and chat with our neighbours. On the day of the attack when we were running to save our lives, I noticed, in the midst of our terror, that she had suddenly lost the ability to walk and talk. Her face had lost its colour. With the help of her father and my other daughter we somehow managed to carry Yasmina into the field. When we returned to our place three days later, we saw our house in ruins. They had looted all our belongings and then burned down our house We had two buffaloes too, my husband used to sell milk....” At the mention of the buffaloes Yasmina let out a heart-rending cry. “She keeps asking for the buffaloes and crying for them, they were her friends – she loved them dearly.” said Tahera, as she recollected how the two buffaloes were killed. Yasmina let out another cry – this time a howl so unbearable that we almost ran away. The child now spends most of her time sitting under that tree, paralysed left side down.



*Source: Tahira Bibi and Yasmina Banu, in Boru Village, Panchmahal (Godhra) district. May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002.*

## **THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE**

Dr. Shukla, a senior officer in the Health Department stated that this department had extended Trauma Counselling to 356 affected children (190 boys and 166 girls), of whom 10 had been referred to experts for further treatment. He also gave us the information that primary education facilities had been set up for 3145 children in 11 camps. We did not get specific information about the camps or areas covered, plans to reach out to other camps, or for extending these services to affected children on a long term basis.

Mandakini Dave, of the Gujarat Stree Kedouni Mandal, whom we met in Shah-e- Alam camp also said that a team of 40 trained counsellors had been organized by the commissioner of the Mahila Bal Vikas Vibhag (Women and Child Development Department), to be posted in six minority camps in Ahmedabad. Mandakini, who is a member of this team, said that they had just started work in May and were focussing mainly on women, to help alleviate their trauma, and “also because it was the mothers who had to look after the children.”

While it is a positive sign that such work has finally started, it is clearly inadequate - there is a dire need for more such teams to cover other camps, and focus directly on children too in addition to working with women.

## **A PEDIATRICIAN'S EXPERIENCE**

### **Dr. Bharat Vakharia, UNICEF consultant, Ahmedabad.**

Dr. Vakharia works with children of both communities in the Daryapur and Shahpur areas of Ahmedabad. He has also treated some children and new-born babies from the camps, but has not worked directly in the camps. He spoke cautiously but clearly about his experiences with the minority community in the last two months of violence, and his observations relating to the impact of growing tension, across the last year, on children's physical and mental health.

“People of the Mohammedan community here live hand to mouth, there are very few Muslim doctors – only 1-2%, so they don't have a choice but to go to Hindu doctors. A few sensitive cases have come to me recently.

A very small child was brought to me – just 10 months old – and had to be admitted into a nursing home. His Muslim parents were terrified – they had a Hindu couple admit him, they did not come to the nursing home to see their child themselves.

There was also this case of a caesarian section in a Muslim area. The baby needed to be admitted into an ICU nursery immediately – it had fluids in the chest – and there are only two in Ahmedabad, both in Hindu areas. This was the first male child after 2 female children. At one point I had 8 Muslims in the consulting room demanding that the child be treated in this area, as there was no security for them in the Hindu areas. It took hard talk to convince them, ultimately the baby was taken to the clinic recommended by me. It survived and is OK now. It was difficult for me to help them overcome their fear – now they have brought four more children to me.

The change that adolescents go through is not handled well by society – and the impact of the events in Gujarat from the earthquake onwards, September 11<sup>th</sup>, and then the riots have made the situation worse. *I have had children from classes 10 & 11 coming to me wanting to die.* They come with psychosomatic symptoms, breathlessness, panting, being unable to sleep, they don't find anything interesting, not even T.V. serials. They are depressives. I have to put them on anti-depressants such as anxiolytics – normally for adults – because anxiety levels and thought processes have to be taken care of....otherwise their performance in the exams would be affected. I also counsel them.

*Before the earthquake I would get 10-12 cases a year..... the number has multiplied 3 times. After these riots it will multiply further, but people are too scared to move out as yet – they still need time to start coming.....I apprehend that they will start coming in one or two months after things settle down.....In the last two months I have already had at least 8-10 such cases.....yes, this makes an average of approximately 100-120 cases a year already.*

I feel all schools also require to tackle this issue one a week or so through open talks, including parents, to take care of the children's psyche.

I'm also treating this extreme case of a student subject to such violence by his teacher in a school, that he has suffered a complete loss of speech for the last 6-8 months....

For traumatized children, attempts have to be made to make their environment as normal as possible – right now whether schools teach or not is not the point, being in a collective is important for children.....it is therapy.

Patients with polyurea pass more urine more often – in children this is stress related. I have also received some such cases recently. Now it is also the viral infection season.....infantile hepatitis, chicken pox, measles...these vaccines are costly and take 3-6 wks to become effective. The vaccine for infantile hepatitis costs Rs. 1000, for chicken pox too it is Rs. 1000. How will the children in camps be safeguarded? Hygiene is such a problem<sup>7</sup> - and will segregation be possible?

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Shah-e-Alam camp has only 22 toilets for 12,000 people; Mohsin in the Juhapara camp told us he felt awful because they could bathe here only once in three days, etc.



The situation is also becoming difficult for doctors.....recently I was also approached...I was told to boycott all Muslims, not to treat their children.....I said I would rather stop practicing than refuse to treat children on grounds of their religion. I have been able to continue because these people who came to me with these leaflets<sup>8</sup> were my patients' parents, but these pressures are increasing - I do not know what will happen in the future.

## **GIRLS RAPED AND BURNT**

Of the over 200<sup>9</sup> minority women raped in the carnage a large number were young girls. Eye-witness testimonies regarding five such girls who were raped and then burnt or murdered brutally, are excerpted from the Citizen's Initiative report on women, *The Survivors Speak*, in the appendix to this report. This team had access to most of these witnesses, but did not wish to make them relive the trauma of narrating their accounts afresh as we already had knowledge of them being on record. We met another such witness, who had rejoined her family in the Shah-e-Alam camp after prolonged treatment for severe burns, but her trauma was still writ large in her eyes, so we did not attempt to talk to her directly.

**Shahjahan Kabir Ali: 17 years, resident of Naroda Patiya.**



Shahjahan was burnt by a tola on 28<sup>th</sup> February in Naroda Patiya. She also saw 15 men pouncing on her sister, gang raping her and then setting her on fire.

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<sup>8</sup> Circular letter in Gujarati distributed in the streets of Ahmedabad by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, calling for a complete economic and social boycott of all Muslims.

<sup>9</sup> *Communalism Combat* Genocide Issue, May 2002

***Source: Women from Shahjehan's neighbourhood, now with her in Shah-e-Alam camp, Ahmedabad. May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002.***

In relation to the girls who were raped and survived, one of the critical problems facing the minority community and the activists is that of disclosing the actual numbers thus affected in specific neighbourhoods. One such activist voiced to us her deep regret about having disclosed such information in the initial days of relief work, for if the word spread, or reached the media, the young women of the entire neighbourhood would be stigmatized. "I keep thinking of Kupwara (Kashmir) now," she said, "for years nobody would marry a young woman from that village....."

In the "Ladies Medical Section" of a minority camp we met Mumtaz Bano who had been attending to women since the first truckloads of victims started coming to the camp, and Nurjahan Bano who joined her three days later, and is now in charge of this section. There was obvious disagreement between them regarding the number of young girls brought to the camp who had been raped and whether some of the girls Mumtaz was referring to (whom she had tended to on the first day) had been raped or not. Mumtaz's narrative was sharply contradicted by Nurjahan every time she mentioned numbers, or indicated that one of the girls and one woman whom we had met in the camp had been raped.

#### **Mumtaz Bano, "Ladies' Medical Section" of a minority camp.**

"I was here next door when the first van arrived in the middle of the night. Then four more trucks came, with large numbers of women, burnt naked, with stumps of wood forced up their vaginas.....some had been stripped, others had to tear their clothes off to save their bodies because they were drenched in acid. We threw chunnis over them then woke up the neighbourhood for food, opened up this place to set up the camp.

Another woman, who also lives next door came and we sent about 20 of them to the hospital the first night. 2-3 died.....one was only 11 years old.....they had raped her too, then burnt her....she died upon reaching the hospital.....one of them is still there with severe burn injuries.... ..Then we got the worst off in here. I used to work as an ayah in a nursing home, I learnt through seeing .....there were 13 girls among the women the first night.....they were all bleeding so profusely.....we scavenged for paper, that was all we could find, and stuffed them with it to hold the blood....."

Mumtaz paused, braced herself, and continued, "Some of them were in terrible agony, they had pieces of wood inside them, you know like those stumps in cricket.....remove mine first, please remove mine.....they kept screaming in pain.

Most of the girls have been sent to relatives now. Some are still here. A women's group began to visit us soon after the camp started.....those women are very good. They called a

psychiatrist to give medication, and a gynaecologist. They also organized for a woman doctor to come to the camp twice a day.

The girls are traumatized even now....they jump at the drop of the slightest object. They are very disturbed....they go through long spells of silence....they don't talk....and at night they see those same scenes again.....I too have fallen sick.....I stopped eating, I had to be put on the drip for two days.....I can't bear it."

***Source: Mumtaz Bano, minority camp, Gujarat. May 2002***

Many of the older girls who had survived were now being sheltered away from the camps in the homes of relatives or friends nearby. We were told that many who had "probably" been raped were also amongst them. The question of justice is the most confounded one for them. They are now trapped between the crying need for justice and the imperative to cover up the past in the interests of social acceptance in the future. The painful demands of disclosure, and the accompanying taboo and stigma that it entails, specially for these unmarried girls, are powerful intimidating factors. The injustice done unto them remains shrouded in silence.



## Role of the State and Political Parties: Through the Prism of the Young

### **ARRESTS OF MINORS - ABUSE UNDER PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ORDINANCE (POTO)**

Eight boys, aged sixteen and under, were picked up in the swooping midnight arrests of over a hundred members of the minority community on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> February in Godhra. Of the 62 booked under POTO by the Government Railway Police (GRP) for the February 27<sup>th</sup> attack on the Sabarmati Express, seven were minors under sixteen.<sup>10</sup> According to lawyer Faroukh Kharadi, five of the eight had been released on bail in April. Yet all of them still face charges of murder, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, arson, rioting etc. Irfan is a boy who looks much younger than his years, and he narrated his story to us in a low pitched monotone, with eyes devoid of all emotion..



**Irfan Bilal Badam: 16 yrs, resident of Polan Bazar, Godhra. 6<sup>th</sup> May.**

“I was sleeping in my house on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February when the police came, late at night (4.A.M. 28<sup>th</sup> morning). My mother got up. They broke down the door, stormed in, found me and beat me up. They beat me very badly. They dragged me outside where about 15 policemen beat me up again, with sticks. Then they took me to the police lock up and kept me there for eight days. They gave me food only once a day. If I asked for more, I got a beating. Then they took me to Sabarmati Jail and kept me there for 27 days, and then another 10 days in the Juvenile Remand Home. I missed my exams as they had kept me under arrest.”

*Source: Irfan Bilal Badam, on the terrace of the Iqbal Primary School camp, Godhra.*

### **Advocate Yusufbhai Charkha, interviewed in his office in Godhra. May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

Advocate Charkha, who is handling Irfan’s case and that of other minors accused, listed the following aspects of the case for us:

- Initially the boys were booked under POTO – but the government consequently withdrew this charge when the POTA came into force.
- Parents were not informed about the arrests of their children within 24 hours, as required by the law

<sup>10</sup> For other details see “Modi’s “minor” POTO abuse: 7 boys booked”, The Indian Express, Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup>, in the appendix.

- On 28<sup>th</sup> February these children were presented in the Railway Judicial Magistrate's Court, as if they were majors, and under case no. CR 9/2002, were charged with murder, rioting, arson etc.
- Despite appeals regarding their status as minors, the government remanded them into custody for 15 days – this is illegal; under the Juvenile Justice Act minors have to be sent to a Juvenile Home.
- They were then transferred to the city of Godhra court, case no Godhra City 66/2002, and kept in remand for 13 more days – this is also illegal
- The children had all been severely tortured in police custody.
- Finally they were transferred to the Juvenile Court only at the end of March and five were released on bail in April.

**Mr. M.M. Popat, Chairman of the Juvenile Justice Board, Godhra. May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

This team met Mr. Popat in his chamber in the court. He gave us the names of the officers who had initially filed these cases – Rly. I.O. Mr. K.C. Bawa, Dy. SP, and Police Inspector Godhra Town, Mr. Kandar Trivedi. He also provided us with the details of all the above cases from his record, but refused to comment on what had happened to the children between the time they had been arrested after the midnight of 27<sup>th</sup> February and the time their cases were transferred to the Juvenile Court, between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> April. He did agree that in general producing minors in the Railway or City courts was a violation of the law, as it was to keep them in custody in lock ups.

In response to a question regarding provisions for dealing sensitively with the children in the juvenile court, he stated that henceforth the Board would go by different procedures of the New Juvenile Justice Act 56 of 2000. Under this,

- no trial would be required
- an inquiry would be conducted by the chairman and two members of the board
- and it would be completed within 40 days.

