

CHAPTER 6

ROLE OF THE POLICE

The active connivance of the state and the police in the post-Godhra carnage in Gujarat has been widely covered in the national press. The story in Vadodara was no different. The area reports provide a graphic account of police indifference, inaction and active complicity in dealing with the situation. They also indicate the extent to which the police force is communalised. This section summarises the role of the police in the communal violence that engulfed the city after 27th February 2002. It also describes the efforts of PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan to dialogue with the police in Vadodara.

Role of the Police

The findings of the different teams which investigated the post-Godhra violence in Vadodara city and outlying villages clearly indicate the overwhelmingly negative and communal role played by the police. In most cases, the police failed to respond to calls for help or arrived too late; in many instances they refused to help or were silent spectators to the violence; in some cases, they accompanied attacking mobs. There are cases where the police incited mobs, and in some instances, even participated in the rioting. Partisan action against Muslims, through beatings and firing in areas affected by violent attacks, have also been reported by victims. Police personnel who acted to bring the situation under control in some areas were transferred.

Several *dargahs*, shops and establishments that were in the close proximity of police stations and *chowkis*, were destroyed and burnt. The tables below give details of some of these cases.

Table 6.1: Mosques and *Dargahs* Close to Police Stations Destroyed/ Burnt/ Damaged¹

Location	Distance from the nearest police station/ <i>chowki</i> / picket
Mir Bakarali mosque (Raopura), Dandia Bazar	Within 250 metres from two police <i>chowkis</i> (Shiyapura and Dandia Bazar)
Salatwada mosque	Less than 150 m
Jaliwala Pir's <i>Dargah</i> , Near Sayaji Hospital	Right in front of Nagarwada Police <i>chowki</i> (Ladies Cell).
Haji Hamja mosque (Chhipwad)	Right behind City Police Station, Mandvi
Begum saheb's mosque (Navabazar)	Less than 200 m: Rokadnath Police <i>chowki</i>
<i>Dargah</i> near Bajwada Naka	Less than 200 m
Madina Mosque at Tajgira Kabrastan, Karelibaug Road	About 300 m from Karelibaug <i>chowki</i> , Navi Dharti,
Bade Hazarat Saheb's <i>Dargah</i> , Karelibaug	About 1 km from Bahucharaji Police <i>chowki</i> , Navi Dharti
Baranpura mosque	Within 150 m from Wadi Police Station
Mosque under the overbridge at Pratapnagar	Within 100 m from the Pratapnagar Police Training College
Tarsali mosque	About 1 km from the police <i>chowki</i>
Makarpura mosque	Near Police Parade Ground
<i>Dargah</i> near Udyog Nagar, Ayurvedic Hospital, Panigate	Less than 200 m
Mosque in Kisanwadi	1 km (approx.)
Mosque/madrassa in Navayard	2 km from Fatehganj Police Station
Noor Park, Tarsali Waghodia Chowkdi <i>Dargah</i>	2 km

¹ For a more complete list see Chapter 2, Riots at a Glance.

Table 6.2: Prominent Establishments/Shops Close to Police Stations Burnt/ Looted/ Destroyed²

Establishments/shops	Location with respect to Police Station
Textile shops in Mangal Bazar, Nyaymandir and Nava bazaar: At least 70 shops - all belonging to Muslims burnt, looted, destroyed completely	Right in front of the police: Within 100 to 150 m from the Nyaymandir police <i>chowki</i> and Navabazar police <i>chowki</i>
Shoe World	Within 10 to 25 m of the Shiyapura police <i>chowki</i> in Raopura
Tower shoes	"
Snow white Laundry	"
Tower Jeans	"
Optic Palace	Within 50 m from both Shiyapura police <i>chowki</i> and Ahmedabadi <i>pol</i> police special picket
Deluxe Optical	Right in front of Jubilee Baug special police <i>chowki</i>
Indian Boot House, M. G. Road and other 5 Muslim shops	Within 100 meters from both the Lehripura Police <i>chowki</i> and The Mandvi Police Station (Head Quarter)
Optic Palace, Alkapuri	Directly opposite the official residence of the Police Commissioner, and the Collector, Vadodara, Also the Circuit House

In the 1314 cases for which PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan has information and analysed till date, the following is the profile of police involvement:

- * Police absent at time of attack: 814
- * Police informed but inactive: 397
- * No response from police: 60
- * Police present and actively involved: 25
- * Police prevented incident: 27

According to reports, an overwhelming number of those injured in **police firing** were Muslims. According to newspaper reports, 26 out of 33 victims of police firing admitted in the government SSG hospital in the first two weeks of violence, had injuries above the waist: in the head, chest and lower abdomen (*Times of India*, 13 March, p. 3). In many cases teargas was not resorted to before the police opened fire.

