

CHAPTER 1

VIOLENCE IN VADODARA: AN OVERVIEW

After Ahmedabad, Vadodara (also known as Baroda) experienced the most widespread and sustained violence following the Godhra massacre on 27th February 2002. The first incident of 'retaliatory' violence (or as Chief Minister Narendra Modi would have it, Newtonian 'reaction') occurred with the arrival of the Sabarmati Express at Vadodara Railway Station on 27th afternoon. An armed mob unleashed terror at the station, attacking three persons (including one Hindu mistaken for a Muslim); one person died. Late that evening, the first attacks on Muslim property took place in certain areas. 28th February and 1st March - the days of the Gujarat *bandh* and the Bharat *bandh* called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and supported by the BJP - saw the most brutal attacks on Muslim lives and property. In the first week of violence in the city, according to official statistics, 33 people had died, 411 shops had been torched, 175 houses were burnt/destroyed, 47 vehicles were damaged, 13 factories and 4 hotels were damaged (*Indian Express*, 9 March 2002). The total loss of property was estimated at Rs. 8 crore. Even these highly conservative estimates indicate the scale of violence in Vadodara. The events of the first few days following the Godhra incident signalled the beginning of violence and communal tension, which were to continue for almost three months.

Interim reports of the post-Godhra violence in the city were submitted to various teams which visited Vadodara: The National Human Rights Commission (21st March), the Editors' Guild (5th April) and the National Commission for Women (12th April). PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan also organised local hearings of the Citizens' Tribunal that visited Vadodara (8-11 May). The present document is the final report of PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan on violence in the city and surrounding villages over the three-month period from 27th February to 5th May. It elaborates on the findings of the earlier interim reports, and includes updated information from testimonies and depositions of violence-affected victims and later fact-finding reports.

Discernible Patterns

The violence in Vadodara and its surrounding villages showed certain clearly discernible patterns.

- 1. The violence was directed almost exclusively against Muslims:** their property, livelihoods and symbols of community identity. Muslim-owned shops and establishments, *laari-gallas* and autorickshaws were systematically targeted. In most areas, Muslim houses and shops were attacked, and often looted and then burned down. The attackers did not spare symbols of collective cultural identity in Gujarat's '*Sanskar Nagar*'. Some examples, by no means exhaustive, are: the destruction of the Gaikwadi mosque in Makarpura; the desecration of Ustad Faiyaz Khan's tomb, which was damaged with burning tyres; the 450 year-old Pir Geban Shashid Baba *dargah* (also known as Jaliwale Bawa ki *Dargah*) outside the SSG Hospital (which was burnt, levelled and tarred over in the course of a few days); and *dargahs* where both communities worshipped. (In the case of the Khanka-e-Riyafat *dargah* in Dandia Bazaar, *mazar* of Fakhruddin Riyafat Saheb, Hindu worshippers warded off mobs on 15th March and saved the *dargah* from destruction; the *dargah* was razed by a mob on the 16th.) Inter-community marriages have been threatened: Muslim men with Hindu wives have been singled out for attack (Raja Masani, married to a Gujarati Brahmin, was brutally killed on 22nd March.) There were also attacks on the lives and homes of eminent Muslim citizens who have made significant contributions to the city, such as Dr. J. S. Bandukwala, Professor at Maharaja Sayajirao University and an active member of PUCL Vadodara; renowned epigraphist Mr. A. Ganam, formerly of the Archaeological Survey of India, since deceased; and Mehandi Sheikh, who is responsible for coaching Vadodara's Ranji Trophy cricket team as well as all Vadodara cricketers who have played for the national side. This list is not exhaustive, and does not refer to the contributions of thousands of ordinary Muslims who have been an integral part of the social and economic life of the city, for whom the violence has brought untold psychological, physical and economic suffering and insecurity.
- 2. The violence occurred in three more or less distinct phases.**

In the first phase, from 27th February to around 5th March, systematic, intensive and organised violence was directed against Muslims and their property.