To our counter question of how, if there were to be no trial, would the children's lawyers fight the cases in their defense, he backtracked and contradicted himself: "No, no, there is not much difference between a trial and an inquiry."

When asked for the names of his two colleagues on the Juvenile Justice Board, he claimed not to remember them.

**ARRESTS AND TORTURE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**Mohammed Hafiz, 17 yrs., B.A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Yr student of the S.V. Arts and Commerce College, Resident of Kalupura. May 5<sup>th</sup> 2002**

Shortly after listening to Afroz's narrative, this team met her sister Arifa, and yet another dimension of the trauma that has been unleashed on students was revealed to us. She told us that her sister, overcome by her own outburst and anxiety for her son, had no energy left to talk about any more of her sadness. But they considered it important to narrate what had happened to their brother too. Hence she, Arifa took upon herself the task of doing so - in a voice high strung and breaking with emotion.

"My brother was staying with our grandmother in Teen Darwaze, Patwaseri, and was studying in her house when they broke down the doors and came up the stairs to arrest him after the Godhra incident. He was beaten mercilessly upstairs, then dragged downstairs and beaten up further, outside the house too, by about 60 policemen in *chaddis* (or were they policemen?), till he finally collapsed. They also beat up female relatives and other women present. My brother was then taken to the Karanj Police Station, admitted for a day into Vadilal Hospital and then returned to Karanj Police Station again. When he was being transferred to the Central Jail with approximately 120 other young men who had been arrested like him, their van was attacked by a tola of thousands at Sabarmati.....11 of these young men, including my brother, have still not been released. They are "making" a case against him. He had done absolutely nothing to deserve this. He was just studying in a room in my grandmother's house - what reason did they have to arrest him?"

He has come home on parole now for 15 days for his B.A, 3<sup>d</sup> year exams, he will have to return to jail on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. He was not allowed any books in jail to study for his exams - he has to prepare the best he can in these few days. But my brother says it is better to die than live a life like this. He has no goal left in life, he says ultimately he has to end up in jail."

*Source: Arifa Abdul Hamid Kathiara, sister, volunteer in Rang Avadoot camp Juhapura.*

## **HOW THE YOUNG PERCEIVE THE POLITICAL PARTIES, POLICE, GOVERNMENT AND THE GUJARATI SAMACHAR.**

**Zeenat, 13, from Naroda Road, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

Zeenat was helping the volunteers with the younger children in the camp when we met her. She welcomed us in fluent English, and describing the interaction of the younger children when they first arrived, she said:

"All their games were war games. They would shoot, fight, kill, throw bombs at each other and team up saying, "You're Hindu, we're Muslims, you're the Bajrang Dal/VHP, we are Muslims. You wear saffron, I'll wear green.....that is what they had seen and heard. They now refer to Hindus as the Bajrang Dal or the VHP. Now we have got them out of those games into more peaceful activities."

*Source: Zeenat, in the Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura*

**Mohsin, Class 7, resident of housing society near Rang Avadoot Camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad.**

Mohsin had come from the neighbourhood to play with his cousins in the camp. He said:

“You can see the “border” from our windows.....there is a wall between our Juhapara and the Hindu Jivaraj area. The Bajrang Dal, with *talwars* and *kesri* (saffron) patties came from there and cut up Muslims here. The police too stood on that side of the border and tear gassed and fired shots into this side.....”

***Mohsin, with his cousins in the Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002.***

**Ina: 9 yrs., Naroda Road, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

“When the tola came we all started running. Everybody got separated. The tola burnt our house, it destroyed the *masjid* nearby. And the police was with the tola, it also arrested many of our boys and took them away. The police shot down one of the boys in the next house – he died. I will never go back there. They will attack us again, they will finish us.”

***Source: Ina, in the Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad.***

**Mohsin Cl.7 , Md. Sk. Mohsin Cl. 8, Farroukh Cl. 7 From housing society nearby, and from Baroda, in the Juhapura camp, Ahmedabad.**

These boys, chatting amongst themselves, turned to us and said vehemently: “The *Gujarati Samachar* writes that Dawood Ibrahim sent us bombs; they also published missile shaped pictures of the bombs.... They all write lies, complete lies, and get us into trouble.....”.

***Source: Mohsin, Md. Sk. Mohsin, Farroukh in the Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002***

**Naseem Banu: 20 years, from Narodapatia, Chamanpura, Ahmedabad.**

Naseem’s house was adjacent to Ehsan Jafri’s. She was in the Daryakhan Camp when this team met her. Initially she was not at all interested in conversation. In fact, she also seemed unhappy when others began to narrate their accounts. She reasoned that nothing could be gained out of conversation. *‘If the government engineers our killing, what could anybody else do? No one can be more powerful than the government’*.

Later, however, she began to open up. “When the assailants encircled Chamanpura, I took cover behind my house....Eventually the rescue party and the Darya Khan Camp vehicles brought us to the camp. I saw what they did to Ehsan Jafri. He folded his hands to plead for his life, they slashed down his hands.” She referred to the popularity of Mr.



Jafri in the locality and said, *“Who will ensure justice when the government is a party to this crime?”*

*Source: Naseem Bano, Daryakhan Camp, Ahmedabad. May 3rd, 2002.*

## The Crackdown on Education

This team's investigations revealed that there has been a systematic crackdown on the education of minority children and youth at all levels, in both private and government schools, in Gujarat. This is a process that was initiated months prior to the carnage and peaked in the period starting February 28<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the more obvious economic, physical and psychological devastation that the largest minority community has been subject to, the denial of education to its children has been the surest way of crippling its chances of its recovery in the future.

The communalization of education in Gujarat is a well known fact now. Teesta Setalvad's detailed analyses of the Gujarat State Board Social Studies Textbooks (SS) highlighted, among others, the following aspects:

- Depiction of ancient Indian culture as Hindu culture (SS, Std.V)
- Muslims, Christians and Parsees categorized as "foreigners" in a section titled "Problems of the Country and their Solutions" (SS, Std. IX)
- Silence on the role of the RSS in the murder of Gandhi (SS, Std VIII)
- A frighteningly uncritical account of Fascism and Nazism (SS, Std X)
- Glorification of Hitler for lending "dignity and prestige to the German government" and "instilling the spirit of adventure in the common people" (SS, Std. X)<sup>11</sup>

As a logical extension of such communal and fascist indoctrination, the examination papers too listed the following questions, even as violence still raged through the riot-torn state:

- The English paper of the Gujarat Higher Secondary Board, in the section on transforming sentences, asked Class XII examinees to remove the "if" from the following sentence: "If you do not like people, kill them."
- The same paper also asked them to join five sentences like these into one: "There are two solutions, one of them is Nazi solution. If you do not like people, kill them, segregate them. The strut up and down. Proclaim that you are the salt of the earth."
- Examination papers of Classes V and VI also listed a question that read "What is the basic difference between *miyans*<sup>12</sup> and Others?"<sup>13</sup>

These questions rocked the parliament in late April in the midst of continued violence in Gujarat. One leader even observed that "such questions could create a psychological fear among students and could result in carnage and destruction."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> From a printout of Teesta Setalvad's analysis, which has been much cited, both by the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Culture in 2000, and by various newspapers across the country since March 2002.

<sup>12</sup> A derogatory term for the largest majority community in India.

<sup>13</sup> The Telegraph, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April and Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> The Telegraph, Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2002.

No action has been taken so far against the Gujarat government. Moreover, its response to the recommendations of the Standing Parliamentary Committee on Textbooks to remedy the distortions of history has been to

- a) send in a letter stating its disagreements with the parliamentary committee's observations
- b) reprint the textbooks in 2002 in complete dismissal of the committee's strictures against these sections.<sup>15</sup>

It was with such knowledge fresh in mind that this team heard anguished testimonies of children and youth, mothers and sisters, teachers and lawyers. They talked of minority children being forced to withdraw from private schools, of the differences in the numbers admitted in municipality schools, and their phasing out in stages in minority areas, and of the pressure to conform to the appearance and dress codes of the majority community in colleges in the build up to February 27<sup>th</sup>. In the direct aftermath of the Godhra train incident they discussed the looting of computers and equipment in the better off institutions, the large scale arrests and torture of school children and college students, and of the problems relating to the examinations. They also voiced their apprehensions about future access to education in light of their current destitution, the major displacements of populations now in camps often in areas remote from their original places of residence, and of the treatment they would receive in schools in their original areas if they could return there. Fear and despair were the sentiments underlying each one of these testimonies that was narrated to us.

## **FORCED WITHDRAWAL OF CHILDREN FROM PRIVATE SCHOOLS: ISSUE OF BASIC SAFETY**

### **Afrozben: Resident of Juhapara, mother of Naved, in class II, Ankur School, Paldi, Ahmedabad.**

Juhapara, on the southern outskirts of Ahmedabad city, and home to 4 lakh members of the minority community in Ahmedabad is also known as "Mini Pakistan" for that reason. Afroz, was a senior volunteers in charge of Rang Avadoot, one of the seven camps in this area, and which sheltered approximately 400 victims, including 62 children, from Naroda Road, Ahmedabad, as well as some from areas as far off as Vadodara. All the children were from middle class families and had been attending private schools. Afroz was giving us the backgrounds and histories of various children around us, when she suddenly burst out with her own narrative: "Where is there safety for our children, I ask you? The Bajrang Dal attacked the schools, broke down sections, beat up the watchman and demanded that the principal hand over lists of minority children in the school. Similar events took place in Little Flower, Don Bosco, Trinity, GLS, all English medium schools. (See "Muslim schoolkids targeted" in The Hindusthan Times, April 6<sup>th</sup> for more details, and regarding other schools too. - Included in appendix .) Two of them have already sent notices to parents asking them to take Transfer Certificates for their children as they could no longer guarantee their safety."\* With tears silently streaming down her cheeks, Afroz continued, "After the riots started, my son's results dropped drastically,

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<sup>15</sup> The Telegraph, Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2002.

we ourselves are so frustrated, how are we to see to our children? When he went to sit for his exams, we'd be pacing up and down outside.....his mother, father, grandfather....all afraid that something may happen....how will I educate my son like this? ..... I'm thinking of leaving Gujarat, *inshallah*, I cannot bear this any more. He is my only child, what if something happens to him?"

Her voice wavered, "And my son loves India, he loves the Indian flag, he keeps seeing the film "Gadar"....He has such a strong Indian identity, we could not bear to tell him that Indians were behind the riots, that the Bajrang Dal Hindus were behind it. He thought that Pakistan was behind the riots and we let him believe that....and he was so angry when he found out we had been lying to him.

Everybody is sitting at home. Those of us who are in government jobs cannot go to work. "*Hamara khuda bhi hamare saath nahin hai – usne bhi chhutti le rakkhi hai. Allah ne itni maar maari hai, wo hi raasta nikalega, insaan toh kuchh nahin kar sakte hain.*" Till three days ago they came in tolas of 10,000 to 20,000 to Ekata Maidan. Now they stand on the terraces in hordes. When I went to distribute foodgrains in Srinathnagar, the Bajrang Dal men stood on terraces, and stripped, they called out abuses, they are all under the leadership of the promoter Anil Bakeri. Whenever I go out of this area he harasses me, they harass me.

Even though I am from Gujarat, I still say I want to leave Gujarat. I'd even leave my large four-bedroom flat in which just the three of us live, and go share a one-bedroom flat with the joint family in the Konkan.

In these camps we have been so busy just keeping people alive that we have had no time to address questions of education. Admissions have to be completed this week – it is very necessary. But who will take these children into schools is the question?

Fellowship programmes for children in boarding schools in other states? How can a mother let her child go away from her after what has happened, who will guarantee her child's safety? Will those who put them in such schools give it to us in writing that our children will be safe, will the schools give it to us in writing? How can we trust that our children will be safe in boarding schools, even in other states?"

Afroz finally broke down, sobbing uncontrollably: "I have never talked about myself like this before... I've always been told not to get emotional, to keep my control....I'm opening up to you for the first time today because I can't bear it any more, I'm so scared for my son...."

When she recovered she asked in a grim voice, "The questions I have for the authorities in this state are: Which are the schools for our kids? Is there safety on the roads? Is there safety in the schools? Will we find our children when we go back to get them at the end of the day? Will the teachers not be callous even if our children can go back to their schools? Will my son's teacher not say 'Why are you back? Smile Iqbal!'

The basic question is : How do we give our children an education?"

*Source: Afrozben, Samarth, organizer of Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapara, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>.*

\* Anandibehn, the education minister denied vehemently that such threats were being issued by anybody to private schools; and that if anybody had received such letters, they should show them to her. She had already issued a directive against such threats, she would issue it again, as well as stop schools from sending such letters (c.f. full text of interview in appendix).