Combing operations were almost exclusively focussed on Muslims. The police often acted with great brutality, beating people (resulting in serious injuries, including multiple fractures), destroying property, issuing threats and making arbitrary arrests under a range of charges, including Section 307 (attempt to murder). Since the men were often hiding away from their homes - out of fear of vindictive police action - when combing took place, women bore the brunt of police repression. They were subjected to verbal abuse of a highly sexualised nature and often mercilessly beaten. Even pregnant women were brutally beaten; indeed, they seem to have attracted special attention from the police, and in many cases the beating was accompanied by statements such as "Let it die before it is born". Derogatory language and abuse against their religion was a frequent feature of police combing. The police also beat up infants and young children, elderly and ill people in their homes. People have lost all faith in the police after their traumatic experiences in so-called combing operations and the cynical and persistent denial of justice.

The summary below, based on more detailed information presented in the area reports, gives an overview of the role of the police in specific areas of the city. Police action (and inaction) have been classified under a number of categories, and the areas in which instances were reported are listed for each category. In many – probably in most – cases where police help was sought, the police failed to respond promptly. The reasons given ranged from pleas that they had no men or vehicles, to outright refusal to help. 'Police inaction' refers to situations in which police were present during incidents but did not attempt to prevent or stop them. In a number of cases, police arrived together with attacking mobs, i.e. accompanying the attackers: these are listed under a separate category. While the presence of police as passive bystanders during attacks also constitutes a refusal to help, the category of events called 'police refusal to help' refers to those cases where the police categorically refused to come to the aid of residents when they called for help; such refusals were generally accompanied by taunts such as 'now you have to reap the reward of Godhra'. Police inaction at the scene of attacks was at times

² For a more complete enumeration, see Chapter 2.

compounded by explicit encouragement of attackers, or incitement to further violence, such as through urging the attackers to kill Muslims ('why are you only burning their houses?') or rape Muslim women ('*unki izzat loot*'). In yet other instances, policemen were directly involved as participants in attacks. Cases of police incitement or participation in looting and arson have been listed in a separate category. A further category, 'Partisan police action...' refers to situations in which police acted against victims of mob attacks rather than against the attackers. The 'B' and 'F' appearing in parentheses after the names of localities refer to beating and firing respectively.

Police atrocities against residents of affected localities during combing operations have been so widespread and extensive that they have had to merit a separate box. The letters in parentheses again serve to distinguish what kinds of actions occurred where. Atrocities committed during combing operations against women, children, elderly and ill persons have been separately highlighted, as have the use of highly offensive sexual and religious verbal abuse.

Table 6.3: Police Inaction in Areas of Vadodara City and Suburbs

Police Action	Areas
Failure of police to come when called/late arrival	Best Bakery, Taiwada, Baranpura, Makarpura, Shivshakti Nagar (Makarpura), Noor Park, Alkapuri, Khatija Park, Shivam Society, Aalishan and Borsali Apartments, Bahar Colony (Ajwa Road), Sama, Bhayali, Maretha, Sokhada, Kawant, Pipalda
Police inaction	Panigate Gaurav Society, Taiwada, Bavamanpura, Baranpura, Machchipeeth, Manjalpur, Shivshakti Nagar, Avdhut Nagar, Noor Park, Raghovpura (near Tarsali), Ramdev Nagar (Gotri), Gorwa village, Fagvel Nagar, Indiranagar (Karelibaug), Khatija Park, Sardar Estate, Aalishan and Borsali Apartments, Bahar Colony (Ajwa Road), Kisanwadi, Das Patel ni Chaal (Navayard), Fatehgunj, Sama, Bajwa, Maretha, Sokhada, Panwad, Kawant
Police arrival accompanying attackers	Panigate Gaurav Society, Bavamanpura, Baranpura, Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi, Machchipeeth, Noor Park, Raghovpura, Roshannagar (Navayard), Kawant
Police refusal to help	Taiwada, Fagvel Nagar, Indiranagar (Makarpura), Ranoli, Maretha, Pipalda
Police participation in attacks/looting, incitement by police	Madarmohalla, Taiwada, Vadsar Road, Shivshakti Nagar, Indiranagar (Makarpura)
Partisan police action against Muslims: beating (B), firing (F)	Madarmohalla (B), Panigate Gaurav Society (B), Bavamanpura (B), Taiwada (B, F), Raja Rani Talav, Sabina Park (Ajwa Road) (B), Aalishan, Borsali and Bahar (B,F), Roshannagar (Navayard) (F), Fatehgunj (F), Sama (B,F), Panwad (B)