- * On 28th February, a mosque in Gotri was burnt and the Islamic Study Centre (Ajwa Road) was attacked and extensively damaged. Cars belonging to Muslims parked in the Gandhi Ashram campus at Gotri were attacked, and Dr Bandukwala's house was attacked (for the second time) and burnt on 1st March. Poor and middle class Muslim communities were rendered shelter-less, their houses either looted, destroyed and/or burnt. Over the first two or three days, about 120 Muslim houses in Kisanwadi, 40 huts in Fagvel Nagar, 185 houses in Noor Park, 28 in Vishalnagar, 12 in Huzrat Paga, 40 in Kapurai, 80 in Adarshnagar in Bhutdi Jhampa, as also houses of Muslims in Govindnagar, Vijaynagar, Makarpura, Sardar Estate and Dandia Bazar, Sayajipura, etc. were destroyed.
- * Muslim men, women and children were killed by stabbing, private or police firing, and by burning them alive. Women were sexually harassed and assaulted, and threatened with rape. Families fled their homes to relief camps, homes of relatives, or outside the state.
- * At least a hundred Muslim shops and establishments were attacked, destroyed, looted and burnt. *Laari gallas*, *paan* shops, restaurants, hotels and other means of livelihood were either looted or destroyed. Big shops, small to big industry and home-based units were destroyed and gutted.
- * Over fifteen mosques, *dargahs* or other Muslim monuments were destroyed or damaged.
- * Widespread hate propaganda was circulated through pamphlets distributed by Hindu communal organisations in different areas, including those calling for the social and economic boycott of Muslims, about Muslims being a peril for the survival of Hindus, and urging Hindus to awaken, decimate and drive Muslims out from India.
- * Hindus who sheltered and supported affected Muslim families were threatened and abused.

In particular, the **events on 28th February and 1st March** were characterised by

- * The presence of **large roving mobs, armed with swords, and raising slogans like *Jai Sri Ram* and *Jai Hanuman***, attacking Muslim houses and shops. Reports from various Muslim localities over the first two days of violence spoke of stoning, threatening, stabbing, and the use of swords by mobs. Swords were a prominent weapon employed to intimidate Muslims. Throughout the night of 28th February, terrified Muslims hid in their homes, or in some cases were sheltered by non-Muslim neighbours.
- * **Gas cylinders, kerosene and petrol bombs** were widely used to destroy and burn Muslim houses and places of worship (Noor Park and Kisanwadi). Shops were set on fire by drilling holes in walls, pouring in inflammable chemicals and then setting them on fire so that they first smouldered and then burst into flames. Even animals were not spared: acid was thrown on goats belonging to Muslims, which were then killed (Gotri).
- * **There was large-scale looting** of homes and shops before setting them on fire. By 1st March, Muslims started leaving their localities and moving into *jamaatkhanas* or with relatives in 'safer' areas. Mobs went back repeatedly to the abandoned houses to loot and wreak further damage (for instance, in Atladra, Noor Park, Kisanwadi).
- * **There was selective destruction and targeting** of Muslim homes and property, with mobs in certain areas moving around with electoral lists. In Kisanwadi, women reported that a local man had made lists of house numbers and locations of minority houses. Visits to affected sites showed that where *laaris* (pushcarts) were parked in Akota, two Muslim *laaris* were burnt while the Hindu one in the middle was intact. Such examples can be extended to residential areas as well: in fact, in many cases, Muslim houses were saved only because they adjoined Hindu ones. Muslim tenants in Hindu-owned houses saw their belongings being dragged out and burnt; the houses themselves were not attacked or damaged.
- * **Police inaction** was a recurring and ubiquitous feature accompanying the violence. Reports from all areas investigated tell the same story: the police did not respond to repeated calls, or arrived late. Shanti Abhiyan members who made repeated calls to the police from Dr Bandukwala's house when it was surrounded by mobs, reported that the police did not arrive till much after the attack occurred. The same happened in the Best Bakery carnage, where the police arrived just as the survivors who had managed to escape to the roof of the burning building and spent the night there, were threatened that they would be killed. In many cases,

there was not only inaction but direct **complicity** of the police, who accompanied and at times incited attacking mobs. In certain localities, victims have alleged participation of police personnel in attacks.

