

Report on Nandigram Events

Annexure 1 : Background: Events That Preceded Our Visit

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Report on Nandigram Events

(Based on visit by social activists and intellectuals and further investigation)

Visiting the Relief Camp and villages under attack.

November 12, 2007

On November 12th 2007, a team consisting of about 25 social activists and intellectuals decided to visit Nandigram.¹ This was the first team of civil society organisations that was to go into Nandigram after the events in early November, when a heavily armed force of CPI (M) supporters began its onslaught for occupation of Nandigram territory. The team took with it a truck full of relief – again the first relief from outside to reach the camp. In spite of the attack on some of the members of this team and others including Tarun Sanyal, Sunando Sanyal, Debprasad Sarkar, Meher Engineer and Medha Patkar, we felt the urgent need for some senior sensitive, peace loving persons to reach out to the people in serious crisis. We were receiving frantic calls and knew that many people were wounded, hospitalised and destitutionalised.

While the DIG, Kolkata was informed in writing the previous day, it was at 12 noon when we were about to start, that the police officials objected to our visiting Nandigram. And after much argument it was agreed to have a meeting with the Chief Secretary, Home secretary and the IG at the Writers Building. During the one hour long dialogue, we brought to their notice the High Court order directing the state government to permit social organizations to go to Nandigram with relief material and render services (order dated 15th March 2007 in AST 205 of 2007). The senior officials were requesting us to postpone the visit to the 13th but we refused, due to urgency. We also claimed our right to reach Nandigram, where the people are not protected by the state against armed attacks by the ruling party cadres.

On starting at around 2.00pm we reached Howrah district and faced the first human blockade by 35 CPI-M supporters, who moved away after an hour. But the truck could proceed only to face another at a distance. On crossing the same, it was at another point that we found hundreds of men on the street expressing support and assuring protection to our Yatra.

They belong to Trinamul Congress, Congress-I and nearby communities. Surprisingly the Police and Revenue Officials themselves stopped the vehicle at this point, without any reason. Objecting to this illegal detention, we protested against Police behaving rudely with our supporters and after an hour could compel them to let us go. All these, we realised were delaying tactics to the least.

Late evening, we were however stopped at Kolaghat by a blockade of a thousand plus CPI-M agitators and the police officials and force in 4 to 5 vehicles travelling with us, expressed their inability to remove the same. We were threatened with attacks in the darkness and with the abusing and challenging groups of agitators surrounding the truck, we decided to return back to Kolkata. The first ever set of relief material could not reach the Nandigram refugees.

November 13, 2007

We, a group of about 25 representatives of people's movements and defenders of human rights, civil liberties, equitable development having made two defeated unsuccessful attempts to reach Nandigram, when we were stopped and not just heckled but attacked by the CPI-M cadres with red flags and raised voice with abuses, this time we were determined to reach the area under encroachment facing state violence and left with no defence, as the information from the field indicated. However, while we were compelled to return the previous night from Kolaghat where party members and supporters had a road blockade. The next day there was a change, either because Mr.LK Advani was to visit the region or to counter the defamation gained over months. That very day, Nov 12th therefore, we could pass without any political blockade and reached the relief camp housing about 2500 persons in Nandigram. Mr. Advani,

¹The team consisted of Medha Patkar, Atmaram Saraogi, Debjit Dutt, Chhabi Roy, Chandan Pal, Amita Bag, Gautam Bandopadhyaya, Pusparaj, Biswajit, Swapna, Anuradha Talwar, Swapna Tripathi, Bijoya Chanda, Kalyan Sengupta and others. From amongst those who were in the team, a few have contributed towards the writing of this report.

Sushma Swaraj and other NDA leaders' team had already taken a round of Nandigram and few villages and returned back.

On reaching the only relief camp housing and feeding children, women and men ousted from their homes and habitats, we could not believe the silence, tears and terror in the air. It was for the first time during last many months that we were not received with the slogan 'Dichchi na, Debo na'. The same women who had struggled like soldiers, were speechless and could only embrace us with heartfelt depression but slowly came to gather strength to narrate the stories in their choked voice. Some merely held our hands conveying the desperately needed support till we were taken to the dais.



We addressed a public meeting where all the speakers including the leaders of the BUPC expressed their strong objections to the events indicating violence from the ruling party CPM cadres and demanded that the armed cadres and their threats should be withdrawn immediately. An angry Doctor upset with his medical service team not being allowed to the villages where it was needed the most, spoke with anguish but asserted his professional ethic. Young Sarvodaya volunteers from Orissa, Gautam Bandopadhyay and other senior activists from APDR, PBKMS, NAPM, HSS, Gana Mukti Parishad and other organisations could convey their support and solidarity.

We then spent hours with families – women and men - who were stuffed in small classrooms of the old school building, who vividly described what they themselves and their community had gone through. The stories were of horrifying armed attacks, burning and demolishing houses, of molestation and rape. We were told that hundreds were still missing and many of them were likely to be in Khejuri under the custody of CPI-M cadres and leaders.

November 14, 2007

Next day early morning, when we proceeded to the villages in block II, we knew, the destinations could not be disclosed even to the pilot car and the stuffed police and IB jeeps. We requested BUPC leaders to give us 2 to 4 of their members only to accompany us to show the path and the places of conflict. A caravan of 6 jeeps no doubt could not be hidden and was not to, since we intended not just have a flying round but also to have a short dialogue with the people living in. We could see CRPF jawans placed but only upto a few kilometers near Nandigram town and not beyond.