**DECREASING STRENGTH OF SCHOOLS IN MINORITY AREAS;  
STEADY PHASING OUT OF CLASSES 5-7 IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS;  
LABS DESTROYED, COMPUTERS LOOTED IN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL;  
DRESS CODES IN COLLEGE – STUDENTS COMPELLED TO LEAVE**

**Sirajuddin, Teacher of English in a private school in Godhra.**

This team met Sirajuddin while talking to children on the terrace of the Iqbal Primary School. This camp housed 748 people, of whom 305 were children. In addition to this it also provided the rations for 3,200 other victims living with relatives in the area. Most of these victims were from the villages of Panchmahal, Dahod and Kheda districts, and some from Khanpur. A gentle, soft spoken man, Sirajuddin narrated to us quietly and precisely the ways in which the education of children and young people in his community had suffered across the last two years. Like Afroz, he too emphasized how the ground had been prepared for the crackdown on his community long before February 27<sup>th</sup>.

“The Municipality Schools here are staffed chiefly by the majority community. All the schools in the majority areas have only majority community teachers; and the schools in the minority areas have 50% minority community teachers. In the Municipality Board, for both Gujarati and Urdu medium schools, 90% of the members are from the majority community.

As we live in Gujarat, we want our children to be trained in Gujarati. My own son goes to a Gujarati medium school. The strength of the eight Gujarati medium municipality schools in the minority area has been scaled down; now there is an average of only 40-50 children in each of these schools, whereas the Gujarati medium schools in the majority areas run to full strength, with approximately 700 children in each. That is why upto 95% of the children in the majority area Gujarati medium schools on the "border" come from minority families..... so we send our children to those schools because they are better run and better equipped.

In the last two years there has been a gradual closing down of classes 5-7 in the primary schools in the minority areas. This year, three municipality schools shut down classes 5-7. The school opposite the railway station used to go upto class 7. For the last two years now classes 5-7 have not been run there. The strength of classes 1-4 has also been

decreased; there are now 4 classes and only 2 teachers there. After the *danga* (riots), Urdu medium teachers have also been transferred to Gujarati schools.

The only day on which large scale violence took place in Godhra was on February 27<sup>th</sup>, after the burning of the train. But they deliberately targeted the Boys High School opposite the Civil Hospital. They looted all the computers and destroyed the laboratories before setting fire to the building.

Many of our youth attend the local government aided Commerce College in Godhra. Here too they have had to face harassment in both the internal and the external examinations. They have been pressurized to follow a dress code – no beards, no caps, no kurtas allowed. No Urdu allowed. If they have not followed these codes they have been penalized in their examinations, or even been failed.....sometimes they've received 30%, sometimes even less. So many of our students have been compelled to leave college without completing their education.”

*Source: Sirajuddin, volunteering in the Iqbal Primary School Camp, Polan Bazar, Godhra. May 6<sup>th</sup>.*

#### **LACK OF PROVISIONS FOR EXAMINATIONS; SUPREME COURT CASE FOR SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS FOR STD. X & XII**

**Father Vinayak, Teacher St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad. May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

This team held a discussion with Father Vinayak in his office. He also supplied us with photocopies of the list of all the minority area centres that had been shifted to the majority areas, and the Supreme Court judgement.

“I started visiting the relief camps on the third day of the riots and picked up the problem of the class X and XII exams that the students were supposed to write on 11<sup>th</sup> March. How would the displaced minority students take their examinations?

I wrote a paper to the press highlighting the issues of trauma, stamina, lack of textbooks and notebooks for preparation and the absence of any funds to buy new material, safety while travelling to the exam centres etc. The press sent reporters to camps and published their findings in the newspapers, so the exams were postponed from 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March. There was a demand for further postponement, so the government announced that the exams would still be held on 18<sup>th</sup> March, but supplementary exams would also be organized all over the state on 6<sup>th</sup> May. On 17<sup>th</sup> March however, it cancelled the 6<sup>th</sup> May option overnight and declared that exams would be held all over Gujarat on 18<sup>th</sup> March only, except in Ahmedabad and Baroda, for which a new date would be set within a few days. So the May 6<sup>th</sup> option was totally scrapped, irrespective of the problems students in the rest of Gujarat would face.

The Times of India reported that children in examination centres on 18<sup>th</sup> March had tears streaming down their faces and were hallucinating about fires etc. On 18<sup>th</sup> March again there was trouble, including the stabbing of a student in Bharooch, and exams in 7-8 centres had to be dropped.

The original petition for the postponement of all exams scheduled to start on the 18<sup>th</sup> had been filed by the Lok Adhikar Sangh in the High Court 45 days before the exams. On the 19<sup>th</sup> I filed an affidavit in my name saying that it was not fair to go on with the exams during the riots and there should be supplementary exams. Approximately 10,000 students had not been able to sit for their exams, and this would cripple their careers. The case was heard immediately, but the affidavit was rejected on the grounds that 1) one such petition had already been filed before, and 2) it was a government matter.

Then Colin Gonsalves filed a petition in the Supreme Court in the name of Aparna Bhatt and three others. The PIL was filed on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The hearing was held on 15<sup>th</sup> April in Delhi – I was also called to present the case in the hearings. On the very first day the SC issued notices to the Gujarat State Education Board and the Secretary of the Education Department, Gujarat Board to appear in the SC within 3 days. Harish Salve argued for the government.

*The government argued that it had distributed books and pens etc. in all the camps. This is a complete lie!* \*Justice Kirpal (who is the Chief Justice now), on the bench, said: “Mr. Salve, you expect 40,000 children to study in relief camps!”

Within 3-4 hearings the case was decided. The SC came down heavily on the Gujarat Government,\*\* and stated that it should decide to hold supplementary exams, or else the SC would order it to do so. By the third hearing the government had to return with the dates. The government claimed that only 20% of the students had not taken exams. We argued that given the high dropout rate, this 20% was the majority of the minority community.

18<sup>th</sup> April was the new date set. But there were riots again in Ahmedabad, Barod and 6 other centres, so again more students could not sit for their exams. Another affidavit was added to the SC case. This made the case stronger.

Also, three days before April 18<sup>th</sup> the government shifted all the minority area centres to the majority areas, so this created complete insecurity for the minority students. I have this list here of approximately 30 such centres that were shifted. The minority community announced a boycott, and 60%-70% did not sit for the exams.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April the SC issued a directive that exams would be held all over the state – if a student had missed even one exam, he/she could sit for all the exams again. Further, students in relief camps would also be allowed to sit for their exams again if they wish to do so. The date set for the exams is now in the first week of June. The government has announced that 26,000 students will be sitting for these exams.”\*\*\*

When this team asked him about the future role of role educational institutions and teachers, he replied, “What has been the impact of witnessing such carnage and torture, and how do we deal with it? There are 200 colleges in Gujarat – one of them, Xaviers, is a Christian college. We have a network of Christian Schools – but *what can be done with the teachers? Their attitude is shocking too. College professors also say: “They deserve it, they asked for it.”*

*Also, at the moment we are in a phase where we can’t even open our mouths. No peace initiatives have worked. Anybody who talks of harmony is a traitor. We are waiting for emotions to calm down.*

I teach Value Education too in this college. I’m planning to introduce something like national integration in this course.

I believe that this is neither a religious nor a communal conflict – it is a political conflict. I want students to start thinking how we have been used...how to shift the focus from a communal focus to a political focus.

**Source: Father Vinayak, in St. Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad. May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

\* In her interview with us too, Anandibehn claimed that not only had the government supplied textbooks, notebooks and pens to every single camp, it had also sent teachers to each of them to help students prepare for their exams. *Every single camp organizer in the minority camps that this team visited stated categorically that the government had done no such thing. If they had received any books and stationery at all, then only NGOs had provided the material. No teachers had visited any of these camps either.*

\*\* Anandibehn also claimed that the Gujarat government had won the case hands down. She said *“They went to the Supreme Court. We came back the victors.....They [the Supreme Court] confirmed that what we had said was right..... they agreed and just said you don’t have to do anything...they praised the arrangement we had made for the exams”*

\*\*\* Yet, within a few minutes she completely contradicted this statement while saying regarding the supplementary examinations: *“We [said we] would hold a supplementary test for them in June. Now let me tell you, I just called the heads of the secondary education board for the number of forms we have received. How many have we received? 500. 500 children filled up their forms – for the Xth and XIIth standards, both inclusive. And they made us spend crores for this....”*



## **GIRLS' EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD SEXUAL ABUSE AND BURNING OF WOMEN**

In the few camps across the state from which students did sit for their board exams, most of the students who had not dared to venture out to examination centres were girls. The grotesque sexual abuse, rape and burning of minority women has completely destroyed the confidence of young girls and women right across the state, and they feared to step out even in places like Godhra city, where no rioting had taken place after the 27th of February until May 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Latifabehn: Mother of Sultana, B.Sc. 3<sup>rd</sup> Yr. Residents of Godhra.**

We spoke to Mohammed Yusuf Giteli and his wife Latifa, a middle-class couple, and two of the organizers in charge of the Iqbal Primary School camp. They obviously share a relationship of mutual respect and love. Latifa, a confident and dignified woman in a purdah, spoke of her own bitter disappointment at being withdrawn from school after class VII, and her lifelong dream to see her daughter graduate from college resolve to educate her daughter. She is a housewife who has never worked outside her home, and now works in the camp from 7 A.M. to 10 P.M. everyday, supervising classes for children, and helping the women train their minds onto therapeutic embroidery and handiwork.

“ I took great joy in my studies, but my deep regret is that I was made to leave school in class 7 to be married early. I decided that my daughter would become an educated woman. I have two daughters and a son; both the daughters now live with their in-laws – we have to get them married early in our community, it is difficult to find good young men who are still unmarried at a later age. My younger daughter was not interested in studies but Sultana, the elder one was; so we even found a family who believed in educating women and agreed to let her continue with her studies after marriage. Now look at what's happened..... The riots took this town by storm just a few days before her final B.Sc. exams and she was too terrified to go to the centre to sit for them. Various male members of our family and friends offered to escort her and sit outside and wait till she finished her exams, but she was too terrified to even consider the possibility.” Latifa's eyes brimmed with tears as she continued, “Now her spirit is broken. She says she will never be able to take her exams again.....and my dream for her has turned to ashes.”

That same night, Latifa and her husband gave us shelter in their cousin's home near the camp. As other women and children of the community came into our room in Tahiraben's house to chat with us, their genuine warmth and ease contrasted sharply with our feelings of confusion. For the first time we were coming to terms with the shame of having been born as “Hindus”, and for the first time one of us acknowledged herself as one: ‘I feel ashamed of being a Hindu, Latifabehn. The way the Hindus have tortured your community is unpardonable, but ....can you still forgive us?’ Latifa pulled those shaking hands gently into hers and said, ‘There are good and evil people in both our communities.....You all are tired; please take a little rest: tomorrow we shall meet again in the camp...’”

*Source: Latifabehn, organizer in the Iqbal Primary School Camp, Polan Bazar Godhra. May 6<sup>th</sup>.*

**Sultana: 20/21 yrs, 3<sup>rd</sup> yr. B.Sc., married, with an infant daughter. Godhra.**

We met Latifa's daughter Sultana later in the same camp. She had just come out of teaching the children.

“We used to go to English medium schools. Our mother wanted us to continue with our studies. After passing my Higher Secondary exams, I got admission into the B.Sc. course. Then my marriage was arranged – my father said he's a good boy, let them get married. In any case girls get married early in our community. My mother insisted that my in-laws be requested to allow me to study after my marriage; they agreed. My husband and his family always encouraged me to continue with my studies. My college is located after two stations from here. I would have taken the B.Sc final this year. I was very keen about continuing with higher studies after my graduation. But see what's happened. Our college is co-educational, I used to travel on my own, never before had I felt uneasy..... But after what has happened I cannot take my exams.... a sudden fear has gripped me..... I cannot trust anybody anymore.....if we continue to live here it will probably never be possible for me to sit for the exams. But where else can we go?

A few days before 27<sup>th</sup> February the walls had been plastered with posters which declared “*Hindu jage, Miyan bhage*” (When the Hindu wakes up, the Muslim flees), “*Jo Ram ka nahin woh kam ka nehin*” (He who does not pledge himself to Ram is of no use), “*Hindusthan mein rahena to Hindu banke jiyo*” (If you want to live in Hindusthan then live as a Hindu). Even these had not made me afraid. Now I am scared. The BJP and the Bajrang Dal do not want us to be educated, to be employed. They want us to remain backward. The streets are not safe for us – and neither are our homes. But at home at least I can die with my own people.....”

*Source: Sultana, volunteering in the Iqbal Primary School camp, Godhra. May 6<sup>th</sup>.*

## **LARGE SCALE DISPLACEMENTS OF POPULATIONS; FEAR OF RETURNING; THE PROBLEM OF REHABILITATION AND EDUCATION**

There has been a massive displacement of populations, which have taken refuge in camps, and homes of relatives in other areas. All the adults we talked to in the minority camps, from Naroda Patiya in Shah-e-Alam, from Naroda Road and Vadodara in Juhapara, from Ode in Sureli, Anand, and from various villages of Panchmahal in the Hallol camp and the Iqbal Primary School, Godhra, said that they were too scared to go back to their homes, and did not know where to go. The children from these areas too voiced their fear of ever returning to their homes and schools in these areas. While people from certain areas have started returning to their homes under police escort, thousands still continue to live in the camps, and the government has now promised not to shut

down the camps till the question of rehabilitation is settled. The central problem every single organizer, and parents, in the above camps discussed concerning children in this context was that of schools admitting them in their new areas of residence. The fear is that if the municipality and private schools in these areas cannot extend their capacity to admit these children, or if new municipality schools are not set up, then thousands of displaced children will be further deprived of education; the only alternative these members of the community can see is admitting as many children as possible, into madrasas.