- * **A disturbing feature of the violence has been the targeting of rural areas and incitement of tribal communities.** The violence spread to rural areas by 3rd March. Here too the attacks were focussed on Muslims. Tribal villages which had never before been affected by communal disturbances, saw large-scale violence. In Tejgadh, Panwad and Kawant, *adivasis* were mobilised to attack Muslim houses and property. It has clearly emerged from various reports that *adivasis* were incited by Hindu communal organisations. Terror was sought to be created by stoning, spreading rumours, and killing animals, followed by mob attacks which forced people to flee. This was followed by the looting of houses, including carrying away of their animals like goats (or killing them by driving vehicles over them), and finally burning, smashing, and breaking whatever was left in or around the houses. In many cases, victims fled to nearby fields; in Sokhada village, all the Muslim residents hid in the fields at night, watching their homes being looted and burnt.
- * Significantly, in Muslim majority localities and areas with mixed populations, Hindu houses were safe, and there were efforts by both communities to maintain peace. In several of these areas, trouble broke out in the second phase of violence.

The second phase of violence began on 15th March, the day of the *shiladaan* in Ayodhya. In Vadodara, processions and *ramdhuns* were organised on that day, violating prohibitory orders and leading to fresh escalation of violence. The violence first erupted in Machchipeeth, when the *shobha yatra* turned aggressive and violent, leading to stone-throwing on both sides. Violence then spread to other areas of the city. It is significant that areas in which residents had actively prevented violence in the first phase (such as Fatehgunj) were targeted in this phase. There have been reports of bangles being sent to areas which did not 'react' sufficiently in the first phase, to 'humiliate' the Hindus and spur them on to violence. Not surprisingly, many of these places, such as Dabhoi Road and Fatehgunj, witnessed violence in the second phase, after 15th March.

Towards the end of April, from around the 26th up to around 5th May, Vadodara was affected by a **third round of violence**. From around the third week of April, there were rumours in the city that there would be violence after the Gujarat State Board Examinations. These rumours led to the build-up of considerable tension. While the 'big attack' that was being anticipated did not happen, the tension that had built up manifested itself in a further round of violence, which began on 27th April.

The later phases of violence, less intensive than the first phase, were more like a steady war of attrition. During this period, in contrast to the first week of violence, Hindus in sensitive areas were 'prepared' for 'retaliation' by Muslims (aided, according to reports, by local Hindutva organisations, which distributed *talwaars*, *guptis*, etc.). This time, Muslims in some localities attempted to defend themselves, leading, with the prevailing build-up of tension, to street-level confrontations (stone-throwing, etc.) in some areas. When Muslims, who had been denied police protection during the most vicious attacks on their lives and property, came out to defend themselves, they were picked up by the police and charged with a range of offences, including Section 307 (attempt to murder).

3. **The role of the police in Vadodara through the entire period of violence** was ineffective at best and partisan at worst. Details of police inaction, complicity and their role in combing operations are given in a separate section of this report. In almost every event investigated, the police failed to prevent attacks on Muslims, in most instances not responding to calls for help. When and where the police did arrive, they either came too late, or were passive bystanders to the violence; in some instances, they actively encouraged the attackers or even participated in the attacks. (There were, however, a few instances where the police responded to repeated requests and escorted affected people to safer places.)

For example, in Indiranagar, Makarpura, after a mob had vandalised a mosque, residents made around 100 phone calls to the police. However, the police showed up only after four hours, only to say that the residents should make their own arrangements for their security. Starting with the attack on well-known PUCL activist Prof. Bandukwala on 28th February, the police and state administration did not take action in spite of being given details well in advance (24 to 72 hours) of sensitive areas and persons by PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan. Other such examples where the police were repeatedly contacted in advance are: Panwad and Kawant; Borsali Apartments and Bahar Colony, Ajwa Road; Rain Basera in Machchipeeth, Wadi, Navapura, Patel Estate at Pratapnagar, and Sardar Estate on Ajwa Road.