We visited Kamalpur, Takapura and Satangabari. Some of us also went to Gokulnagar Daspara and Adhikaripara. We met the leadership of the BUPC namely Sk. Sufiyan, Abu Taher, Bhabani Das, Abdus Sammad and many others. Some of us also met the Superintendent of Police and other police officials and Shri Alok Raj, DIG CRPF, and we talked to the District Magistrate over the phone. The following report is based mainly on our observations during our visit.

Reaching Kamalpur and Takapura we sensed the tension within no time. About 20-30 persons, women and men came to the jeep in each place with 2 to 4 persons, CPM local leaders and spokespersons arguing against our visit, claiming that 'peace' is established 'now' but was totally absent before. They meant BUPC had tortured people and disturbed peace... by compelling people, especially women, to join processions in the darkness too, and forming BUPCs in villages even where SEZ was not to be come up. This indicated their plan to evict CPM, they said. We could find out that the vocal persons were employees of state government, especially local teachers or employees returning home from Kolkata. Some women screaming against BUPC were to be taken cognizance of but with caution, since they were guided by the outsider-insider CPM leadership, no doubt. Our journey was to be blocked and time taken but we wanted to listen to them. They couldn't show us any house attacked or burnt by BUPC, while houses of BUPC supporters were, according to them, burnt by house owners themselves. This they claimed in the case of Abdus Samad, leader of BUPC. We could still speak to the women and men lingering behind, watching

and listening to these outspoken representatives whose expressions were of disgust and fear both. Some of our group members approaching them, could know that we were being bluffed. We proceeded and during the journey could meet many old and sick women, shocked and scared men, silenced youth only when we stopped the jeeps suddenly and went a few houses inside. Their relatives and large number of other families had fled from the village, to take shelter in the Nandigram camp or at relatives houses far off... or just had disappeared not knowing where. Those were either burnt to ashes or partially demolished, made inhabitable. Some of them were desperate to get medical treatment but all were wanting our support against threats of evictions and pressures from the party cadres to 'behave'. The worst of the fear was that their standing paddy crop would be harvested, as openly claimed, by CPM cadres, leaving them with nothing. They knew of this operation having begun in the village Satangabari. They were curious to know about their brethren in the camp and expressed their anguish over the sealed fate with no belongings left to feed and clothe themselves and no house to shelter them.

We visited Satangabari, the village which was attacked by the Harmad Vahini², known to be the armed hired force of CPI-M party, in April-May 2007. It was then that some of us had visited the village Satangbari and actually heard the details of the incidence when Harmad Vahini cadres entered the village on motorbikes and with other vehicles, demolished, looted houses. People who were expecting the attack, called other villagers and in the resistance, Harmads were also attacked with whatever weapons other villagers had probably leading to some wounded, if not killed. Press reports are also available.



This time, we found it this village, only tens of people, supporters of CPI-M including some leading them. The latter had come with motorbikes with red flags. We saw the label of Indonesia on the cover of the motorbike number WB-30-A-5293.

We were stopped and our jeeps were gheraoed by the people present who questioned our visit. One of them said, you (Medha Patkar) had paid 10 lakhs to BUPC. We strongly countered. They said, some screaming, that their houses were attacked and they were made to stay away for months. We decided to visit those houses and walked with the turbulent crowd, amidst shouts, questioning, and yet a dialogue. Some of the houses such as of Mr. Anwar Ali, Abdul Kayyam, Mannanbabu and Samiran Bibi. They informed us that a few hundred houses were attacked by BUPC supporters in 3 villages Kiyakhali, Ranichowk and Satangbari. Those who told us were SK Abudul Bari, Tapan Bhuia, Akshar Ali. They told us they are for SEZ-Chemical hub as it will bring them jobs. They were especially against BUPCs being formed in village after village.

When some of us enquired separately with persons standing quietly near the crowd, they could not confirm everything. We found out that about 400 persons were out in the Khejuri camps, managed by CPI-M leaders for months. All the Satangbari villagers supporting BUPC have left the village and are dispersed. Some are in hospitals, some in the Nandigram relief camp.

The police with more plain clothesmen were surrounding us to listen to the conversation and intimidate those belonging to 'opposition'. There were no other flags but the red ones right from Nandigram into the villages. This was remarkably contrary to the fact that a large majority of villagers had joined the struggle against SEZ, with BUPC seeking support of the opposition parties as is the case with every struggle of the displaced, across the country may it be in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra or Orissa. With CPM and other left front partners in opposition, in these other states, they are invited to mass rallies, protests and also committees formed, invariably. Most of the times, they have responded, as in Pondichery, against

² *Harmad* is a word that is used in Bengal to refer to the pirates of Spanish origin who used to attack and loot villages. They were famous for their cruelty and inhuman behaviour. The people of Nandigram have adopted this word to refer to the armed goons of the CPI(M) who have been attacking them since January. *Vahini* means army.

privatization of port, in Raigadh, Maharashtra where Ambani's SEZ, the SEZ Act and Congress Government's nexus is questioned, in Orissa where anti POSCO struggle have CPI leadership alongside the Gandhian youth. In Andhra Pradesh, the CPM fighters as the party openly claimed, laid their lives and sought compensation within 3 days, continuing to grope in many people's organizations and seeking support of civil society on land rights and rehabilitation rights. This is forgotten by CPM in West Bengal where the party in power is known since years to have established monopoly or at least a terror against not only opposition by other parties but also other people's organizations or human rights defenders. Those who cannot be branded to be capitalists or communal, are categorised and condemned to be the Maoists, giving a boost and space to the radical left as the only ones posing an impactful challenge to the CPM – its intolerance, widespread arrogance and non-responsiveness.