Table 6.4: Police Combing Operations

<p>Beating (B), arrests (A), destruction (D), theft/extortion (TE), threats (T), harassment (H), arrests of boys (Ab), charging under Section 307 (C), firing (F)</p>	<p>Madarmohalla (B, A, D, H) Panigate Gaurav Society (B, H) Taiwada (B, H, T, D, C, F) Bavamanpura (A, D, H, T) Raja Rani Talav (B, T, D, F) Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi (B, A, Ab, T, C, F) Machchipeeth (A, Ab, C, F) Nagarwada (A, B, Ab, D, T) Kasamala (A, Ab, C, TE) Indiranagar (Karelibaug) (A, Ab, C) Suleimani Chaal (B, Ab, D) Sabina Park (B, D) Roshannagar-Navayard (A, B) Fatehgunj (A, B, C)</p>
<p>Atrocities against women (W), children (Ch), elderly (E), ill (I)</p>	<p>Taiwada (W, E, Ch, I) Raja Rani Talav (W, Ch) Kagda Chaal (W, Ch) Bavamanpura (W, E, Ch, I) Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi (W, E, Ch, I) Machchipeeth (W) Nagarwada (W, E, I) Kasamala (W) Bahar Colony (W) Suleimani Chaal (W, Ch,) Sabina Park (W, E, Ch) Sama (W)</p>
<p>Verbal abuse: Sexual (S), Religious (R)</p>	<p>Taiwada (S, R) Kagda Chaal (S, R) Raja Rani Talav (S, R) Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi (S, R) Machchipeeth (S, R) Nagarwada (S) Sabina Park (S) Kasamala (R) Fagvel Nagar (S) Indiranagar (Karelibaug) (S) Roshannagar-Navayard (R)</p>

As a rule, when the police made arrests during combing operations, people were beaten, often very badly. In some cases, witnesses who had been arrested and released later recounted inhuman treatment and torture in lock-up: apart from 'routine' beating, this included treatment such as refusal of food and water (in some cases, arrestees were advised to drink their own urine), and highly communal taunts and threats. While ill-treatment in police custody was almost certainly much more widespread, the team obtained explicit descriptions from residents of only a few localities. These were: Taiwada, Nagarwada, Bahar Colony and Roshannagar-Navayard.

In several localities, residents reported that policemen were drunk during combing operations: Bavamanpura, Suleimani Chaal, Kasamala Kabristan, Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi, and Raghovpura.

FIRs

Reports from the following places explicitly mention that the police declined to register proper FIRs: Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi, Nagarwada, Raja Rani Talav, Indiranagar (Makarapura), Gorwa, Fatehgunj, Raghovpura, Atladra, Maretha, Sokhada, Vadsar Road and Bajwa. However, it is more than likely that police did not register proper FIRs in other areas as well. When victims state that FIRs were 'properly' registered by the police, it is likely that many of these were improperly recorded and being illiterate, the complainants are not aware of its contents. In many instances, although FIRs were made out, the police refused to give copies to the

complainants. It is highly probable that many of these FIRs were framed in such a way that they would be useless for prosecuting cases. For example, when a woman from Kagda Chaal went to file a complaint against police brutality in her locality, the police duly wrote out an FIR; however, what the FIR stated was that the woman had been injured in stone throwing; the complainant got to know about the contents of 'her' FIR only by chance.

In some cases, the police threatened those who filed FIRs or demanded copies of FIRs they had filed earlier. In Rain Basera, police accused by women were paraded before them; one policeman handed over his revolver to a woman and mockingly asked her to shoot him. When, in the end of May, women from Taiwada went to collect copies of FIRs that were registered after the 15th March incident there, they were told by the police that they would get the copies if they were retrospectively arrested for violating curfew at the time of the incident.