Several incidents occurred in close proximity to police stations and *chowkis*. Details of some incidents are given in the section on the role of the police in this report. For example, on 15th March, in front of the Panigate Navapura Naka police *chowki*, three boys burnt a house belonging to a Muslim while six policemen stood watching. A shop of a Muslim in full view of the Panigate Police Station was burnt. Similarly right in front of the Mandvi Police Control Room, one shop was burnt without any police action. On Shastri Baug Road, very close to the police point, Saiyyad Studio was burnt. Even worse, there were many instances of the police taking active part in the violence - in the looting, arson and in the killings. In Navayard (Roshannagar and Ashapuri) kerosene was seen in a police vehicle during the riot by eyewitnesses.

In many cases, the police refused to file FIRs, filed false FIRs, or refused to give copies of FIRs to victims. When women in Taiwada, which was badly affected in police combing operations, went in late May to demand copies of FIRs they had filed for an incident which had occurred a month earlier, they were told that they would be given FIRs if they agreed to being arrested for curfew violation (being outside their houses) at the time of the incident.

A clear communal bias can be seen in the pattern of police arrests. In general, while Muslims were arrested under several and multiple sections, frequently including attempt to murder, Hindus were largely arrested for violating curfew. In order to show that Hindus were also being arrested in large numbers, the police resorted to arresting innocent and poor Hindus. In Indiranagar, Makarpura, on 17th March, migrant workers from Bihar were dragged out of their homes and arrested by the police, whereas those Hindus who were part of the attacking mobs in the area have yet to be arrested. In contrast to arrested Hindus, who were charged only under Section 188 (violation of prohibitory orders), the Muslims arrested were charged under Sections 137, 143, 144, 153, and 188.

Men, and in many cases, young under-age boys, were indiscriminately arrested, beaten up and seriously mistreated in police custody. Several men and boys were charged with attempt to murder. In the most serious instance of police atrocities, policemen shot and killed in cold blood two men who had been sitting on a night vigil outside a house in Taiwada. Rather than being an exercise to preempt further violence, the police combing operations in Vadodara in effect served to further terrorise the victims of violence (Muslims) while doing little to curb the real culprits (who were overwhelmingly Hindus). Investigations of fact-finding teams clearly indicate that police action has been completely biased and communal. Although the combing operations were beyond a shade of doubt grossly biased, there were some cases of police harassment of residents of poor Hindu localities as well.

In such a situation, it is not surprising that affected Muslim families are hesitant to return to their localities, where in any case Hindu neighbours are hostile if not downright threatening. In a particularly significant incident, 32 Muslims, accompanied by two police vehicles, were returning to fetch their belongings from Avdhut Nagar, Makarpura, when they were attacked by a large mob. Two persons were lynched and died on the spot, four were admitted to the ICU of SSG Hospital in critical condition, and the others were injured in the attack. Police Inspector Vanecha of the Makarpura Police Station, who was part of the police escort, claimed that it had not been possible for the police to deal with the large mob. He was later suspended for not taking effective action.

Police Atrocities on Women

In especially - although not exclusively - the later phases of violence, from 15th March onwards, the police played a prominent role in terrorising Muslim residents of localities through partisan and brutal **combing operations** and arrests. Women in particular were subject to extreme forms of harassment by the police in their own homes. In many cases this occurred when men had fled their homes out of fear of police repression. The police beat the women (not even sparing pregnant women), issued sexual and highly communal threats and employed extremely abusive language, vandalised and looted their houses. Not only were the women subject to verbal abuse, they were also subjected to physical and sexual abuse. In Bahar Colony of Ajwa Road, women went out to request the police to set up a police point as tension had been increasing in the wake of violence. The police not only refused to listen to the women, but *lathi*-charged to force them into their homes. At Rain Basera, Machchipeeth, under Karelbaug Police Station, as well as in several areas under Panigate Police Station, women were assaulted by the police during combing operations.

4. **Hindu religious symbols** were extensively used during the violence. The appropriation of Hindu religious symbols includes the following: shouting of *Jai Sri Ram* as a battle cry by marauding mobs and politicians of the ruling party; forcing Muslims to say *Jai Sri Ram* or *Sabse Bada Hanuman*, in many cases accompanied by pulling of their beards; projection of the Godhra victims as martyrs to the cause of Hindutva; aggressive and loud *bhajan* singing (especially on 15th March, but also before and after); and public recitations of the *Hanuman Chalisa* organised by the very elements involved in looting and arson (as in Tarsali).