Operation Nandigram, as per investigation reports

Reports from newspapers as well as accounts that we heard from people in the villages in Nandigram as well as in the relief camp show that the “re-capture” of Nandigram was carefully planned and executed by the CPI(M) party. Amassing of arms seems to have taken place for quite a few days before the attacks were launched. We ourselves got first hand reports in the third week of October from villages as far away as Nalgora in the Sunderbans and Mandirbazar block in South 24 Parganas of groups of 13-14 mercenaries who were used during elections by the CPI(M) being mobilised for the Nandigram operation.

Planning with the police was also done. Police camps began to be withdrawn from the third week of October. The OC of Nandigram Police Station was reported to have said that he had been asked by his superior officers to not send his force in, no matter what the circumstances. TV coverage showed police standing by or lying down on the ground while bullets whizzed past. Their orders seem to have been clear – hands off and let the *harmad* take over.

The timing of the operation was also well chosen- Pujas are a time for holidays in West Bengal with political activity at its lowest ebb. The long weekend from the 9th to the 11th with Kali Puja and Bhai Phota saw the operation at its peak, courts closed and very little option for any counter action.

Villagers everywhere reported to us that there was a shower of bullets and bombs and then the *harmad* came in with faces covered with black cloth- a frightening sight in itself. Looting of houses, burning, beating people, even molestation of many women and rape seems to have followed. The houses and families of those active in the BUPC were especially targeted, so one could see a ‘para’ or hamlet with some houses intact but others chosen ones demolished, burnt and looted. This generally led to the fleeing of almost all able bodied men and many women with children from these families. Some stayed back, generally the old, the infirm and some women and children. The number of those who got dispersed... taking shelter at their relatives far away is unknown.

The relief camp in Nandigram High School thus saw a daily inflow of people whose villages have been attacked one after the other.

A few of the incidences and attacks as narrated by the affected are as follows:

On last Monday (5th November) an old woman died in our village. The three families that support the CPI(M) in our village who had left and the Harmad used this as an excuse to enter the village in order to discuss the last rites of this woman. They came at 7 AM in the morning. While chasing them away, Gangaram Das of Kalicharanpur received a bullet injury. There was a shower of bullets and bombs. The women and children fled from the houses. 40-45 houses were looted, broken and burnt. 4 of us are in the relief camp, while my wife and daughter are at a relative's place. They come here everyday for food. (Gautam Mondal, Simulkundu)

On Wednesday(7th November), there was tremendous firing in my village from 10 AM onwards. The harmad were coming. I ran away with my two children- a 6 years old boy and a 7 years old girl and came

to the camp. My wife Sailabal Das, who was in hospital for two weeks with a chest injury after March 14th could not come with us as she had a knee injury. She was not capable of running away. I heard she is now in Kalicharanpur at her relatives' house. I do not know if she is alright. (Nanda Das, Gokulnagar)

When the attack started, I ran away with my children. I fell in the hands of the Harmad. (showing her 6 year old son whom she is carrying and who is absolutely naked). I was not able to get even clothes for my children. (Rahima Biwi, 7 No, Jalpai)

On Thursday (8th November), I moved my family out of the village to my relatives' house. I came away myself to the relief camp. On Friday (9th November), we heard that they (CPI(M) goons) had begun to loot and burn our houses. (Sk. Hafizul of Daudpur)

There are 11 people in my family- my two mothers, my wife and 7 children. My house has been looted. Even my children's books- one is now in Class X, another in Class 12 and the younger one in Class V- have been torn to small pieces. My family has phoned me and told me that it is not safe to return home. I feel insecure here also at the relief camp. (Sk. Sajiman, Osmanchak).

Women and children

Women and children were not spared in the violence that occurred. In fact, as is usual in all cases where violence is perpetrated, the impact on women and children is always the worst. We give examples below:-

The harmad caught me because I participated in the peace procession on the 10th of November. They beat me up and my nose is broken. I am now in hospital. (Chhabirani Mondal, Gokulnagar)

In Satangabari, village, 7 women and girls were reported to have been raped on 7th of November 2007. While one of them, a 40 year old woman named Akhreja Biwi had been admitted to Tamluk hospital after gang rape, her two daughters who had also been raped, Anwara 18 years old and Ansura 16 years old were missing. 4 other women had not been allowed to come out of their villages and could therefore not report the matter (Abdus Sammad, BUPC leader).

On last Tuesday i.e. 6th November, at 6 AM about 20-30 person came crawling through the paddy fields. Their faces were covered with black cloth. They were firing bullets. They went from house to house. They looted the houses, took away the tiles, broke the walls with a machine that they had. They surrounded me and asked for my husband. I had already sent him away. I could recognise about 10 of them from their voices, as they were from my village. The rest were strangers. They hit me on my face many times. They snatched away my 4 months old baby and threw him on the floor. He hurt his head (showing us a large bump on the back of the infant's head) When he started screaming, one of them said – leave her alone. Give back the baby to her. (Muktaran Biwi, Satangabari).