Police Personnel Named

The victims of police excesses during combing operations have identified a number of policemen who were prominent in the attacks. Some of these names have come up repeatedly in testimonies from more than one locality. PI Kanani of the DCB, for example, has been named by several victims, especially in areas of the walled city, where he and his men were particularly ruthless during so-called 'combing' operations.

PI P.P. Kanani (Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) - Taiwada, Bavamanpura, Memon Colony, Panigate
ACB "A" DN. S. M. Katara - Bavamanpura
PI N. M. Parmar - Taiwada, Bavamanpura, Sabina Park
PI N.K. Rathod - Machchipeeth, Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi, Nagarwada
Constable Mahesh Rabari - Bavamanpura
Bhagirathsingh Jadeja (Goonda Squad) - Roshannagar-Tulsiwadi, Machchipeeth
Kanu Patel, and Fatehsinh Patel (all of Karelibaug Police Station) - Machchipeeth
PI J. K. Rao (DCB), M S Patel (Raopura Police Station) - Machchipeeth
Hemraj Parmar (Panigate Mobile No. 2) - Bahar Colony
PSI Patel (DCB) - Bahar Colony
PSI B. V. Rabari (Fatehgunj Police Station) - Roshannagar (Navayard)
PI J. J. Sarvaiya (Makarpura Police Station) - Makarpura
PSI G. N. Sarvaiya - Bajwa
SP I. D. Upadhyay, Constable Ranjit - Sama
PSI Vadalia (Varnama Police Station) - Raghovpura village, near Tarsali
Havaldar Ghanshyam Chudasma , PSI T. J. Vaghela (Fatehgunj Police Station) - Roshannagar (Navayard)
PI S. S. Baranda – Memon Colony, Panigate (since transferred)
PI P. R. Gehlot, Dy.S.P. B.M.Patel, Police Constable Kiran Talwar - Laxmipura, Samiyala

Instances of Police Help

In a few areas, the police offered help to victims, mainly by escorting them to safer areas, or relief camps, or preventing arson and looting. Some places where people received help from the police are: Baranpura Bakery, Gotri (Gandhi Ashram), Kisanwadi, and Odh village. In Taiwada, after the tragic deaths of two persons on 30th April and the atrocities against local people by the police, DCP Gautam apologised, and offered all help to the victims of combing operations and asked them to get in touch with him personally if stone-throwing occurred in the area. Residents of Baranpura said that DCP Geeta Johri had also been helpful and considerate. (She was transferred later.)

Some Comments on the Role of the State and Police

After the first two days of violence, it was apparent that the local police force was not up to controlling the situation, and a demand for army deployment was made. Despite having a local EME corps, which, according to discussions with army officials, had offered to step in to control the situation, this was not done, and violence continued unabated over the next few days. The authority with which the administration should have acted was missing. In Vadodara district, the situation was aggravated by the exercise of a chain of command where the city police is under the jurisdiction of the Police Commissioner, while the rural areas come under the Collector. This, in our view, led to delayed deployment, since the decision-making was divided and therefore weak. Delayed

deployment in Kawant, for example, despite several appeals from people there, including Hindus and a local BJP leader, led to unprecedented violence and destruction.

Another issue which is particularly important is where people are to turn for justice when the police themselves are guilty of violence. Terrified victims have had no choice but to file FIRs against the police in the presence of the very policemen who had abused and beaten them in their homes; or to get the same police who vandalised and aided in the destruction of their property to file *panchnamas*. In later phases of violence after 15th March, in a hostile and threatening environment and with a complete loss of faith in the police, people in affected areas were left with little option but to come out in self-defence when attacked. The police and state administration should have realised over the first two to three weeks of violence that apart from cracking down on those involved, urgent confidence building measures were necessary in areas where violence had occurred or were likely to occur. Attackers, even in the worst cases, and those named in FIRs, were allowed to go scot-free. On the other hand, when Muslims sought to defend themselves, this was treated as illegal criminal activity. The alienation and despair of the Muslim community in such a situation was further increased through police excesses during combing. In most cases of combing, policemen took away household 'implements' like small kitchen knives, hammers and sticks. Although there have been reports in the newspapers about large hauls of acid and petrol bombs, crude home-made weapons etc., they have not made clear from where these weapons were obtained during combing. It is true that people of both communities, especially in the old city area, have been arming themselves to prevent attacks. This has in turn created a constant environment of fear and insecurity. By showing laxity in dealing with those accused in the first phase of violence immediately after the Godhra incident, and selectively targeting the Muslim community in combing operations, the state machinery has shown itself to be ineffective and biased.