*Source: Every single organizer of the minority camps visited, and all the parents interviewed. May 3<sup>rd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 2002.*

## **RESPONSE OF A PROMINENT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION**

### **Leenaben Sarabhai, Founder of the Shreyas Foundation, Ahmedabad.**

This team interviewed Leenaben, who is above eighty now and is in charge of the Shreyas Foundation, in her home and in her car on the way to the Foundation. Shreyas Foundation runs a school that imparts creative education along Gandhian lines, to children from a wide range of backgrounds, and emphasizes that their “facilities are open to all regardless of sex, creed or economic condition.” It has also been running Shreyas Balgram, an SOS village (by affiliation), since 1964 for homeless and destitute children and those from broken families. When Leenaben heard that we had come to talk to her about the impact of the communal carnage on children and orphans, and what could be done to address the problems, her face twisted with emotion and she said:

“This government has clipped our wings, we cannot do anything; it is impossible for any NGO or autonomous organization to do anything worthwhile in this state. This is not the country that Gandhi and Nehru led to independence; this is not the country they dreamed of.” A little later regarding whether programmes for fostering communal harmony among children could be set up across the state, she said, “My hands are tied, my lips are sealed; they will not let us do anything. I cannot tell you how much we have been harassed in the last few years.”

“I have been wanting to do something about these children I have been saying send children to me, we will look after the destitute, the orphans; we take in children from all communities in the Balgram - but nobody has taken up my offer.” After a minute’s pause she said abruptly, and firmly, “But I do not want any interference. No I would not like their relatives to come and visit them, take them away from here, they interfere too much.....But I can tell you this much – I am willing to take in 30 children – I will take the responsibility for 30 children.”

*Source: Leenaben Sarabhai, at her residence in Ahmedabad. May 8<sup>th</sup>.*

## **THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE**

**Anandibehn Patel,<sup>16</sup> Education Minister of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.**

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<sup>16</sup> See appendix for the full text of this interview.

The government has adopted a stand of brazen callousness. In an hour long recorded interview given to this team by Anandibehn Patel, the Education Minister of Gujarat, not only did she deny flatly every aspect of the crackdown she was questioned about; she also responded to a question regarding initiating programmes for fostering peace and communal harmony in schools with a diatribe on the “mentality” of perpetual rioting in Gujarat.. Regarding how one could address through education the fear in children who have witnessed such butchery and burning and how one could work towards a better future in Gujarat she said:

*“See, the situation of Gujarat is such – this is not the first time that there have been riots? Every ten years there are riots. There was one in 69, another in 85. There were also riots in 82, then 92, 90, and now too. There are always riots. I won’t say solution...after a riot, the fear you see, the fear you experience..... the local people don’t [they don’t]] get scared. You come from outside, that is why you are scared, ....I just made my rounds today, I’m not scared. The people who live here, the local people, they don’t feel scared. They easily get back together.....”*

This was shortly followed by her extremely articulate invective against the minority community and how they had massacred members of the majority community in the months after the Godhra incident.

She also claimed that the government had set aside Rs. 1 lakh as compensation for each orphan, and also 1 lakh per affected family for the education, books and uniforms of its children from class 8 right through college, since education was free up to class 7. As to how they would access this compensation, she said that they did not have to go to the government, the government would go to them. All they needed to do was register in the schools and colleges, and the government would pay the schools/colleges directly. As to whether families in camps knew about these compensation packages, she declared that this information had been put up in every single camp in the state, and all knew about it; that all had been informed about this compensation in the same way as they had been about the postponed examination dates.\* She also added that the government would not channel the funds through NGO, implying that NGOs swindle the money – “... we are not going to give this to any NGO. Because it never reaches if we give it through NGOs.”

***Source: Interview with Anandibehn in the Circuit House, Ahmedabad. May 9<sup>th</sup>.***

*\* Not one of the organizers in any of the camps we visited had any knowledge whatsoever of these compensation packages for either orphans or for the education of affected children and college students.*

### **Mr. Bhad, Chairperson of the DPEP, Gandhinagar.**

The Chairperson of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) proudly emphasized that this was a programme run independently of state control,<sup>17</sup>. Even as he kindly shared with us the DPEP 2000-20001 booklet with “Mission – Education for All”

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<sup>17</sup> As a part of the national *Sarvshiksha* programme, and funded by the Netherlands. This interview too is recorded.

writ large over the cover, he showed complete ignorance of the problems the large scale displacements of population, and the communal fury in various areas, would cause for the schooling of minority children. He also insisted that every single teacher, in all the municipality primary schools under his charge in the Godhra, Banaskantha and Dangs districts, was an enlightened and progressive person with no communal bias whatsoever. As such any orientation programmes for teachers on fostering communal amity in the classrooms, was completely unnecessary. And when he finally grasped the idea of initiating peace programmes for children in primary schools, he thanked us profusely for the excellent suggestion.

***Source: Recorded interview with Mr. Bhad, in the office of the DPEP, Gandhinagar. May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002***

# Violations of the Constitution, the Law, and International Treaties

The urgent task today is to secure justice for all the victims of the Gujarat carnage, and simultaneously to ensure that the principles of equal citizenship and justice for all enshrined in the Constitution are not merely safeguarded but also strengthened. This team holds that first and foremost India's own institutions of democracy and justice have to be pressed into action, and their representatives and office bearers made accountable for their responsibility to safeguard the rights sanctioned by the Constitution. Appeals to international courts of justice and the evoking of international conventions are also extremely important and necessary tasks, but can only supplement the process of delivering justice. The main action has to take place within our own institutions and be implemented by our own judges, bureaucrats and leaders, with the involvement of Indian citizens across the nation.

## CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS

The Gujarat government is responsible for gross violations of the Constitution of India with respect to children's rights too.

### Trauma and Denial of Education

**Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy** which states "... that children are given opportunities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment".

*The large-scale and intense trauma that children have been subject to as well as the denial of education, are both in complete violation of this principle.*

**Article 14 of the Fundamental Rights** "The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws....."

**Article 15 of the Fundamental Rights** "...prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth"

*Depriving minority children of access to education and disempower the entire community thus is a clear violation of the above articles.*

The sensitivity and effectiveness of a democracy are reflected nowhere better than in its ability to protect the children, who cannot directly participate in the democratic electoral process. A drive to ensure education for every child has become a critical imperative in Gujarat, and it is the responsibility of the Gujarat government to implement it. In the context of the large-scale trauma that children have been subject to, access to education becomes even more necessary as natural therapy and to help restore some sense of normalcy in their lives.

#### **Violations of Laws regarding juvenile citizens of this country:**

- Producing minors in the Judicial Magistrates' courts
- keeping them under arrest in adult lock ups and jails
- failing to inform their parents within 24 hours
- subjecting them to severe and repeated beatings in custody

#### **VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TREATIES**

While victims of injustice and violence have always had trouble being heard, historically none have had more trouble than children. It has long been internationally agreed that the child, by reason of his/her physical and mental vulnerability, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth. **The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924**, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and the statutes of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children straightforwardly document the need for such special safeguards. The State's failure to implement various International Treaties that relate to the rights of every human being, adult or child, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, **The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**, and **The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**, has been convincingly demonstrated in other reports<sup>18</sup>, and do not need repetition here.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, to which the Government of India became a signatory in 1992, has also been infringed upon in no uncertain terms. Of special relevance in the context of the murders of children, born and unborn, the trauma of witnessing the rape, murder and burning of relatives and neighbours, and the arbitrary arrests and police torture, are the following provisions:

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<sup>18</sup> Presented in details in The Survivors Speak. The articles of The International Convention of the Rights of the Child are also listed there, but since they bear specialized relevance here, we too include them in the interests of presenting a comprehensive account of the violations of children's rights.

## **International Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. India acceded to the convention on 11 December 1982.

### **Article 2**

Ø States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Ø States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

### **Article 6**

Ø States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

Ø States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

### **Article 14**

Ø States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

### **Article 37**

Ø States Parties shall ensure that:

- (a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- (b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

### **Article 39**

Ø States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

We also seek to draw attention to the fact that almost each and every principle of the United Nations' ten-points Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) has been severely violated in the Gujarat genocide. We quote the ten principles below in full.



## **Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)**

### Principle I

The child shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. Every child, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to these rights, without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself<sup>19</sup> or of his family.

### Principle 2

The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

### Principle 3

The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.

### Principle 4

The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care. The child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.

### Principle 5

The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

### Principle 6

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

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<sup>19</sup> Read herself/himself, she/he, his/her, him/her etc. throughout this document.

#### Principle 7

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.

The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents.

The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right.

#### Principle 8

The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.

#### Principle 9

The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form.

The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

#### Principle 10

The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.<sup>20</sup>

Nothing seems more distant from the children in the Gujarat Relief Camps than a promise of “healthy and normal” development. The entitlement to a Muslim name has unfortunately threatened the right to the Indian nationality. Most of these children have either lost the bread winning members of their families, or their parents have lost all their savings, as well as their means of livelihood in the genocide. It remains the duty of the State, which has unmistakably and miserably failed to protect the children and their parents from acts of organized violence, to now secure the “benefits of social security” for them. If the State fails to do so, this second failure – being less spectacular in form –

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<sup>20</sup> Declaration of the Rights of the Child, G.A. res. 1386 (XIV), 14 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 19, U.N. Doc. A/4354 (1959).

might be more harmful in its lingering effect since serious psychological dislocation accompanies economic and social dispossession.

In the *Shah-e-Alam* Camp alone, almost fifty babies were born immediately after the genocide and another fifty were expected during the time of our visit. The Government has not taken any substantial measure to provide “adequate pre-natal and post-natal care” to these newborns and their mothers. We wonder how the proclamation of the right to “full and harmonious development of ... personality” and claims to “love and understanding” would sound to Javed Hussain (14) of Naroda Patia, or to Saddam Hussain (8) of Randikpur, or for that matter to any of the 50,000 who have lost their homes in this organized violence.

The right to education has been violated. The sources of family incomes have been irrecoverably destroyed. The course of normal life has been suddenly disrupted. It is clear that one of the aims of the genocide was ethnic cleansing – hence the systematic and widespread rapes and burning of women, fetuses and children. Another was to psychologically traumatize and emotionally destabilize the children from the minority communities. Many of them have been forced to witness the rapes of their mothers, sisters, relatives and friends, some of whom have been burnt to death, and some others were left semi-charred. The “spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood” that they were promised now sounds like a cruel joke. The Government has failed not only to live up to the requirements of the Geneva Principles, but also to guarantee the minimal constitutional rights of the citizens from a particular community.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Conclusion

### **GENOCIDE: A THREAT TO THE VERY PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP AND JUSTICE**

The Gujarat genocide has not just been a manifestation of the most brutal forms of cruelty in modern history. Its perpetrators, the Bajrang Dal, the VHP, as well as the ruling BJP, have actually attacked the very principles and institutions of democracy and justice that are the cornerstones of the Indian Constitution and the Indian State, and sought to replace it with a communal and fascist regime of violence.

While this team unequivocally condemns the burning of the train at Godhra, and the grotesque murder of 59 people, including women and innocent children, it emphasizes equally strongly that the carnage of next three months was not a spontaneous retaliation or even a communal riot. As various members of the IAS, some of whom have stemmed riots themselves within hours, have explained categorically, it takes 5 hours to 3 days to stop a riot. It cannot continue beyond that - as it has for over three months now - without the active connivance of the government. It was an organized genocide.

### **DEMOLITION OF THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHILDREN'S AND THE COMMUNITY'S CAPABILITY FOR SURVIVAL AND WELL-BEING IN THE FUTURE.**

This team too, like most others before it, found evidence that points to a calculated, methodical and sustained programme of the Sangh Parivar and the Gujarat government for destroying the very bases for the survival of the minority. The frenzied raping, killing and burning of women and children have already laid bare their objective of ethnic cleansing and breaking the spirit of the community and its children. The findings presented here, regarding the acute trauma, extensive arrests and custodial torture, and the systematic crackdown on the education of minority students initiated more than three years ago, expose the further objective of demolishing the very foundations of the children's and the community's capability for survival and well-being in the future. The children and youth of Gujarat need concerted care, support and education if this is to be averted.

### **THREAT TO THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY**

Lack of access to education, and consequently of the rights of citizenship and democracy too, further destroys the possibility of peaceful negotiations between the communities, and paves the way for a future of unmitigated coercion, subversion and violent conflict.