I am seven months pregnant. On Tuesday, (6th November) I fled my village like everyone else. The next day I decided to go back. There was nothing left of my house. I was in my mother in law's house. The harmad surrounded me and said why have you come back and they beat me up. I tried to take cover under my mother in law's bed, but they dragged me out. My ear started bleeding. They hit me on the head. My head is still paining. They did not let me stay inside the house. My baby was not moving after the beating. My lower abdomen is also paining. (Manjura Biwi, Satangabari)

The harmad kept asking me where my elder brother in law's house was (he was active in the BUPC). My husband is deaf and dumb, so they did not bother with him. They wanted my 15 years old son who works in Kolkata. They said if you don't produce your son we will abduct all of you. Then they began beating me. After they left 7 of us fled to the camp. (Rahina Biwi, Satangabari)

While the harmad attacked the peace procession, my husband and I fled away with our two children. But they have not allowed my aged mother in law to come. CPI(M) cadre are putting pressure to make me come back. They will kill me if I go back as I was very active in the BUPC.

The Procession and its Aftermath

We had heard while we were in Kolkata about the last ditch attempt by the BUPC to fight the onslaught of the armed squads of the CPI(M) non-violently. They decided to take out two huge processions of unarmed people – one from Sonachura towards Bhangabera and the other from Nandigram itself towards Maheshpur in the hope that the armed mercenaries would not at least attack them. The OC was informed about this in writing, as was the Prime Minister, the President and the Chairperson of the UPA was informed by some of us, through phone calls conveying urgency, through personal secretaries. We also contacted some ministers at the Centre and some MPs requesting them to take urgent action to prevent a massacre. At 9 AM on the 10th people started gathering outside the police station, demanding protection from the armed onslaught in the villages. When there was no reaction from the police station, after a few hours, they began walking towards Maheshpur



What followed were attacks by armed groups of CPI(M) goons on an unarmed procession, capturing of “prisoners of war”, torture of the unfortunate captives for information, and using them as human shields to enter other villages . By the end of this operation , Operation Nandigram was complete.

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I was in the procession from Sonachura. In Gokulnagar, where the Pancham Dol programme takes place every year, 70-80 persons came out suddenly from the paddy fields. They had guns and lathis. They told all of us to put up our hands and told us to go towards a red flag that was planted some distance away. They checked our pockets and took away our money, mobiles and whatever else we had in our pockets. They surrounded us and made about 500 of us walk. We walked for almost 2-3 hours from 12.30 pm to 3 pm to Sherkhachak in Khejuri. Two of us had bullet injuries but were made to walk in spite of that. By then there were about 100 harmad. They made us go to Amratola Primary School first in Khejuri, where they gave us muri to eat and water to drink. Then they took those whom they identified as being important to one side. They took each one of us aside one by one and asked questions- why did you go in the BUPC procession? Where are the land mines planted? How many Maoists are there? Who killed Shankar Samanta? How many arms are there with you? Who gives the arms? 3 people would ask the questions and two people would beat us up. If one said one did not know or if one did not answer the quaetiosn they would start beating one up. After giving me this treatment they brought me back to the others. Fifteen persons were given the same beating as me. Then Naba Samanta, the CPI(M) leader said “This entire state is ours. Why are you being foolish and joining the procession of others?”

By this time I was in great pain. They had broken my arm. So I pleaded to be taken to a hospital. 7 of us were brought to the hospital at 8 PM at night. We reached the Kamardah hospital at 11 PM. Later Asit Das a DMS doctor from Kalicharanpur was brought. He was so badly beaten that he had to be immediately transferred . Asit Das was taken in the ambulance with a drip. I do not know where he went The next day the doctor came and said the OC has come to take you.. The rest of us came to Nandigram hospital. We had amongst us Khagen Kar. He has a book shop in Tekhali bazaar. He had a head injury and his eye had burst and was hanging out. He was to be sent straight to Tamluk. He was not in our procession. He was picked up by the harmad in Tekhali bazaar.

There were 15 of us who were beaten up. 6 came with me. I don't know where the other 8 people are.(Asit Pradhan , Sonachura)

On the day of the peace procession, bullets hit me in 4 parts of my body. So I am now in hospital.(Prakash Giri Sonachura)

I am in Class IX. On the day of the procession, the Harmads attacked me. They pushed me down on the ground full of stone chips.. 5 of them beat me with fists, blows and kicks. They sat on me. My nose got fractures (showing a shirt full of blood stains). This is what I wore that day. I was a prisoner in Parulbari camp for two days. Now I am in Nandigram Hospital.

I was in the procession from Sonachura. They hit me on the head. I had to get three stitches. I am now in hospital at Nandigram. My son Sukhenedu was abducted from the procession and taken to Sherkha Chak in Khejuri. On the next day (11th November) my son and others were used as human shields by the harmad. They kept them in front and the harmad used bombs and bullets from behind them. In this way they got those who had left their homes (ghar chhara) to return to their homes. (Sukumar Mondal, Sonchura)

On Saturday (10th November), our procession began from Nandigram towards Maheshpur at 12.30 PM. When we reached Samsabad, about 3 kilometres from Maheshpur, bullets began to be fired over our heads. We ducked and continued to walk towards Aamgacchia. We crossed the bridge there and went up to the State Bank building there. Then Sk, Rejaul died of bullet wounds. We managed to get his body back. Then two more persons were shot and had to be sent to Tamluk hospital. After that I do not know how many died. We asked the police to come with us so that we could recover the injured and the dead. They did nothing. (Sk. Hafizul of Daudpur)

According to all the reports, the five hundred people who were taken on gun point were kept in three places – Amratala Primary School, Kalgacchia and Kunjipur. Some were used as human shields, but some were rumoured missing. A police officer whispered to us on the 14th that at least 350 of these people were still in Khejuri.