Given the kind of historical background documented in reports on earlier riots, the police could not be expected to have behaved very differently in the Gujarat context. The few individual police officers who were above partisan influences have been punished for carrying out their duties. In this context, it is very obvious that the government was sending out clear signals to the police to toe the political line or face the consequences. By and large, the police in Vadodara and Vadodara district played the game according to rules of their political masters.

The systemic causes of such lapses in the police administration need to be seriously examined and taken up at the highest possible levels. As we have seen, there is a historical continuity in the way the police have conducted themselves in Gujarat. Neither state nor society can survive such a shocking collapse of law and order by the very forces that are entrusted with the job of maintaining it. We fear that unless this lapse is dealt with firmly and the guilty officers are punished, the people of Gujarat will never regain confidence in state institutions. Overhauling the police force and systematically rebuilding the integrity of the police will have to be one of the first priorities of the State. Unless this happens, we fear that not a single lesson would have been learnt from the holocaust in Gujarat.

Efforts of PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan

PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan maintained regular contact with the Commissioner of Police (CP) and the Collector right from the afternoon of 27th February, the day of the Godhra carnage. On that day, on the basis of information available to us, we alerted the Police Commissioner about the possibility of violence breaking out on a large scale. The CP said that the police were quite well prepared and had the experience to handle the situation. They also dismissed our fears as being far-fetched and assured us that nothing untoward would happen.

Contrary to the confidence of the CP and Collector that nothing would go wrong in the city, almost all areas of Vadodara were engulfed by violence, including areas that did not have a history of communal tension or violence. On 28th February, when the house of Dr. Bandukwala in Sama was attacked and his car set on fire in his compound, we demanded immediate protection to him. The CP assured us that they were in touch with Dr. Bandukwala. We emphasised that such incidents could be repeated all over the city and provided a list of areas like Gotri where violence had already begun. The response we received was that this was a spontaneous reaction which would die down in a day, and that we were reacting with needless panic. This at a time when Vadodara was already in flames and new areas were being affected by violence.

We also asked for details about the deployment and strength of the police force in Vadodara city and district, but were refused any information. When we suggested police deployment in certain sensitive areas, they said that they did not have adequate numbers and that the policemen were tired, ill and so on. We were told that there

was a 'human problem' which we should understand. When we told them that the police had often been acting in a biased manner, we were told that the police are part of society and that the problem of biased behaviour could not be resolved at this juncture.

The behaviour of the Vadodara police is strikingly reminiscent of the manner in which the Mumbai police reacted during the Mumbai riots in 1992, as recorded in the Srikrishna Commission report::

"The response of police to appeals from desperate victims, particularly Muslims, was cynical and utterly indifferent. On occasions, the response was that they were unable to leave the appointed post; on others, the attitude was that one Muslim killed was one Muslim less...Police officers and men, particularly at the junior level, appeared to have an in-built bias against the Muslims which was evident in their treatment of the suspected Muslims and Muslim victims of riots. The treatment given was harsh and brutal and, on occasions, bordering on the inhuman...The bias of policemen was seen in the active connivance of police constables with the rioting Hindu mobs, on occasions, with their adopting the role of passive onlookers, and, finally, their lack of enthusiasm in registering offenses against Hindus even when the accused was clearly identified and post-haste classifying the cases in 'A' (True but not Detected) summary".

- *Report of the Justice B.N. Srikrishna Commission on the Mumbai riots of 1992-1993*

Every alternate day we provided to the administration detailed information about some areas of the city. The police failed to act on this information, and no explanations for their inaction were forthcoming when they were repeatedly approached. All our suggestions towards maintaining peace were rejected as a matter of conscious policy. In areas like Tandalja, where we were active and did inform the police about potential disturbances escalating into violence, the police did not play a active role, although they refrained from playing a negative role. The experience of Tandalja - where peace was maintained through the entire period of disturbances in the city - shows that violence could have been far more effectively contained if the police and administration had involved local people and organisations working against violence in peace-keeping efforts.

We were also constantly in touch with the police about the role of the media and the manner in which RSS, VHP and BD leaders were using local channels to make inflammatory and extremely provocative speeches, and demanded action against the offending media. However the action taken was delayed, and selective in that it allowed the main culprits to go scot-free.