The connection between denial of education to these children and a massive multiplication of fundamentalist forces cannot be denied. Children, and specially teenagers, who've lost their homes, are furious and ready for revenge. Others, who've seen much worse and lost much more, are still obviously in shock, but all hell will break

loose once they recover the ability for anger. This, compounded with the systematic crackdown on every single level of education for minority children - elite and poor - as well as the sub-zero financial conditions of affected families, makes further schooling a dubious possibility. The consequences of this are not difficult to imagine. A desperate fury, and no positive channeling of emotions and abilities, makes more than 50,000 children and young people (at least 25,000 of them boys) ripe catchment area, across the next decade, for both the extremist fundamentalist forces within the country, and for appropriation by forces across the border.

*Thus, in addition being guilty of gross violations of the Constitution of India, the Gujarat government is also responsible for endangering both the internal and external security of the country.*

## **REVITALIZING THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES UNDERLYING THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA**

Contemporary sectarian politics in Gujarat now operates exclusively in the form of faceless masses of “frenzied perpetrators” and “vanquished victims”, completely effacing the value of the individual human being. This is what makes possible the perverse brutality that is ravaging Gujarat. This state has witnessed a virtual collapse of human values and social ethics. In light of the collective dehumanization of the present, the principles of citizenship and democracy gather renewed significance. For in their emphasis on the basic rights of the individual they restore the human being to centre stage, and in privileging equality and justice they create the ground for mutual co-operation and respect between distinct identities.

Revitalizing the fundamental values underlying the Constitution of India, and making them a vibrant force again is the only way in which we can begin to counter rabid sectarian politics. The importance of human equality, the dignity of life and labour, the promise of justice for all, and the commitment to non-violence as the most humane path of action, are basic and rational values which have the potential to unify people across all divides of religion and ethnicity. Their potency should not be underestimated, for it was on the strength of these that India overcame the forces of colonialism. There is a crucial need for concerted efforts to breathe new life again into these ideals, with creativity and commitment, in every classroom, in culture and in politics. This work is basic to shaping a future of some peace and dignity for the children of Gujarat.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1) Trauma Counselling:**

The government must keep track of traumatized children both in camps and even of those who may have left the camps for their original or new homes, and ensure long term trauma counselling sessions for them, with sustained follow ups.

NGOs could play a valuable role here by getting therapists to train teams of volunteers whom the government could employ for this purpose.

## **2) Immediate Justice for Arrested Minors**

The minors arrested have already been subject to severe torture and their education has also been hindered. The cases of all minors arrested must be dealt with immediately, in juvenile courts, in as humane a manner as possible.

The cases should be conducted in the presence of representatives from human rights organizations.

## **4) Speedy Justice in hitherto unrecorded cases**

Immediate recording of FIRs, supplementary FIRs including names of culprits where they were not recorded earlier, must be facilitated, along with the setting up of special courts to bring speedy justice to all the affected surviving victims. It is imperative to foster children and young people's faith in democracy and the judicial system of the country, if a large scale takeover of the law into their own hands is to be pre-empted.

## **5) Immediate Compensation**

The government must give immediate compensation to all. This should include amounts adequate for setting up small shops businesses to all teenagers who've never been to school/won't go now or need to earn for their families to recuperate losses. It should also start special income generating programmes for older girls who are not enrolled in schools.

## **6) Access to Education:**

The government must ensure that

- a) all children displaced from their original homes get admission in the municipality schools in their current areas of residence
- b) additional schools are started up in areas with large displaced populations
- c) all children of affected families get fellowships for school and college, and expenses for books, uniforms and transport for at least the next 5 years
- d) special provisions are made to ensure that girls and young women feel safe travelling between home and school/college, and that they all enroll in schools/colleges
- e) it actively encourages the building up of mixed populations across communities in each school
- f) parity be maintained amongst all municipality schools regarding the number of teachers, students admitted, facilities offered etc.
- g) classes 5-7 be added on to all the municipality primary schools where they do not already exist, and restart the classes which have been shut down.

NGOs and private educational foundations should play an important role by

- a) ensuring that concerted efforts and funds are channeled into sending to school even those children who've never been to school before and to orient them towards recognizing the importance of becoming educated articulate members of the community

- b) opening up more seats for affected children in private institutions, on fellowships where possible
- c) procuring funding and making available full fellowships and expenses for study in boarding schools in other states, in cases where parents are willing (many are too terrified to let their children go at present - complete breakdown of trust)), and in the case of orphans too.

#### **6) Dress and language codes**

The government must emphatically prohibit the imposition of dress codes and particular languages in all institutions, with specific penalties prescribed for those that continue to disallow the minority community's dress and language on their campuses.

#### **7) Creative programmes for revitalizing the values of democracy and citizenship:**

Sensitive and well thought out programmes for creatively fostering respect in children for the values underlying the constitution of India, as these have the potential to unify people across divides of religion and ethnicity. Programmes which develop an understanding of the importance of human equality, the dignity of life and labour, the promise of justice for all, and the commitment to non-violence as the most humane path of action, should be developed, and teachers trained for the same, by the DPEP (which claims to be an autonomous body with funding from the Netherlands) and other educational bodies, or NGOs specializing in children's education. The Government should be directed to draw upon the expertise of these agencies to implement the programmes in all schools.

#### **8) Directives to Gujarat government to implement in schools the programmes for revitalizing the values of democracy and citizenship:**

Its clear from the Education minister Anandibehn Patel's interview with us that the Gujarat government has no plans to implement programmes for fostering communal harmony and peace in schools. The multi-party Parliamentary Forum on Education and Culture should be urged to press this case in the Parliament, so that the Parliamentary Committee on Education and the Ministry of Education direct the Gujarat government to implement programmes on peace and communal harmony in all private and municipality schools.

#### **9) Security and welfare of orphans and children of women widowed in the carnage**

Regarding orphans and children of women widowed in the carnage, it seems unlikely that the larger families/community will let go of them at present, but likely that they will feel burdened by them later. So it would be important to develop a programme that

- a) keeps in close touch with orphans and children of women-headed families now, presses for government compensation, and ensures that the units caring for the orphans now do not have direct access to the total amount of the compensation, but get periodic payments for the upkeep of the child
- b) helps place the orphans/children of women headed families in institutions/boarding schools with fellowships if necessary and when the time is right.

**10) International Monitoring of measures adopted by the state, and dissemination such information – as per International Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Article 44.1 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) requires all States Parties to submit reports, every five years, to the United Nations Committee on The Rights of the Child, “on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein, and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights”. Recommended that

a) The Central Government demand a detailed report from the Gujarat Government regarding the steps taken to ameliorate the effects of this communal carnage, have it verified by an international monitoring team, and highlight the measures taken in its next report to the UN Committee.

b) The Central Government make this report widely available to the public in this country, as per Article 44.6 of the ICRC.



*Into an uncertain future: Babies born in Shah-e-Alam Camp*



**Appendix 1: Interview with Anandibehn Patel, Education Minister of Gujarat.  
(Conducted in the Circuit House Annexe, Ahmedabad), May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

We have spent over a crore [rupees] supplying text books, guide books, pens, pencils to children from classes 1-12 in all the camps, wherever there are camps – there are 103 camps. We have also started anganwadis wherever there has been a need for them – you must have seen them yourselves. In the same way we taught children of the primary sections, from classes 1-7. Their exams are over too....now the vacations are on, so the teachers have gone back to their homes, that's why classes are off now.....but they taught the children in the camps till the 6<sup>th</sup>.....Classes were also held for Class X and XII students in the camps, during class hours....yes, teachers would go and teach in the camps.

In addition to this, the third thing we did was for women. Three kinds of work – we did a survey of pregnant women, took care of their needs, took them to hospitals for their deliveries.....secondly, we prepared a project for the rehabilitation of the women, but we can't do that in the camps. We have all their addresses, so when they go back to their homes, we will organize 6 month training camps and classes for them in different areas....we will teach them the things we do in Gujarat....stitching, embroidery; in addition to this we will also give them some technical training. The government organizes these, NGOs also do so. We've charted out the full plan. But not for the camps...there is not enough place in the camps either. These camps are such that people go there to eat in the afternoon and evening. Otherwise only 100-150 people stay there. The rest all come to eat from the neighbourhood, we can't stop anyone.....they come and eat twice a day and go away....wherever they have work.....yes, this is the case with all camps, most people do not stay there at night. In any case the government is running all the camps, the government is covering the full cost of all the camps, the organizers just manage the camps. The organizers are NGOs, and government personnel visit each camp everyday.

The books and stationery that were distributed, we gave them to children at every level, classes 1- XII, and to college students too. We gave them to every single child, not one child was left out. We gave guide books too....through the education department. We have the complete survey, of how many children there are in each camp and which classes they are in, we have the list. Because we've decided that for a year – before 15<sup>th</sup> June, when the classes start again, they are to be given kits. They will be given uniforms, shoes, chappals, socks, one dozen notebooks, pens, pencils, compasses. These kits are being prepared. And we have kept aside Rs.30 crore for text books, and all these things.

There are three types of people in camps – one section who have not lost anything, they have come out of fear. There are those who come twice a day, eat and go back – that's because they are poor. This goes on all the time, during the earthquake too. If there is food being distributed, they come and eat. The other category is of people whose houses are intact, nothing has happened there, but there is fear. In areas where there are Hindus and Muslims, one lane is of Hindus, the other of Muslims. There is fear here. And fear

there should be too, for where there have been stoning, clashes, burnings, then what does one do? So they come and stay there, out of fear. They are ready to go back. But they want protection. They want protection in each and every lane. In one lane there are five houses, in another others....we cannot provide so much protection....so we say go back when the ethos improves. The third category is of people whose houses have been burnt, they have nothing left. They stay here all the time. I've just come back from 68-69 camps. There are 225 people who stay there all the time. The remaining 800 come there only for meals.

*Regarding the schooling of thousands displaced as in Shah-e-Alam...*

It will happen after 15<sup>th</sup> June, the schools are starting, they will go back. It's not that they are not going back out of fear, we will have to provide protection. And now they are going to get money from the government. When they get the money, they will clean up their homes and start staying there.

*Regarding the amount of compensation for each house, given that during the earthquake the estimated compensation for each house was Rs.45,000.*

It is different for the earthquake. In the earthquake the whole house had collapsed, there were no walls left. It is not like that now, the walls are there, they even have roofs above them, the whole house is there, its only inside.....(*regarding the houses fully burnt down as in Naroda Patiya*) those that got burnt down like that, were homes made out of tents....there are houses of different categories.....(*as to how many such houses there were*) the survey is not yet complete.

It's like this, the survey may be done in one lane, then there is trouble in the next, so the survey has to be done all over again. But except for Ahmedabad the surveys are complete in the rest of Gujarat...the rest of Gujarat meaning where there were 2-3-4 camps.....and there more than 50% of the people, wherever they have got the money, have gone back and started work again. Now in Godhra 4000 people have gone back to their homes...in the villages too...In Godhra there are 4000 people remaining in the camps, the rest have gone back to their villages. In Ahmedabad, the situation is different. We are not going to try here in a hurry. The trouble is still on. If we say go back to your homes, it won't be right. While the situation is still bad, it is better for them to remain in the camps.

*What will happen when the monsoons arrive in June.*

Before that, we will do it. It will be done in 15-16 days.

*What about the schooling of those who are too scared to go back, if they stay on in the camps, or with their relatives in other areas or wherever....whether they would be admitted in the schools in these areas.*

Yes, yes, they can go wherever they want to.

*Regarding the capacity of municipality schools to accommodate them.*

.....the schools are very good, and in each area there will be 20-25 families more, with children in different standards, they can be accommodated. If they are primary school

children, the primary schools are government schools, and starting up a new section there is not a difficult matter for us – that we will do. (And whether they would start a new school where there is a demand for another one if the displaced population is large) That we will do, we keep doing that. In Gujarat the education system is quite good. The primary schools are run by the government –there we can start a new section, for this cost would have to be borne by the government, not a private body.

In the 69 riots, the government made a big mistake by creating Juhapura – that is why all this is happening. It gave them all that land in one area, and all those people stay there. Everything goes on there, the smuggling in of weapons, manufacture, storage.....so when we give them land in one place it creates problems. There should always be a mix (of populations).

*Regarding letters issued by English medium schools, to Muslim parents asking them to withdraw their children, as they could not guarantee the safety of these children.*

Who told you this, tell me! (We said we'd heard this from 5-6 places). I will tell you, when the exams were on, the way the Hindus helped these children, the Muslims have not helped their own children.....they tried to stop the children. And in the good schools where their children study....here in the good schools 40% of the children are Muslims....calling up the principal there, scaring away the children from there, saying you are not to sit for the exams.....Muslim families themselves told us that these people are telling us not to let our children sit for the exams.....But the work of saving...our teachers in these schools said no, you come and sit for the exams.....I tell you it is these Muslim fundamentalists who are harassing these families, saying don't go. And our frustration is that we are trying to get them to the schools, to sit for the exams, and they are trying to stop them. Who should we say all this to? Still we asked them, why are you keeping these children from the exams? They will only oppose the class X and XII exams. They won't oppose the college exams, or the primary exams, or the secondary....so what was the need to oppose the X and XII exams?