Subduing the Population

The people in the relief camp were very keen to go home, but for the fear of attacks. Their first request to us was to arrange for their safe return. They were afraid that if they did not return their paddy crop which was near harvest time would be looted by the CPI(M) supporters. However, they were also frightened of returning. They were told on the 11th and 12th November by some CPI(M) supporters to go back to their houses as all was peaceful. However the experiences of returning only meant a recurrence of torture. The CPI(M) had decided that once the territory had been “recaptured” it was now time to subdue the rebellious population into submission.

On 7th, Wednesday, seven of us tried to go back home. As soon as we reached, one of them began shouting – those who ran away have come back. They pointed pistols and knives at us and began beating us. They threw me on the ground. They asked me to produce my husband. When they were about to cut my throat open, I said I will stay in the village. I will not go anywhere. Then they tied me up. I asked for water. They would not even give me water. I pleaded with them to leave and promised to come back at night with my husband. They left me and since then I have not dared to go back. (Rahina Biwi, Satengabari)

Two brothers from our village, Enamul Kazi and Ajanur Kazi, went home from the camp on Sunday (11th November). Ajanur Kazi is the CPI(M) Panchayat member from our village. He became active in the BUPC after the SEZ issue came up. They were told that everything was alright at home, but when they went there they were beaten up. (Sk. Hafizul Daudpur)

Those who are in the village are being forced to go in processions at gun point by the CPI(M). They have been forced to go on night guard by the CPI(M). Our paddy has been harvested and taken away by the party member. Fines are being imposed on all of us. Many houses have been burnt. (Prakash Giri Sonachura)

My uncle, Netaipada Karan (96 years old) a freedom fighter of Jambari died on the 13th morning. He was a freedom fighter and was beaten up a few days ago when the village was “occupied”. We asked for a police force to go with us to the village so that as his sons and nephews we could do his last rites. As LK Advani was to be here, the OC said he could only provide us an escort, once LK Advani left. In the evening, we were told to go to Tekhali. 10 of us went to the Tekhali Outpost with 3-4 policemen. The rest of the escort was to be given by the Tekhali Outpost. The Tekhali Camp in Charge rang up the CPI(M) Local Committee Secretary (LCS) to ask for his “permission” before sending us there. He was told by Pratap Shaw, the LCS that only one of us could go to the village – the others need not come as the LCS himself would arrange for the cremation of the old man!. The party thus took charge of even the last rites of my uncle. We have complained to the OC in writing and have said that the body can rot there as far as we are concerned and it is his responsibility that my uncle’s last rites were not performed. (Netaipada Karan’s nephew, Jambari).

The harmad did not break down my house . That is because my brother in law is in the CPI(M) and he stopped them from doing this. I was myself from the CPI(M). They are very angry that I joined the BUPC, so they have said when I go home they will kill me. I work as the peon of the cooperative bank. I am in hospital right now and afraid of going home. My 15 year old daughter is in Class VIII. I have hidden her at a relative's place as I am afraid she may be molested or raped. Her studies have stopped.
(Sukumar Mondal, Sonchura)

Till we were there on 14th November, atrocities to subdue the villagers were continuing. In Nandigram Hospital, we met Musharraf of Garchakraberia. He told us that his father Adbur Adut Khan, his brother, Mujtara Khan and Obaidullah had been surrounded by the CPM *harmad* on the morning of the 14th November at 7 am at Garchakraberia. Those surrounding them were Malek Meer, Basir Meer, Taimuch Mallik Lalu and another 12 people. They beat up these three people. They demanded that Musharraf should leave the relief camp in Nandigram and the BUPC and must come back to the village. According to Musharraf, they also threatened to shoot his father and his two relatives. But he got the news at Nadigram and told the police. The police however took no action. Instead he had to approach some of his relatives who were close to the CPI(M) and they interceded on his behalf. So their lives were saved. His brother and father have been admitted to Nandigram hospital while Obaidullah, who is more severely injured, has been sent to Tamluk, to the district hospital.

The Divide In the Villages

The experiences we heard in the relief camp were of looting and burning by the *harmad* and of very few CPI(M) being rendered homeless in the past 11 months. However when we went into the villages , we were surrounded by vociferous groups of CPI(M) supporters who insisted that huge numbers of them had been “ghar chhara” or homeless refugees for the past many months.

We give examples of the versions that we heard in the camps below:

Our village has 70 families. Of these, 10 are CPI (M) supporters. Amongst these 10, 7 had joined the BUPC while the other three ran away and did not come back though we asked them again and again . We even disproved their claims that we had looted their houses by showing their houses to the police as proof. They wanted greater benefits from the CPI(M) party that is why they did not come back . The ones that CPI(M) claims are ghar chhara (chased out of their homes) had come home for sowing their paddy crop. So we told them- you say you have been chased out of your houses yet you have sowed your crops. This will do, you have to come and stay at your own houses. We did not want 40-45 people who were the perpetrators to come home. The rest were welcome. Many who had gone hoping to get greater benefits wanted to come back, but the CPM would not allow them to. They forced them to stay in the relief camp. (Gautam Mondal, Simulkundu)

There were people who fled to Khejuri in our village – 15 families in all. We asked them to come back 5 times. They buried their things under the ground and hid them under the water of the pods and then said we had looted their houses. (Rahima Biwi, 7 No. Jalpai)

People were very willing to talk about atrocities that had occurred on them while in the relief camp at Nandigram. In the villages on the other hand there was clearly an atmosphere of fear. Versions of events were sharply differing.