On 14th March, when the Supreme Court judgement disallowing *shiladaan* in Ayodhya was announced, we approached the CP and Collector and submitted a written representation listing the areas where trouble could break out. We made concrete suggestions, using a map, as to how the police could be deployed effectively even if the numbers were low. When the *shobha yatra* began in the city on 15th March, we were in constant touch with the CP and the Collector requesting them to prevent the rally from passing through sensitive areas. However, they chose to ignore us, and Machchipeeth flared up, unleashing a second, bloody round of violence. After a couple of days the police told us that the mobs were so large that the police could not control them. The CP's constant refrain was that 'everything is not in our hands'. He evaded our question about whether allowing the *shobha yatra* did not amount to violating Section 144, which he himself had promulgated in the city.

We informed the police three days in advance about the build-up of tension in Chhota Udepur and Kawant. We also provided them with information about threatening activities in these areas. The Collector and DSP (Rural) took no notice of this information, and once again were unable to contain the conflagration there. After 7th March, the stock response to any complaint became that their duty was to 'save people's lives, not provide protection to their property.'

We approached the CP about the fact that the police and local goons were not allowing victims to file specific FIRs, in which they wanted to name the attackers. The CP was not willing to discuss this at all. Let the police do their work, was his standard answer. He refused to provide the list of people arrested against the complaints and specifically in the combing operations, saying that it was not in the interests of society to give this information. His response to our charge that the police were arresting innocent people, rather than rounding up the real culprits, was very negative.

In sum, the police chose not to make use of suggestions and information that could have helped to preempt and contain outbreaks of violence. The failure of the police to make use such inputs, to counter rumours and to promote peace-keeping initiatives in sensitive areas proved to be major weaknesses in their ability to control a difficult situation.

STOP PRESS 1!**Attack by Police on Memon Colony**

PUCL received a complaint on the nights of May 29 and May 30, 2002. On the night of May 30, at about 11.30 p.m. five police vehicles descended on the relatively well-off Memon Colony. There are about a 1000 Muslim families living in Memon Colony and surrounding localities .

According to eyewitness accounts of residents, vehicles offloaded police personnel, including some dressed in the black uniforms of commandos, who started throwing stones and bricks at houses in Memon Colony. The resulting scene was that of a mob on rampage, the only difference being that in this case the 'mob' comprised of the so-called keepers of the law. Almost all the houses in the colony were damaged with glass window panes shattered. The glass pane of a Maruti Omni was shattered and 3 Bajaj tempos were upturned. Worst of all, the glass windows of the local Madani Masjid were damaged by the mob. With glass pieces all over the floor of the masjid, residents could not offer their Friday prayers there, and were forced to do so on the road outside, under the hot May sun. The Baangi Saheb, the traditional announcer of the Azaan, Jalaluddin Mohd.bhai Rathod, had his beard pulled by the police and was beaten on his legs. Also at the receiving end of the lathi-wielding police were Zubedaben Abubhai, 60, and her daughter Rukshanaben, 40 years. The mother was beaten on her legs, resulting in painful swelling; the daughter was hit with a brick on her left temple. Abuse reserved for Muslims was in free flow from the police: 'Pakistan bhej dengen' ('we will send you to Pakistan'), 'Pakistan ke najayaj auladon' ('you Pakistani bastards'), 'Kashmir ke aatankwadi' ('Kashmiri terrorists'), etc.

Memon Colony residents claim that there was no immediate provocation on their part. In fact they say that the colony was relatively peaceful and incident-free not only during the last three months but also during the last 20 years. Police sources, however, maintain that they were forced to enter the colony after a Muslim autorickshaw driver with two Hindu women passengers drove into the colony on May 29. According to the driver and the two women, whom the PUCL team spoke to, the autorickshaw was attacked by a Hindu mob near the petrol pump close to Memon Colony. To escape the attacking mob, the driver turned into the colony. The women claimed that they had requested the driver to leave them on the main road. The two Hindu women and the Muslim driver sustained minor injuries in the attack by the mob, and were later rescued

On probing, Muslim residents told the PUCL team that on the evening on May 29, Hindu men threatened a couple of Muslim youth and pulled their beards. They were rescued by a group of men from Memon Colony who rushed to their defence. The Hindu youth reportedly then ran away. During combing operations on the night of May 29, the police arrested 27 men from Memon Colony. The same night witnessed the burning of Motiwala Printers, Baroda Electricals, Roshni Dry Cleaners, Baroda Pan House and Supreme Faraskhana on the nearby main road. A couple of scooters and four wheelers were also burnt at Srinath Complex opposite Memon Colony. On the night of May 30, two youth, G. C. Shiekh and Ghulam Hussain Sheikh, were arrested and released after two hours.