And their MLA, the Congress MLA, the Standing Committee chairman of the Congress, Ershad Mirza, an all India minister of the Congress, he takes them away? We tried, we said, come, sit for the exams, we will hold your exams. 85% of the children sat for the exams. And the word goes out that this government does not take their exams....and people like me keep hearing and writing in the media. It went to the High Court, and the Supreme Court. They went to the Supreme Court. We came back victors.

*Regarding the verdict of the Supreme Court.....*

They confirmed that what we had said was right. We said that 98% of the children were present in the schools....in the last exam....on 18<sup>th</sup> April....more than 98%....and each year so many children sit for the exams, each year. That too we told them. I'll tell you what their demands were. Their demand was to promote all the children. Promote all the class X and XII children. We said that if we do that then on which basis will these children be admitted to the Medical and Engineering courses? This cannot happen. Secondly they said, in that case, examine those who want marksheets, and just promote the rest. How can we decide whom we will examine and whom we won't? This too we

said was wrong, we would examine all. Thirdly, they said open up separate centres for Muslim children. We said we could not open up separate centres, but we could make full provisions for all – to and from the centres, for whoever wants it, Hindu or Muslim. And if you do not like one centre, if you say this centre is not a good one, then tell us, we will take them to a different place.

Thirdly they said that the centres we had shifted – we had shifted 41 centres in the urban areas, because of the disturbed situation. We sat down everybody together while shifting the centres – principals, trustees, our MLAs and the leaders of the areas. We sat them all down and said now you tell us, where should we take them. This included Hindu children and Muslim children. We believed that the exams could not be held in Kalupur. If there was trouble even for one day, the children would not come to sit for the exams. That is why we transferred 41 urban centres to the banks of the river. . . . . shifted the centres from the Muslim areas to the Hindu areas. We showed them that was not the case. This is Aroma school, this is . . . mati school, the exams are going on here. That is how we had to show it there.

Then. . . how many Muslim children were present for their exams? In Modasa, 100% sat for their exams, in Bogra too 100% sat, only one child did not, one. There were 572 children there, 571 sat for their exams. We showed them this attendance. And the third was that we heard on the first day that in Jamalpur, where there are five schools, the people there are preventing the students from coming. The bus was standing there. Keshav Kumar, our BJP person was there, my officials were there, saying we will take you. But the *goondas* there, they tore up the slips, they did all this. The children were sitting in the bus, the parents were ready, they were ready, but they were not allowed to sit, they were made to leave the bus. How they stopped them. We presented all this in the Supreme. . . . see this is our situation. Then they agreed and just said you don't have to do anything. . . they praised the arrangement we had made for the exams. And I too had said that whoever has not been able to sit for the first exam, will be allowed to do so the next time. The next day too I announced that if you haven't been able to sit for the second exam we will let you do so later. On the third day too I announced the same.

I also didn't know this, but they told me. . . 2-4 parents called saying that their slips had been taken away. Immediately I had it announced on the TV, that even if one does not have a slip, one should reach the centre – and reach a centre nearby, we will still let you take your exam. This is how we had 85% of the children sitting for the exams.

One more exam is to be held, I'll tell you. We had said in the Supreme Court that we would allow re-examinations for those who had not been present for three exams. The we said this would hold also for those who had not taken one exam. We would hold a supplementary test for them in June. Now let me tell you, I just called the heads of the secondary education board for the number of forms we have received. How many have we received? 500. 500 children filled up their forms – for the Xth and XIIth standards, both inclusive. And they made us spend crores for this. And the Supreme Court told them that their demand was wrong, to have separate exams for the Hindu and Muslim children. This demand itself is wrong.

The government runs schools till class 7. After that, in those schools that receive full grants from the government, there is only an admission charge of Rs. 8. There are no other fees. This is the case right upto class XII. Then there are other schools which are self-financed schools. Here they have fees, ranging from 200 to 500 to 1000. From classes 1-7 we give we spend 28 crores, and give all the text books. From classes 8-12 we continue to give to the SC ST students. This year we will give to children of other communities too – to the affected people. And not just text books, but exercise books, pens. Pencils too.

*Regarding displaced children who may not get admission in schools in current areas of residence, would she consider setting up special cells to handle appeals.*

We have our courts (but courts take a long time to process cases). In the same way as we advertised on Doordarshan, in the newspapers, everywhere, in the camps etc. ....they have to give us their addresses as to where they will be. Then the education officers will keep in touch with them. Collectors have also been given instructions – like there are five families from Sabarkantha; they are staying in camps in Mehsana. They have their registers too.

*Regarding the schooling of these displaced children....*

That is our responsibility. We will make full provisions for them.

*Regarding the fear in children after having seen such butchery and burning. The ICDS has started counselling for some children, but whether she is thinking of setting up trauma counselling centres in more places - in which camps? Also, the increasing conflict and enmity between communities – how much worse will it become? It's ingrained in children's hearts now. So what is the future of Gujarat? How can one handle it at the level of education?*

See, the situation of Gujarat is such – this is not the first time that there have been riots? Every ten years there are riots. There was one in 69, another in 85. There were also riots in 82, then 92, 90, and now too. There are always riots. I won't say solution...after a riot, the fear you see, the fear you experience..... the local people don't [they don't]] get scared. You come from outside, that is why you are scared, how will we go around....I just made my rounds today, I'm not scared. The people who live here, the local people, they don't feel scared. They easily get back together. They live next to each other, and when something like this happens, again....

*But the scale this time, its never taken place at this scale before; the riots went on for two months, the scale of bloodshed...doesn't it seem to her that things are becoming worse. That there should be educational programmes, in classrooms, children should be educated in such a way that this does not become worse, the hostility, the enmity between communities that is on the increase ....*

This enmity does not exist in children. If there is enmity, it is there in adults. So first we keep saying the schools have to go on, the schools are not to be kept shut.

*But the children say we will never play together again. Earlier they say they used to, now they say they won't, they'll take revenge.....*

For some time it will remain so..... and they do have the feeling of revenge.....

*Regarding creative programmes in classrooms.....*

That can only happen once the schools open – no? We can start such programmes only when the schools reopen. How can they be started now? Now the exams are going on.....

*In Hindu camps too the children are no less angry. The feelings of anger and revenge are rampant. Seeing this one fears for the future of this country, and this state.*

This stays only for a short while – only a short while. Then it becomes “smooth”. We have seen this – seen this for years now. In 69 over 3000 people had died. Over 3000. And for three months there was curfew. I used to stay in Shahpur myself. And the schools reopened after 4 months. I have worked in schools continuously for 30 years. People forget very easily. And they begin to accept things and live again. Like I told you about the villages. Show me one village where riots are still taking place. One village. In my.....is Abasna. 5 people have been killed there. 5 people. But today you go to Abasna, the same people stay there and the others too stay there. We feed them, we say you too eat, stay with us. Such situations are created later.....In Virangar there is no trouble now. In Virangar the camp lasted for 4 days. The Hindu camp and the Muslim camp, both lasted 4 days, then they all went back to their homes. In Mandel too, the work of the camps is over. In Ahmedabad things are different. In villages the committees have been formed. They have been told that the villagers have to get back the families who have left, and the villagers themselves have to provide fully for them, for their homes, they have to protect them and help them rebuild their homes too.

*Regarding provisions for those orphaned in the riots.....*

For them we have 4 centres. We will keep them there and educate them. And if anybody wants to adopt them, they can. In the Gandhi Ashram there is a hostel, in the Sabarmati Ashram too such kids are there. There are a total of 150 children there. We can keep them with those children too. We will try to keep them there. We will try to educate them there, we will educate them.

In the same way, women who have been widowed...the Rs. 500 that should be given to them, we have already started giving, but the Sardar Avas Yojana housing that we give them from the government.....they do not take it. Wherever there is a close relation...an aunt, an uncle, any close relative...we do not have a single orphaned child with us. They are all in some home.....

*Regarding compensation for orphans.*

They will get the amount due to them and in the name of the parents who have died...from the collector...in the bank account.....one lakh rupees. If the house was burnt or burnt down then the money for that too will be deposited in their accounts. When he [sic!] turns 18, he will decide for himself what to do with the money.

For widows, the central government had sanctioned grants to open a refuge. Today, we do not have more than 50 widows who are willing to stay there. They are staying with a brother-in-law, or with their natal families. But we have started training programmes for them. They stay in their family homes, but come for the training. Such is the situation. Otherwise we had thought that we would put together similar age groups of 50 or so – men and women, with some children...we would keep them together, maybe some marriages could have taken place amongst them...but not one woman was ready to stay like this. Did not want to stay in the refuge. They claimed whatever was due to them and preferred to stay with a paternal uncle, a maternal uncle, a maternal aunt, a maternal aunt.

*Regarding schools issuing letters to Muslim families saying they cannot guarantee the safety of these children...*

See nobody has complained to me about this so far, nobody. Today you are making this complaint. I say, if anybody has done such a thing, you give me the information if you can. Then I can stop them, saying don't do this. But nobody has made such a complaint so far, if anybody does, then I will put a stop to it.....

It could be like this, that the parents themselves are scared that their child.....safety.....that is their look out....but if any school issues such a notice, then I will issue a directive – I have already done that before, will send it again.....

Have you met Rita Teotia in the ICDS? *(She had to come back to Ahmedabad from Gandhinagar, so we met another official who gave us information.)*

*In college, the fees are not more than Rs.100 (But for those who have lost everything) I told you no, that we have made provisions for education, whoever is in difficulty, for everybody.*

*Would they need to apply, how would they access these funds.* Everybody knows. Everybody knows that we are going to give this, according to the records....in colleges we will give the fees. For fees we have reserved Rs.One lakh, one lakh per family, this includes college, primary, secondary, whatever....

*Where they should apply for this money.....*

The children do not need to apply. We have the records. And it is our responsibility to reach it to the children, because we are not going to give this to any NGO. Because it never reaches if we give it through NGOs. Because they.....we have a network of primary and secondary teachers. We will send it through them....

*If students apply to college, will they get the fellowship in the college, or would it be sent to the student's home?*

When a student enlists in a college and informs the college of his/her affected status, the college will provide the fellowship, and we will pay the college. Every affected person has an ID card. These students will get free education for a year.

But one year may not be enough for the family to stand on its own feet...  
Then we'll think again.

*Not satisfied with this – You say that there are riots here every 5-10 years.....we are educationists...in W.Bengal, which has not seen such riots, we are already concerned about students, about initiating programmes in schools. We had been hoping to learn something for you in Gujarat, see what kinds of programmes you might have initiated, you have had rioting here for so many years now...*

Let me tell you what the mentality here is like. In 69 there were riots. In Jamalpur we have a big *mandir* (temple), a Jagannath *mandir*. During the time of rathayatra, the rathayatra for all of Gujarat, of Ahmedabad starts from there.....Well there, they had slaughtered a cow. That was all. The riots took off from there, from just that incident. Just that.

In Godhra 58 people were burnt, but there it was just that incident.....

*But what about the responsibilities of educationists?*

The literacy rate is 70 % here, but are you saying that there is a co-relation between literacy and rioting? Fully educated people too come out onto the streets with weapons in hand. There is no such guarantee that if a people are educated there will be no riots.

*No, the point is that since the rate of literacy is high in Gujarat, why not use it positively – as to how some sense of harmony can be fostered in children..... What is happening in the country, in the world...makes an impact on every country, every state. What happened in Kargil, people reacted so strongly to it. I don't know what it was like where you live, but in Gujarat people were out in the streets, on the roads. They too were saying "Finish them. Why does this happen again and again?"*

Wherever, whenever anything happens the Muslim comes forward first. When Rs. 500 notes were being printed, those who were arrested in this connection – who would they be? They'd be the same. If RDX is brought in, then who are the ones caught? Their names are published in the papers, again it is them. So it's an ingrained mentality now not just in Gujarat, but in the whole country. When cricket matches are played....wherever Pakistan may be playing.....even when it wins outside, crackers are burst in Hindusthan, in Gujarat. This also makes an impression on people's minds.....

*Regarding a solution to these problems.*

I don't see any solution to them. Because we've been trying for years. These NGO's also don't work any less, the NGOs also do a lot of work. But there's never any improvement. They stay next to each other, next to each other.....this case in Shahpur where a knife was plunged into one side and came out on the other.....these two also used to live near each other. They go for weddings, stay together, eat and drink together, do everything together, but when the riot starts they forget everything. And kill their neighbours. How it happens, why it happens, how can we .....

*It's now rooted deep in their minds – some other ways have to be thought of....through education?*



Do you think it's any use having kathas or dialogues? I too ask this question? See how many kathas our Murari babu holds, our Asharam babu too, lakhs come to these kathas, sit, listen. All this happens, but when such incidents take place, then everything flares up again.

You are an educationist, what do you think is your role?

Providing quality education, fostering harmony, augmenting a sense of brotherhood – this is our work, we are doing all this, but it does not have any effect. This is the way it is with adults. With children, you teach them, you explain to them, till the XIIth but ultimately when they grow older and enter society, then the evil influences of society work upon them.

The solution?

You tell me what is the solution. I have been living in Gujarat for 50 years, yesterday we were each other's enemies, today we even sit next to each other and share our meals.

What is the alternative to finishing each other off?