Shrines, mosques and *madrassas*, several of them dating back to Gaikwadi and even earlier times, were damaged in the violence. In several cases of attacks on mosques, the *Quran Sharif* was vandalised or burnt (Raja Rani Talav, Kisanwadi, Navayard and Raghovpura village, Tarsali). Books, furniture and other items were damaged or burnt. Temples were quickly constructed on destroyed Muslim property. In Sama, for example, a Hanuman temple was set where chicken shops had been destroyed on 28th February. By the evening of 2nd March, *artis* were held, with loud *bhajans* blared over loudspeakers, and *prasad* was distributed. A '*Hulladia*' Ganpati was installed in the damaged Shenshani *dargah* on Waghodia Road. In Navayard, a mob attempted to install a Hanuman idol in a garage belonging to a Muslim.

Physical threats to people by both attacking mobs and the police during combing operations were heavily laced with communal overtones. There have been innumerable reports of women being threatened by the police who referred to their men with highly derogatory terms like '*bandiao*' (circumcised). In some cases, when people appealed for police protection, they were told, 'Where were you when Godhra happened?' During police combing, many pregnant women, some in advanced stages of pregnancy, were kicked and beaten on their stomachs by policemen; their pleas for mercy were met with statements like 'Kill the baby before it is born'.

5. **Attacks on children were used as instruments of terror:** In what is surely the most perverse dimension of the violence, children were used to torture and terrorise victims. In one particularly tragic incident in Tarsali, an old Muslim man was shown the head of his beheaded son on a tray before he was himself brutally slain. Another woman surrounded by a mob had to watch as her son, who had climbed up a tree to escape the mob, was brought down, his fingers cut off and the rest of his body dismembered in her presence, all before she herself was killed.

In many cases, children were beaten and abused in the presence of their parents. The police did not spare even small infants - they were beaten with *lathis*, kicked and abused, and in one case, even flung across a room. Young children who were badly beaten by the police were in a state of shock weeks after the incident.

6. **Communal violence spread to new areas.** Unlike in the communal riots of 1969 and 1992, which were largely restricted to 'traditionally' riot-prone areas, new areas were affected this time. Areas where people have co-existed peacefully for generations have been targets of violence, eg. Pira Mita and Fatehgunj. Elected representatives and persons associated with the ruling party have played a key role in spreading violence to peaceful areas. Municipal councillors have challenged colleagues in relatively unaffected areas and implied a lack of *mardangi* because no destruction has been seen in these areas. Similar patterns were reported from other parts of Gujarat when leaders in the quieter districts were sent bangles to denote lack of manliness. The idea seems to make all places unsafe for Muslims, and spread the notion that if Muslims migrate to nearby places, Hindu areas will become unsafe. (Some 'safe' areas like Tandalja where Muslims migrated after earlier riots have been sought to be projected as a 'mini-Pakistan' even by 'responsible' figures in society.)

For the first time, there were widespread attacks on Muslims in rural areas. *Adivasis*, who have never been involved in communal conflict in the tribal belt of Vadodara, took part in arson and looting. However, *adivasi* involvement in killings and rape seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. The organisation and leadership of the attacks in rural areas have almost exclusively come from non-tribal Hindus.

7. The **local media** has played a reprehensibly partisan and inflammatory role right from 28th February. Local political leaders used the electronic media in the most despicable manner. The intentions of leaders belonging to the ruling party and their affiliates becomes very clear if one examines the speeches on local TV channels, specifically JTV, Deep and VNM. (For some details, see Chapter 7). In fact, inflammatory speeches by certain leaders on local cable news channels on 15th March after the Machchipeeth incident helped to spark off combing operations by the police. Despite several appeals to the administration to take

action against certain particularly offensive local news channels, the Commissioner acted only in the last week of March by filing FIRs against two of the relatively less provocative channels.