On the morning of May 31, when the PUCL team was investigating the incident, the Police Commissioner Mr. D. D. Tuteja was also present and making inquiries as to whether the police were from the BSF or the RAF. Later the same morning PUCL-Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan representatives met the Commissioner at his office. He told them that he still did not know about the identity of the policemen who attacked Memon Colony, nor which branch of the Department they came from. This was at 12 noon, a full 12 hours after the incident. On the other hand, PUCL investigations clearly revealed that PI S.S. Baranda from the Panigate Police Station and PI P.P. Kanani of DCB were present with their full staff during the Memon Colony stone-throwing episodes – a fact verbally confirmed by PI S. S. Baranda to PUCL representatives.

Later at 3 p.m. on May 31, an Imam of the Masjid near Memon Colony was stabbed in the neck and rushed to the hospital by the police. The tension in the area further aggravated.

PUCL sources expressed surprise at the contrary versions of the Commissioner and his staff and demanded an inquiry into the incident and suspension of the police officers involved. PUCL subsequently learned that PI Baranda had been transferred, but no action had been taken against PI Kanani.

Stop Press 2!**June 14-15, 2002, Samiyala, 10 kms from Vadodara**

Samiyala had been the site of intense stone throwing to intimidate Muslims for the last 7 days. Stone throwing would start at around 8 p.m. and stop around 12 midnight. The night of June 14-15 saw a increase in the intensity of stoning. Parts of Samiyala saw pitched battles.

PUCL - Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan representatives got continuous frantic calls from 9 p.m. onwards. PUCL contacted the DSP Piyush Patel and Collector Bhagyesh Jha. Phone calls were made to DSP by PUCL who ultimately visited the site. And promptly returned. He was again informed by PUCL that there was a plot to burn couple of homes at Samiyala and was requested to take it seriously. The Collector was also asked to ensure that no homes got burnt.

When the PUCL team entered the Muslim area, passing through the Hindu localities, mobs were standing with weapons with the Police standing along a bit relaxedly. Apparently both communities had been indulging in stone throwing. Muslims were ordered to get inside their homes immediately or else they would be beaten up. The Muslims while cowering with fear were pleading desperately to ensure that their four houses in the Hindu locality be not put to fire. PUCL members again made phone calls to DSP and Collector several times. The response given was that additional reinforcements were on the way.

In the meanwhile PUCL team members who had gone on a peacekeeping mission were pushed around, verbally abused in vulgar language, and were told by Dy.S.P. B.M.Patel that PUCL members instigated the rioting. This despite the PUCL team clearly identifying its credentials. The PUCL team was ordered to get out of the area or sit inside the home of Abid Ali Hassan Ali Syed. Even as this was happening Muslim males were being threatened and pushed around by the Police who kept shouting "now you will complain to Gill... This is the bastard who complained about PSI Gehlot. He has deliberately put chemicals in his own home and burnt it. And is pretending now to be innocent." The idea was to teach a lesson to those who complain about the Police.

Eventually the houses of one Hindu and that of Kasem Ali Syed Ali, Nazar Ali Kasem Ali and Mehar Ali Ahmed Ali near Gujarati school were burnt. Mehar Ali Ahmed Ali had 2 days ago celebrated the marriage of his son. And he was shouted at and accused by the Police for injecting chemicals and burning his own home. The Police even sought to see evidence of chemicals on the ground where drinking water had just been splashed.

Once again phone calls were made to the DSP and the Collector and the Collector was requested that the Police at least talk to the PUCL team properly.

Eventually in response to the PUCL team's calls the DSP reached the site and called for the PUCL team members to be escorted out. The PUCL team was pushed around violently by the police constable Kiran Talwar and others even as they were going out to meet the DSP.

The Collector did come around an hour later and went about looking for evidence of Muslim complicity. By 2.00 p.m. at least 40 Muslim males and some Hindu males were arrested and taken to Vadodara. The situation is tense and with many Muslim males inside the Police locket, the situation may worsen further.