In Kamalpur, the first village that we visited, we found ourselves surrounded by a noisy crowd of about 70-80 men and women. The most vociferous were Ajanur Sau, Akraman Sau and Subhash Jana.

There are 65 Muslim houses in our village and others are 50 houses in our village. 30-40 of us had left. We were driven away about a month ago. Now we have come back. 45 families have now gone away. (Ajanur Sau, Kamalpur)

7-8 houses have been looted or burnt in Kamalpur. The house of Abdus Sammad, a BUPC leader was a burnt shell with all its contents looted. The village people insisted that Sammad had fired his house himself . Some insisted that the fire had started because of a fire in the kitchen.



did not dare to come out of our houses. If you move forward you will see a number of burnt and broken houses at the left side of the road. Since Monday at least 100 people have left their houses. No men folk in our family dared to stay in the village. They are constantly threatening us and forcefully making us join the CPM rally. (Sabirun Bibi and Rameshan Bibi, Kamalpur)

A little later, two women Khusanu Bibi and Harisan Bibi rushed there and asked the two women in a bud and threatening voice why were they stating the names of who burnt the houses when they did not actually know and two women become very frightened and stopped talking.

When we moved forward a little we found the house of SK. Kohibur in broken and abandoned condition. After that there was the telephone booth and house of Mahmud SK. at the left hand side of the road also broken and abandoned. Opposite to the said booth an aged woman was standing alone who stated.

"We have a small shop of potato, onion etc. On the day when the house of Sammad was burnt the Harmads also broke and looted our shop. My husband Rabin Shasmal and son Vivekananda Shasmal left the village. I can't move quickly so I have remained at home. (Tuntunibala Shasmal, Kamalput)

When we moved a little away from the crowd, a woman came and began complaining loudly, in spite of angry interruptions by other women who surrounded us.

They broken and looted my house and our shop. Our shop was a telephone booth, so they looted our receivers, batteries and other equipment. They have taken away even our bedding, and 4 trunks of clothes. I have nothing left to cover ourselves with." (Irani Biwi (w/o Motelef Sau, Kamalpur)

Chhabirani Bera of Kamalpur, when Irani Biwi complained of her house and shop being looted, said "we found 7 cycles, 8-10 uniforms, 2 packets of bullets and packets of explosives in her house." Irani Biwi claimed that the packets were of paint powder.

The villagers were not able to produce any of the Maoist literature, arms and uniforms that they had found in other people's houses. They were also not able to give a seizure list of handing the same over to the police.

We met Rekha Mondal wife of Kalipada Mondal, wife of Amulya Mondal and wife of Nirapada Mondal and they showed the burnt houses of Kalipada Mondal, Debu Mondal, Pashupati Mondal and Jadupati Mondal, the burnt cow shed of Nirapada Mondal and complained that two cows of Pashupati Mondal were burnt to death by the *harmad*. The men folks of these families except one who cannot move fled away. Only the women are living there and they are so frightened of the *harmad* that most of them preferred to remain anonymous. While they were talking to us some CPI (M) supporters led by Debashish Khatua and Rabin Samanta come there and started reporting to us about the misbehaviour of BUPC. Later our local guides pointed to a person standing beside the crowd as the LCM of CPI (M) Alokesh Manna. We saw the ransacked and broken three storeyed building of the Ex- Panchayet Pradhan Tarapada Khatua also.

When asked about how Abdus Sammad's house was burnt, Ajanur Sau said "Abdus Sammad's supporters have burnt his house. They did the same to another 5-7 houses. We found bombs, explosives and Maoist literature in their houses. They used to take money from us – Rs.1000-1500 from each family."

Two women were standing silent behind the gathering. When asked about the peaceful situation in the village they whispered to us so that the others could not hear them speaking.

The house of Abdus Sammad was burnt by the Harmads. The Cadres were firing at that time so we

In the second village, Takapura, we were told that there had never been any problem of looting or of people leaving the village. Both CPI(M) and TMC supporters said this to us. Of the 250 houses in the village, 200 owed allegiance to the BUPC and 50 to the CPI(M). All of them were living peacefully together. Tensions seemed to have started recently. CPI(M) supporters spoke of women getting together and trying to break down their doors. When the attack by the CPI(M) started, 6 houses were burnt in Takapura. though there were no people who were “ghar chhara” or refugees here, and who had to be returned to their homes. Operation Nandigram therefore was not just a matter of helping those who had been rendered homeless to their homes. It was also a matter of capturing all the political and physical space in the area.



We met Paresh Karan and people in his *para* who spoke to us in whispers and said that their houses had been looted. Most of them were old people or women, the men having all left. Many of them were petrified and crying.