It would be no exaggeration to state that the local press, particularly *Sandesh* and *Gujarat Samachar* (the former with greater impunity) was party to maintaining and fuelling communal tension in the city through sensationalised and provocative, at times highly inflammatory, reporting. *Sandesh*, for example carried the following headline on 28th February: "About 10 young Hindu girls were pulled out of the railway carriage by a group of religious fanatics". What the article actually reports is that this was a rumour and a myth. (We have presented a detailed analysis of *Sandesh's* reporting in the section on the role of the media.) Had these newspapers played a more sober and responsible role, allaying rather than preying on the fears of people (particularly of the majority community), they could perhaps have contributed to defusing tension and restoring peace in the city.

8. The violence has affected not only Muslims, but poor Hindu families as well, through loss of livelihood, and in many cases, burning of their homes. Poor and *dalit* women have complained to fact-finding teams of harassment, including sexual and offensive abuse, by local police during curfew.
9. Those **guilty of the violence** in the city and surrounding villages have been named in FIRs, in testimonies to various commissions, and also identified by PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan in our fact-finding in different areas. There is no doubt that the violence in the first phase was directly the work of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal (and their reportedly hired men), aided by local BJP leaders. In many cases, neighbours have taken part in attacks on localities; but in as many instances, victims have categorically stated that the violence was the work of outsiders. In later periods of violence, the police is also culpable, given the terror and trauma they have created during so-called combing operations. The local newspapers, particularly *Sandesh*, added to the stereotyping of the Muslim community as anti-national and terrorist, and served to create and maintain terror through systematic disinformation and rumour-mongering.
10. A visible **lack of remorse** among a large section of the Hindu educated middle-class about the enormous human tragedy that affected such large numbers of people in the state has been a disturbing feature of the violence in Vadodara and elsewhere in Gujarat. This situation is quite unlike that in other communal riots, where this socially and economically important section of society influenced the restoration of peace. In many Hindu middle-class localities, Hindus who had social relationships with their Muslim neighbours, gave encouragement and shelter to attackers. The reality that many of these attackers were lumpen elements of whom they would normally be fearful, did not seem to disturb them. Looting of shops destroyed by mobs saw the enthusiastic participation of middle-class Hindus. Right from the beginning of the violence, statements like 'a lesson needed to be taught' and other justifications of the violence were often heard from middle-class Hindus ranging from university teachers to petty businessmen. It is almost as if the affected people are the antagonistic 'other', beyond the pale of human ethics and morality, which forbid such savagery against people. There is an eerie silence in which victims of the carnage appear to have been invisibilised.

This Report

The Vadodara Shanti Abhiyan was formed about a decade ago in the wake of communal violence in the city. Its members include activists of mass-based organisations like trade unions, women's organisations and NGOs, as well as individuals like doctors, artists, school and university teachers, and other concerned citizens. Since the first week of March, Shanti Abhiyan, along with PUCL-Vadodara, has been working consistently to involve citizens in the city - students, teachers, residents of affected areas - in peace initiatives, through distribution of pamphlets, peace meetings, and formation of peace committees in different areas. It has also been involved in relief work and assessment of damages and losses incurred by those affected in the violence. It has constantly been in touch with the local administration, on issues of relief and rehabilitation of victims, and appraising them of developments in specific areas which could lead to potential violence.

PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan fact-finding teams investigated incidents of violence in different areas. Teams from outside Gujarat, particularly of women's organisations from Delhi and Mumbai, worked with PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan members to investigate some incidents of violence in different areas of the city and surrounding villages. The findings presented in this report come from a number of sources. The area reports - which describe events in different areas in and around Vadodara in some detail - are based on interviews with victims in their own localities and in relief camps; details from claim forms; depositions before the Citizens' Tribunal which held hearings in Vadodara; and interviews with Hindu neighbours of victims and residents of

different areas. In some few cases we have also made use of newspaper reports which we deemed to be reliable. While we have attempted to cover as much ground as possible, we are only too aware that these area reports are far from comprehensive, given the scale and magnitude of the violence, the limitations of our human and material resources, and the difficult conditions under which the information had to be collected.