Some people have also done research. ....why does this happen? In some places NGOs hold surveys – they ask 1500 people why these riots take place.....and each answers to his/her own accord....

Why do you think they happen?

I don't know either why they happen. I gave you 3-4 instances – this mentality that's taken shape, then people raise the issue of Kashmir, what happened in Kashmir. They evacuated all the Hindus, the government does not do anything, Hindus do not get protection there, this is the mentality, if there are riots, then Hindus are beaten up, Hindus are burnt. And they are the minority, not we. You ask them, they will all say this, that the government does not do anything for us.

*What connection does this have with Kashmir and with Pakistan?*

It is connected you see, everything comes from Pakistan, where does the RDX come from? Where do so many weapons come from? It is the Muslim organizations that provide these.....

*But this time the majority of people affected, the one and a half lakhs in the camps, is Muslim. They were attacked, their houses were burnt down. So how can you say this time too it was sponsored by Pakistan?*

No, no, where did the RDX come from, where did the weapons come from? The innocent people die, but the fundamentalists start riots – see last night we arrested 30 people – all are Muslims.

*But this time it was 1,500,000 Muslims who were affected, whose houses were burnt down. Those who come from Pakistan wouldn't attack Muslims.*

No no, this is all SIMI's network....

*No, come on, SIMI's network is hardly going to render one 1,500,000 Muslims homeless, burn them.....its obviously going on from both sides....all the weapons that were used this time, where did they come from?*

.....Were any weapons found with the Hindus? None were found, only those who had licences had any. Private explosives were not found. Whatever explosives were found, were found on their side.

*We heard that many Hindus had talwars (swords).*

No, no Hindus had talwars. What they had were *lathis* (sticks), nothing else. And if the Hindus are attacked, won't they defend themselves? And when the police comes, it's the police who shoots. Then whether its Hindus or Muslims....

**So no talwars and pistols were found with the Hindus?**

If they were, then they would have been very few indeed. Read the papers of 2 months. Read the Gujarati papers. Sandesh, Jansatta. In these they report all the names....

*But we can't read Gujarati.*

That's our situation. The English papers are behind us, and they exaggerate. They are the outsiders, the Dilliwallas. They will represent only the Muslims, Haven't Hindus been shot? Haven't their homes been burnt? They represent only the Muslims. See, see Star News, they too do the same. And they keep showing what happened four days ago.

*What about the Gujarati media?*

They show all. On Doordarshan, on Gujarati TV. This is what happened in the Hindu areas, this is what happened in the Muslim areas. ...they would have shown you what was found in Millat Nagar, they would have shown you what was found in the Hindu areas. See the Times of India, or the Indian Express, they won't show you this. So how would you know what's happening there?

*You said you taught for 30 years, where did you teach?*

In a Higher Secondary school. In Ahmedabad.

*What are your subjects?*

[Pause}...Maths and Science.

This Abdul Latif was killed in an encounter 2 years ago. Many Muslim extremists like Abdul Latif were nurtured in Gujarat, and by the Congress.....This Abdul Latif used to live in Chimanbhai Patel's own home. So he was encouraged. And they are the ones who get elected. I name Faroukh Sheikh, the MLA, Badruddin Sheikh... These people are all anti-social elements. They get elected....they are Congress men. Ershad Mirza, he is from the Congress. And they kept encouraging these people all these years. That's why they dared to do all this. And they start the riots, hurl four bottles and then disappear. But the sufferers then have to suffer. Till date.... the BJP government after coming into power, in 95, in 98, it's been arresting extremists. That is why nothing has happened in Gujarat in four years. In the last four years there had been no riots in Gujarat.

*Is the ISI here?*

Yes, it's here. 145 members of the SIMI were arrested in Surat; 145 of them were holding a meeting in Surat. And, I'll tell you more: during the earthquake, people came from the whole country, specially in Kutch, on the Kutch border. You get in a truck; behind the truck you write "From Simi, From Simi" ..In the truck you would have some bedding, no not bedding, a few clothes, then they came and take up their positions in various places, they would set up tents. When the government came to know about this, it tried to remove them their tents....otherwise if they had come to the border, it would have affected Gujarat quite a bit.

## **Appendix 2: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MAJORITY COMMUNITY CAMP AND THE MINORITY COMMUNITY CAMPS**

The only camps run by the government were the ones set up for the majority community, as was Shahpur, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.. Unlike the warmth with which the community organizers received us in the minority camps, the personnel in charge here were extremely uneasy and suspicious about our presence, and finally made it clear to us that we were unwanted. The person who spoke avoided giving us his name, saying we should talk to the head organizers of the camp, Atul Bhausa, Municipality Corporation Representative, and Jagadish Datanya, when they arrived. However he did venture some of the information we requested. The camp comprised people from Khanpur, Shahpur, Shankarbhavan, Khadivadi, and from behind Bhavan's College, and were mostly daily labourers; some were vegetable vendors. The camp assistants claimed that 1000 people lived there and 300-400 of these were children. The reason why there were only about 30 adults in sight was that most men had gone back to work (unlike the minority workers who were not getting even daily wage employment). The women too would go back home with their children during the daytime and return at night. In response to our query regarding supplies one of them began to answer that they received everything from the government – sufficient, water, medicines etc. but was cut short abruptly by the first one, saying the camp head should be answering this question. It reminded us in no uncertain terms that this was an official government set up.

None of the approximately 30-40 children who sat with us went to school, except one. They all came from extremely poor families. The organizers were reluctant to leave us alone with the children, but finally did so when many of the other adults came and sat around. Unlike in the minority camps, the constant intervention and prodding of parents added to the confusion of the children. Even our driver, a BJP supporter expressed his unease at the attempts to influence the children's versions. After we had talked to the children for about half an hour the organizers came and told us we should leave, we had overstayed our welcome.

Before we left, an old woman came up to a member of this team and said, "We do not even get enough food here – and medicines? This camp has never given us medicines! We just want peace. Please write to the leaders in the government and tell them to allow us to go back to our homes. We want to go back home, but they will not let us. They want us to continue staying here."

*Source: Anonymus assistant organizer, and old woman, Shahpur Sara No. 5-6 Majority Community Camp, Ahmedabad, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002*

### **Appendix 3: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT NEIGHBOURS/OTHER COMMUNITY**

We witnessed a lot of confusion in the children's heads in both communities. On the one hand there was a definite breakdown of trust and sense of betrayal on both sides, on the other they could not say that all the people of the other community were evil – some were definitely good. Questions of good and evil seemed to fall more clearly along the lines of outsiders being bad, and neighbours being “some good and some bad.” It was significant that none of the children could categorize the “other” community as all “bad”, even after having suffered tremendous losses.

Another interesting aspect was the positive role played by majority community *dadas* and *dons* in certain areas, indicating that a different ethics of the underworld was also asserting itself against that of the communal carnage in some areas.

#### ***IN THE MAJORITY COMMUNITY CAMP***

##### ***Shahpur Sara No. 5-6 Camp, Ahmedabad, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002***

The parents told us that in Khanpur, 7-8 of the approximately 1000 houses of the majority community had been burnt. In the Shahpur bustee, which shared a wall with the minority community area, all the houses were burnt on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Some houses were also burnt behind Bhavan's college. The children were initially a bit wary, soon they relaxed and were eager to talk.

##### **Sunil Kanubhai: 8 yrs, Shahpur camp, Ahmedabad**

A pleasant friendly child, Sunil was pushed forward by his mother to talk to us, and did so willingly:

“About 300 men came to our area. They looted our houses and burnt them. My house was burnt by Mohammedans. I fell sick after seeing the swords in their hands. I do not have any Mohammedan friends. No one died in our neighbourhood, when there is peace we will return home.”

***Source: Sunil Kanubhai, in the Shahpur Camp, Ahmedabad, May 9<sup>th</sup>.***

##### **Asha Manilal: 12 years, Shahpur Camp, Ahmedabad.**

A lively affectionate girl, Asha too was pushed forward by her mother to talk to us:

“The Mohammedans came at 1 A.M., many of them attacked our homes, saying “*Mar denge, kat denge*” (We will kill you, we will cut you up). We ran away and came straight here, to this camp.” First she said, “No, I did not play with the Mohammedan children. The *miyas* are not good, they will kill us.” Upon further questioning she replied, “We used to play together.... but I have forgotten their names.”

“You know what happened here the other day?” she suddenly said in hush hush tones. “A Muslim woman had come here, near the camp, to buy vegetables....we all got together

and chased her away...” she said triumphantly, as other children joined her: “You never know, she may have come to attack us.”

*Source: Asha Manilal in the Shahpur Camp, Ahmedabad. May 9<sup>th</sup>*

**Sagar Rajesh: 10 years, resident of Shankarbhavan, Ahmedabad.**

Our houses were looted. The *miyas* burnt some of our houses too. In peace time we used to play together. Now I won't play with them I'm scared....”

When asked why he was scared, he just looked at us without an answer – then looked at the adults.

*Source: Sagar Rajesh, Sahapur Camp, Ahmedabad. May 9<sup>th</sup>.*

**Maya Bholyo: 12 yrs. Lived behind Bhavan's College, Ahmedabad.**

We requested the adults to leave us alone with the children for a while. Maya Bholyo was the only one who spoke to us without the parents around.

“Mohammedans lived on both sides of our colony, we used to talk to their children, but not any more. Our parents are scared, we are scared. In peace time too now we won't talk to them. We heard that those who came to kill us were Mohammedans...no we did not see them ourselves. We were told they had come from outside....*bahar se aaye thhe*”

They said they were not angry, just scared, and they would not talk to Muslim children any more.

When asked if they wanted peace, they all nodded their heads vigorously. Did they believe all Muslims were bad? “No”. Did they believe all Hindus could be bad? “No.”

If we became enemies, then could we bring in peace? All, including Maya, Asha, Sagar and Sunil smiled like it was a foolish question, “Of course we cannot.” But to the final question of how we could then usher in some peace they looked at us questioningly, with a puzzled look in their eyes.

As we left the camp, they followed us to the camp and told us in very concerned, affectionate tones: “*Apna khayal rakhna....take care of yourselves.*”

*Source: Maya Bholyo and the other children above, Shahpur camp, Ahmedabad, 9<sup>th</sup> May.*

## **IN MINORITY COMMUNITY CAMPS**

**Aslam: Class 5, resident of the Ghachi ki Gali area, Ahmedabad.**

The central focus of Aslam's conversation with us was regarding the rescue of his family by a neighbouring Hindu “don”, and the simultaneous distrust of Hindu neighbours:

“I will not go back - there are only Hindus there. I saw a bakery being burnt. One factory worker was cut to pieces...he refused to flee, he lived alone....later he was burnt...this

was narrated to us by a Hindu neighbour. We were saved by my *mama* (maternal uncle)'s friend Dilip. He is a big "don". He sheltered 20 members of my family in his house for 3 days. He would say he was a don, so we could stay "bindaas" (carefree) in his house, nobody would touch us. We stayed in his house for three days, then he summoned an ambulance and a Tata Sumo. He drove us in the Sumo to the Gandhi Ashram from Ghachi ki Gali, and from there to the Juhapura camp.

He actually saved 120 people. On a Saturday night at 3 A.M., the don Dilip and his friend set out on a Hero Honda, with 3 talwars, 2 guns, and spiky strips wrapped around their fingers. They rode on the Honda all the way down to Juhapura to make sure the road was clear, then they called on the mobile to say that it was safe. Then the rest of the people came down that road, standing in tempos, and reached Juhapura safely at 5 A.M.

The Hindus who came from outside are bad. In our area some are good, some are bad."

**Source: Aslam, in Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

**Minnat: Class 8, from Ekatanagar, Ahmedabad.**

"Our house was in Ekatanagar, and we had two garages there too. The tola arrived suddenly one day and burnt down our house, burnt down our garages too. They were all Hindus. We too would not have survived, it was our neighbour Bharat uncle who saved us. Bharat uncle is a Hindu – he is the strongman of our area, "*Hamare mohalle ka dada hai!*".

**Source: Minnat, in Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

**Raeesa: Class 9, from Naroda Road, Ahmedabad.**

Raeesa was helping out with the younger children in Juhapura when we met her. She couldn't sit for exams because of the rampant carnage taking place at that time. She said: "Our house was burnt down but we all escaped unhurt. Many of our Hindu neighbours participated in the attack, but not the ones immediately next door. They were the ones who saved us.....no, I never want to go back to that neighbourhood."

**Source: Raeesa, in Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002**

**Mohammed Sheikh Mohsin, Cl. 8, and his cousin Faroukh, Cl. 7, residents of Danteswar, Santoshwadi, Baroda.**

Faroukh first started talking to us, stammering and with a hurt, lost look in his eyes. His cousin Mohsin sat in sullen silence, with an angry stare that never left his eyes, even when he started talking to us later. Faroukh obviously idolizes his older cousin; that was how our attention was also drawn to Mohsin.