They came and looted our house. I and my wife hid in my brother's house nearby. They broke open our door and took away everything. I have only one son. He was with the BUPC. We have sent him away. There were no people who had to leave their homes in our village. The CPI(M) and the TMC people used to live together peacefully. Now there are 5-7 young men from the CPI(M) who frighten us. They say they will kill my son. They say they will not allow us to harvest our paddy. (Paresh Karan, Takapura)



The third village we went to was Satangabari Paschim Palli. We found that just before we entered the village some policemen standing on the right side on a small path that led to another hamlet. When we went to see what they were doing, we found that they claimed to have found a land mine. The villagers complained vociferously about the BUPC people planting landmines in the area. The whole affair seemed somewhat stage managed. Our suspicion about stage managing were heightened

later on when we talked to the DIG Range and the SP, Shri Panda in the late evening at about 6 PM. The SP could not really remember whether a land mine had been found in the morning. After a lot of reminding, he said “yes, yes... a mine was found. It had 1.5 kgs of explosives in it. The CID team found it. It has been detonated.” The DIG Range knew nothing about the mine. Was it then such an unimportant occurrence? Or was the mine itself a myth?

The villagers numbering almost 200 in Satangabari insisted we go with them to their village. They showed us another looted and burnt house, belonging to a BUPC supporter. They claimed that the land mine would have been detonated from this house that was at least 7-800 metres away. They also said they had been in camps in Khejuri since April and had come back home just a few days back. They said they had been chased out by TMC supporters. When asked how they had come home again, they informed us that the CPI(M) had told them that it was safe to come back. When asked how the CPI(M) had got them home, a 15 year old girl said “Juddha Kore” (they made war). When we wanted to know details of this war, the girl was shushed by the others. A man remarked “these women do not know anything- it is no point talking to them.”

After 14th March the BUPC people knifed me near my eye (showing us a wound near her eye). I was in Tamluk hospital for 16 days. They demolished 10-15 Muslim houses. Our fault was that we were with the CPI(M). There will no red flag in this village, they said. The party (CPM) has brought us back after waging war with the help of the police. (Haren Biwi, Satengabari Paschim Palli)

A number of men and women came and told us of how they had been homeless for 11 months and had come home to see their houses, as well as houses of TMC supporters burnt, broken and looted. 52 houses of CPI(M) supporters had been broken and looted in Satangabari Barman Para, and 22 in the Meer Para. They claimed that this had been done by the TMC supporters on the 7th November 2007 when they had fled the village. Only three TMC supporters had fled from their houses according to the villagers. One of them, Meer Mannan said “There is no disturbance in the village now, but we will not allow Aajahar, Rosan, and Aurobindo Pramanick to live here. They created all these problems. We will murder them if we see them.”



Our vehicles at this spot were almost smashed by the villagers. They were very angry to see with the three BUPC supporters who had accompanied us to guide us through the villages. The jeep keys were snatched away and in spite of a police force being there, a mob of about three hundred CPI(M) supporters surrounded us and wanted us to give the three young men to them. The police tried its best to guard the young men in the vehicle. With great difficulty we managed to placate the crowd and get out of there.

On the way to Gokulnagar Das Para. we came across a temporary shelter set up with a black tarpaulin in Gokulnagar Malpara. On asking a young man Ranjit Kumar Mal about it, we were told that this was for the night guard. When we remarked that now that “peace had returned” to the villages and no attacks were expected from Khejuri, why was there the need for night guards. Was this not a practice when the BUPC was there? What was the need now? He replied – “we are all with the Red Flag now, but people from the CPI(M) come from outside and attack the people in our village. Looting may happen anytime”. A state of anarchy and great insecurity seems to exist.

The villages that we visited thus seem to be divided between groups of people who owe allegiance to the CPI(M) or to the BUPC. There seems to be intense hatred between people who were once neighbours and perhaps even friends. The CPI(M) supporters are now engaged in a well organised attempt to see that their version of the truth prevails in the villages.

Before

Gokulnagar Adhikaripara is a village that we had visited on 17th September 2007 before the trouble started. The contrast with our last visit could not have been more. On that visit, we had sat in the grounds of the primary school and talked to a number of women. An uneasy truce existed at that time between the two warring sides. People were slowly going back to normalcy. Many of the men, who worked in Kolkata and elsewhere as migrant workers were staying at home to guard their fields and home. Work was a problem. We had talked about resuming normal life, applying for work under NREGA, preparing for the harvest etc. We had discussions with Swadesh Das Adhikari and other leaders about the availability of food schemes and other normal activities. We were informed that many of the primary school teachers owing affiliation to the CPI(M) had stopped attending school, but were still drawing salaries at Khejuri. The BUPC had protested about this and said they must attend school. The teachers had been transferred overnight and many of the schools had suddenly become single teacher schools. The BUPC leaders were saying that their next struggle was to get teachers posted here so that schools could function normally. The leaders also told us about their attempts to start development work. They informed us that they had been in regular touch with the BDO and SDO. Though Panchayat Pradhans and members from the CPI (M) who had fled, were refusing to come back even after assurances of protection, they were insisting that development work must still continue. They had made rather imaginative use of the Panchayat Act, insisting that Gram Sansad meetings be held and a Gram Unnayan Samity be re-elected that could then continue with the

development work. We were told that after these Gram Unnayan Samitys had been formed , NREGA job cards were now being issued to all villagers and they hoped to start works under the NREGA soon. The impression we got was of a group of people who were responsibly trying to get on with their lives and would have been known as good community organisers under any other circumstances. This was just the kind of people's initiative that was eulogised by the Panchayat Department in our state ad elsewhere.