In affected areas, it was at times difficult to get information about what had happened, for various reasons such as the prevailing state of apprehension and distrust, or the fact that victims of violence had fled the area and were scattered in relief camps, had fled to less affected villages in the state, or to their native villages outside the state. While we have attempted to gather information on the extent of damage, this information is much more complete for some areas than for others. Many areas experienced tension and relatively 'minor' events, and we have not been able to report on all these areas, such as for example Hathikhana. We have also attempted to gather information by way of filling up survey forms from individual families. Statistics from these surveys are cited in different sections of this report. (See also Annexure 3, for more detailed summary results of the survey.)

There have been instances of Hindus being attacked in the later phases of violence, and of police brutality in some poorer Hindu localities. We would have liked to investigate these further. However, attacks on Hindus were relatively few and isolated instances, and most of the confrontations were more in the nature of pitched street battles across 'borders', rather than systematic, organised attacks carried out with state complicity. Muslims and their property have overwhelmingly remained the targets of attacks over the entire period of violence, and the unprecedented, large-scale and systematic violation of human rights of an entire community necessarily engaged most of our attention and all of our over-stretched resources. In a number of areas we have investigated, we have attempted to include the perspectives of Hindu residents on the violence and on police actions.

The more indirect violence to people's lives due to the disruption of normal activity, particularly the loss of income over such a long period, has greatly affected the poor irrespective of religion. Although we have tried to bring this out in a number of the area reports, we have not been able to do justice to this aspect. The immediate and longer-term effects of the prolonged disturbances and the vitiated atmosphere on the lives of people is an area we believe deserves more extensive and careful study.

Despite these limitations, we believe that this report is sufficiently detailed and extensive to provide a fair picture of events in Vadodara city and some nearby villages. We have also included sections on the experiences of women, who were targeted in police combing operations, and for whom the consequences of insecurity - physical, psychological and material - have been particularly acute. Also included in this report is an analysis of the role of the local media, particularly the print media, both Gujarati and English, a preliminary version of which was submitted by PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan to the Editors' Guild. There are gaps in this report which we wish we could have filled: thus, we have not been able to sufficiently investigate events and activities of right wing Hindu communal organisations in the months preceding the communal carnage, which we believe to have had a significant bearing on the way events unfolded. Such activities have been reported from several areas affected in the post-Godhra violence in Vadodara.

We were unequivocal in our condemnation of the massacre of innocent Hindus at Godhra, which was without question a barbaric crime against humanity. We immediately issued press statements on 27th February condemning the Godhra massacre. But it must be said that there was little doubt in our minds that the violence following Godhra was anything but unexpected: we had seen this coming. The Sangh Parivar in Gujarat has kept up a sustained and systematic campaign against minorities over the past ten years or so. Incidents over this period indicate that they have been consistently preparing the ground for establishment of their hegemony in the state at all levels. What has, however, taken us aback about the post-Godhra violence has been the sheer *scale* and the *nature* of the events: the preparedness and precision; the level of brutality; the almost impenetrable wall of prejudice and hatred against Muslims built up through the concerted campaigns of Sangh Parivar organisations; the irresponsible, hawkish and frequently inflammatory role of the local press, which consciously served to keep tensions alive; and the role played by the police, at best ineffective and at worst collusive and downright intimidatory.

There is a distinction between Hindutva, the militaristic communal ideology of the Sangh Parivar, and Hinduism as a religion. Over the three months of violence in Gujarat many Hindus, in the state and elsewhere, have come out to express their anguish at their religion being appropriated by right wing fundamentalists and violence being perpetuated in its name. Where we have used the term 'Hindutva', it is to be understood to refer to the Sangh Parivar's ideology.

We believe that the people of Vadodara will realise that it is not in their interest for the city to be held to ransom by such forces, and that their security and well-being are inextricably tied to those of their neighbours, to whichever community they might belong. Shanti Abhiyan's experience of peace-keeping in various parts of the city which were consistently targeted by Hindutva forces in the most difficult phases of violence in the city, through the active involvement of Muslim and Hindu residents, provides hope that some sanity can be restored to this *Sanskar Nagari*.

PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan

Vadodara

31 May, 2002