Faroukh:

"My home was in a Hindu area, they burnt it down, then we ran to Mohsin's house. They attacked his house too, and kept looting it from 11.A.M. to 5 P.M. We jumped across the walls and ran, we spent 5 days in the *khet* (fields), a Patel sheltered us for 3-4 days. Then,

while fleeing we entered the compound of a jail. The jailer threatened to kill my father who was leading us. In despair my father said, “The kill my whole family, form the oldest to the 6 yr. old, kill them.....” .The jailer relented and saved us. Once my dad spent the whole night in a water tank clutching the Quran..... ..

My mother and grandfather went back to Baroda recently. They came back and told us that all our houses had been bulldozed and roads had been built over the land. Mohsin’s house will have a temple built upon it. O we cannot go back there... and in Ahmedabad we will get no Government help – the local collector said there will be no help for outstation folks.....in any case they are giving only Rs. 1000-10,000 compensation for those who have lost a lakh or more. Which school will we go to now? Where will our school fees come from? And uniforms? My dad used to own an electrical goods shop, Mohsin’s dad is in the railway service....and dadaji had got his kaccha house made into a bungalow....now... “

In the meanwhile, Mohsin’s mother joins in: “Mohsin is always angry these days. He is used to getting much more, he demands money from me for breakfast every morning, he can’t do with only tea and toast every morning, he is used to omlettes. On the one hand he is constantly angry, on the other his father beats me up in his frustration – what will I do?”

Then Mohsin speaks up in a tight voice: “ I will kill them. I will kill those who burnt my house \_ Karan, Thakur, Kodia...” We used to repair their fans for free, now they’ve looted 700 fans from our family.....And our neighbours killed my cat too. I loved my cat..... they used to hate it.....they threw it down from the balcony, then threw a brick down on it to kill it.....

We had some good neighbours too on the other side. They had kept our auto, our scooter, and some of our clothes for us. But then Sachin, the local *dada* found out and made them burn these things under threat....they burnt them with their own hands....they too burnt our things.”

*Source: Md. Sk. Mohsin, in Rang Avadoot camp, Juhapura, Ahmedabad. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002*

**Saira age 12, Afsana, age 11, Naina, age 12, Anju, age 12, Rukhsat, age 9, Nilofer, age 10, Nilofer, age 9, Hena, age 11.**

They're all survivors from the horrors of Naroda Patia in Ahmedabad where more than 80 people were burnt alive and many women raped and maimed in what is probably the worst carnage in the current spiral of violence. The girls are young and making sense of what they have seen and heard seems impossible. But they have been scarred for life, their trust in Hindus shattered. They speak of 'evil Hindus'. The Hindu who burnt our home. The Hindu who didn't let us escape.



Some of them have seen with their eyes things no child should see. Others have only heard things. But they are still things no child should hear. "Hinduon ne bura kaam kiya"(Hindus have done 'bad things' - a euphemism for rape), they tell us, as their eyes shift uneasily. They look at each other as if seeking silent affirmation of what none of them really comprehended.

Or, did they?

"Balatkaar" (Rape) - they know this word. "Mein bataoon Didi" (Shall I tell you?), volunteers a nine year old, "Balatkaar ka matlab jab aurat ko nanga karte hain aur phir use jala deta hain." (Rape is when a woman is stripped naked and then burnt) And then looks fixedly at the floor. Only a child can tell it like it is. For this is what happened again and again in Naroda Patia - women were stripped, raped and burnt. Burning has now become an essential part of the meaning of rape.

Hindus hate us, they say.

Why?

Because we celebrate all their festivals - we play Holi, we love patakas at Diwali, but the Hindus can't celebrate our festivals. That's why they're jealous. So jealous that this year they did not even let us take out Tazia processions (in fact the decision to not allow tazia processions on the 10th of Moharram was taken by the Muslim community itself, for fear of violence).

These girls became friends only in the camp, although they all grew up and lived in Naroda Patia. Now they will probably share a life-long unspoken bond of victim-hood. But they are children still. Resilient. Survivors. Their eyes still bright and curious. They even giggle occasionally, as they follow us around Shah-e-Alam, scampering easily over human beings scattered like debris around the relief camp. But will they ever forget? Will Naina, who once had scores of Hindu friends, have them again? Will she trust again?

***Venue: Shah-e-Alam Relief Camp, Ahmedabad, March 27, 2002***

***(from The Survivors Speak)***

**Rehana Yusuf: 18 yrs, resident of Ode village, Anand district. May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

Ode, where twenty-seven persons have been burnt to death, and 200 homes burnt down, is the worst affected village in the Anand district. Most of the affected people from this village are staying at the Sureily Camp. Sureily does not fit into the conventional image of a camp. 300-350 people have been temporarily accommodated in different houses of the village and come to the camp for meals. Rehana came to see us at the camp:

“It was twelve o'clock in the day when a *ḥolâ* consisting of three to four thousand assailants entered our village Ode. Unlike all the other members of our joint family, my parents and I were not home at that point of time. We were washing our clothes at the neighbouring (Hindu) Patels' house across the street. The non-resident Patels used to leave the key with my family. From this house, I saw how the *ḥolâ* poured petrol over my dadi (grandmother) and badi amma (elder aunt), and another neighbour, and burnt

them. Bari amma was screaming “Save me! Save me!” but we could not save her. My parents and I hid ourselves in the Patels’ empty house for three days. At night they came back and ransacked our house. I was shocked to see that many of our old Hindu neighbours, who had celebrated Id with us, had biryani with us just two days ago, had joined the jolâ. I couldn’t keep myself away from the window those three days even though my parents kept asking me to come away. They came back everyday for three days, dragged out dadi and bari ammi’s corpses, and burnt them over and over again – they wanted to leave no sign of the bodies.

For three days we were too scared to sleep, or eat. I would only see all that had happened swimming before my eyes. The tore our Quransharif too, “*Hamare Qualam-e-Pak ko bhi bezzat kiya.*” Everything seemed meaningless. Now its better, but whenever I talk I see all that again.”



Rehana has filed FIRs against the persons whom she could identify in the plundering mob, but is also still in shock about her neighbours: Earlier, our Hindu neighbours would come to our house, eat with us, invite us to their weddings and festivals. They are the ones who assured us of our safety, and they are the ones who burnt us. I used to spend time with their daughters, they would perform their own rituals, cook their own specialities at our weddings. I don’t want to see them again. I trusted them because we had such relations, but they completely betrayed our trust. Now we can never go back there. I cannot think of living amongst Hindus again.

Yet when one of asked her gently, “But you are sharing your experiences with us – don’t you see us as Hindus?”, Rehana, after all that she had experienced, turned to us with a clarity that was stunning, and said very naturally: “Sab Hindu kharab thorai hote hain?”

*Source: Rehana, in the Sureli camp, Anand district*

**Appendix 4: GIRLS RAPED AND BURNT** (From *The Survivors Speak*, The Citizen's Initiative report on how the Gujarat massacre has affected minority women.)

**Mehrunissa: 16 yrs., Naroda Patia, Ahmedabad.**

On February 28, 2002

"The mob started chasing us with burning tyres after we were forced to leave Gangotri society. It was then that they raped many girls. We saw about 8-10 rapes. We saw them strip 16-year-old Mehrunissa. They were stripping themselves and beckoning to the girls. Then they raped them right there on the road. We saw a girl's vagina being slit open. Then they were burnt. Now there is no evidence."

*Source: Kulsum Bibi, Shah e Alam Camp, March 27, 2002*

**Farzana: 13 yrs., resident of Hussein Nagar.**

"I saw Farzana being raped by Guddu Chara. Farzana was about 13 years old. She was a resident of Hussain Nagar. They put a saria (rod) in Farzana's stomach. She was later burnt. 12 year old Noorjahan was also raped. The rapists were Guddu, Suresh and Naresh Chara and Haria. I also saw Bhawani Singh, who works in the State Transport Department kill 5 men and a boy."

*Source: Azharuddin, 13 years. He witnessed the rapes while hiding on the terrace of Gangotri Society. The Chara basti is located just behind Jawan Nagar. March 27, 2002*

**Children burnt with petrol; unmarried girls raped and burnt. Naroda Patia.**

(FEBRUARY 28, 2002) "By now it was 6.30 in the evening.....My sister-in-law was stripped and raped. She had a three-month old baby in her lap. They threw petrol on her and the child was taken from her lap and thrown in the fire. My brother-in-law was also struck on the head with the sword and thrown in the fire. We were at the time hiding on the terrace of a building. My mother-in-law was unable to climb the stairs so she was on the ground floor with her four-year-old grandson. She told them to take away whatever money she had but to spare the children. They took away all the money and jewelry, then burnt the children with petrol. My mother-in-law was raped too. I witnessed all this. Unmarried girls from my street were stripped, raped and burnt. A 14-year-old girl was killed by piercing an iron rod into her stomach....."

*Source: Jannat Sheikh, testimony to Citizens Initiative.*

**A mother's account of her daughter's rape: Village Eral, Panchmahals district.**

“My father-in-law, a retired schoolteacher, refused to leave the village with the other Muslim families who fled to Kalol on February 28th. He believed no one would harm us. From the 28th about 13 members of my family sought refuge in various people's houses and the fields. On Sunday afternoon (March 3rd) the hut we were hiding in was attacked. We ran in different directions and hid in the field. But the mob found some of us and started attacking. I could hear various members of my family shouting for mercy as they were attacked. I recognized two people from my village - Gano Baria and Sunil - pulling away my daughter Shabana. She screamed, telling the men to get off her and leave her alone. The screams and cries of Ruqaiya, Suhana, Shabana, begging for their izzat could clearly be heard. My mind was seething with fear and fury. I could do nothing to help my daughter from being assaulted sexually and tortured to death. My daughter was like a flower, still to experience life. Why did they have to do this to her? What kind of men are these? The monsters tore my beloved daughter to pieces. After a while, the mob was saying "cut them to pieces, leave no evidence." I saw fires being lit. After some time the mob started leaving. And it became quiet.”

***Source: Medina Mustafa Ismail Sheikh, Kalol camp, Panchmahals district, March 30, 2002***

· Medina's testimony has been corroborated by the other two living witnesses - Mehboob and Khushboo. Khushboo in her testimony also recounted how her grandfather (Medina's father-in-law) and Huriben were killed. She also narrated how Ruqaiya's pajamas were taken off and then one by one the men started "poking her in the lower part with their body".

**Yasmin: 13 yrs, Village Delol, Panchmahals District.**

(March 1, 2002) The extended families of Mohammad Bhai and Bhuri Behn - about 20 people - were chased by the mob to the river. Javed and another boy who managed to escape and hide behind a bush saw the mob kill Mohammad Bhai and rape Yasmin. They were about to kill the mother of the other boy who was hiding with him. So he screamed and ran out from behind the bush and was caught. He was made to walk around the dead bodies that were burnt (as if around a pyre) and he was then pushed into the fire.

***Source: Women from Delol at Halol Camp, Panchmahals district, March 30, 2002. Javed, Mohammad Bhai's nephew, had come to Delol to help his uncle. He had narrated this to several of the women from Delol. Javed has returned to his village, Desar.***

## **Appendix 5: MUSLIM SCHOOLCHILDREN TARGETED IN GUJARAT**

The Hindustan Times, Saturday, April 6, 2002

Muslim schoolkids targeted in Gujarat, by Vinay Menon

(Ahmedabad, April 5) The pogrom in Gujarat may be far from over. Intelligence collated by the Gujarat Police reveals that "Hindu activists" are piecing together a survey to identify students from rich, educated Muslim families in some prominent schools here.

The objective, sources say, is to sustain the fear psychosis that has overcome the minority community, resulting in a sharp drop in the number of Muslim students attending school. "By conducting the survey, these religious maniacs are trying to force Muslim families to get their wards to leave these schools for good. A kind of cleansing of the education system, without spilling any blood," said a senior police officer.

The three schools targeted are Xavier's Loyola Hall, Diwan Ballu Bhai and Ankur.

This is the second time since the riots began that a "survey" like this has been conducted. On February 27 (a day before the riots began) meetings were reportedly held in several pockets of Ahmedabad city to identify Muslim properties and houses. This information was then passed on to mobs that attacked the targets.

Several VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders have FIRs registered against them for leading these mobs - a charge both organisations deny.

Intelligence inputs have not identified specific organisations that are responsible for the latest 'survey', but the needle of suspicion points in a familiar direction.

"Our report shows that school staff, bus drivers, and autorickshaw drivers who ferry the children to school have been asked to assist in leaking information about Muslim students," said the police officer. "The idea this time being not necessarily to attack the targets, but to scare the children to the extent that it becomes difficult for them to attend schools without fear of being attacked."

Collecting such information, sources say, is not a difficult task for these 'surveyors' since they have popular support. "It is not strange to see a schoolbus driver, who is also an activist or relative of an activist of one of the many Hindu organisations, assisting these goons in their job," the officer said.

Information, it is reported, is also being collated by the same group of Hindu activists on what remains of Muslim business establishments across Gujarat.

Such behind-the-scenes legwork continues even as eight areas with some minority presence in Ahmedabad city alone remain tense and under curfew. "The Prime Minister's speech was an effort in confidence building. But today, after more than 36 days of rioting, we still cannot walk on the streets of the city like free men, without fear of communal violence," said Anwar, a resident of Daryapur.