..... And After

On the 14th November 2007, when we went to the village, Gokulnagar Adhikaripara felt like a grave yard. It was quiet and one did not hear the sound of human voices. No sounds of children playing were there. The first houses that we entered and the people we met were loud in their criticism of the BUPC. The first one was Jharna Ari. She recognised us as she was also there in the women's meeting on 17th September 2007.

I have two houses – one here and one in Tekhali Bazar. I had a nursery in Tekhali that was looted by the BUPC. People from 3 villages looted it. My son was beaten up by Minakshi Das Adhikari I fought with him for that. My son is now working in the Andamans . We were not allowed to speak when you came to our village earlier. The BUPC people used to spy on us. On 14th March , I went for the Puja. When the police started firing, I came running back. I was hurt I had to spend my own money for my treatment. I went to save my land also. We were CPM they forced us to join the BUPC. There are 10-15 houses here who were in terror. Now our sons and nephews have come back from Khejuri and all is well. (Jharna Ari, Gokulnagar Adhikaripara)

I was away from home for 11 months. The reason- BUPC people used threats and patrolled with guns and used to force us to go in their procession. They had trainings in the primary school with outsiders coming here. They said we will not allow the red flag in the village. 34 families were kicked out of the village. We were in camps in Tekhali and Khejuri. They burnt the Tekhali camp when we went to complain to the Governor. On 12th November, the party waged war and brought us back to our houses. The Naxals and Maoists have heard that the CRPF is coming so they have fled the villages, so we have been able to come home. (Aswini Das, Adhikaripara)

They demolished my tea shop and looted my house all because I was with the CPI(M). 200 of us had fled the village. Now only 3-4 leaders of the BUPC have left home. (Swarnagayen Das , tea shop owner)

A walk into the village helped us to meet Anil Das. He showed us his house which was in a state of ruin as it had been deserted for 11 months. He also complained of looting while he was away. He said they had lost 35 bags of paddy and that they had no food to eat now. The house he showed us was dilapidated due to neglect in the past 7-9 months.



We passed Swadesh Das's house which was locked and deserted. He was one of the prominent leaders of the BUPC. We tried to talk to a woman who recognised us from our previous visits. We asked her how she was. She whispered "not good" and immediately walked away.

We then went further into the village. We met Arati Das and her sister in law. Both of them are living in the village alone without their men folk. While one is a widow, the other's husband is a migratory worker. They are very fearful and insecure because their men are not there. They say they felt more secure when the BUPC was in control. Right now they are afraid that they might be attacked. "we were not forced to go in processions by the BUPC nor are we being forced now as we have never taken part in any political activity and our men are also not here."

Pramila Das Adhikari talked to us in whispers very conscious of those who could be listening. Her son Sunil Das Adhikary had received a bullet injury on his nose on 14th March . He was in hospital for 6-7 months at SSKM Hospital in Kolkata. He was now in Orissa as she was too scared to allow him to come home. She told us "I am at peace why have you come We have now joined the CPI(M). They will bring us peace, the BUPC used to force us to go in their processions."

A man was standing nearby and listening. The police chased him away, Pramila began to talk more openly. She told us that what she had said earlier was lies. She would be beaten up if she said anything about CPI(M) atrocities. She was being forced now to go in CPI(M) processions all the time now. She was living in great fear with her daughter in law. Suddenly a 9-10 years old boy came and stood near us. Pramila's tone and what she was saying changed again. She said BUPC used to beat us and force us to go in processions. They used to rape women.

Further inside the village we reached Adhikaripara. We found the women in a group, still very afraid to talk to us. One of them however with signals and whispers arranged for a small boy to take us to where houses had been burnt.

We saw the houses that had become burnt shells. We saw the houses of the following that were burnt or deserted

Ajit Das Adhikari, Shrikanat Das Adhikari, Srinibas Adhikari, Nabadwip Das Adhikari, Swadesh Das Adhikari,

In a nearby house we met Manotosh Das Adhikari who told us that he could not talk to us as it was dangerous. He left hurriedly. The old man and woman who lived there told us that it started with a shower of bombs and bullets. They hid inside their house and when they came out after an hour or so they found the house next door burning.



In Nabadwip Das Adhikari's house we found a mat and *kantha* (bedsheet) on the bed outside in the verandah. We saw shoes lying on the floor. It was as if people had fled with no time to even put away their things.

We then moved further into the village to another burnt ruin. The house was totally looted and broken down. We met Rashmoni Das Adhikari (86 years old), wife of late Bhuban Das Adhikari, whose house and all her possessions have been burnt down and looted. She has only one *dhoti* that she is wearing. She is living with a relative (another widow) in the neighbourhood and has no food to eat. She has to depend on whatever is

provided by the neighbours' charity.

All the people we met in the interior part of the village complained to us of the very ferocious attack the CPI (M) had organised with their *harmad* to enter the village. They also expressed fear of the CPI(M) and said they were being forced to join them everyday in processions and marches. If they did not they would be beaten up.

We also met people from the CPI (M) who had just returned home. A group of women with bags in their hands informed us that they would be given 5 kgs of rice per head by the party for all those who had returned because they had no food in their home. A number of them in Gokulnagar Adhikaripara said that some of their houses are also on the verge of collapse.

Rabindra Das, the CPI(M) Branch Committee Secretary, informed us that 205 families lived in this Booth. 38 had fled earlier. They have all now come back. He did not know however how many had now gone away. He had received 1.5 quintals of rice from his party for distribution amongst those who had just come home. He informed us that at the Khejuri camp they were given rice, pulses, oil, clothes etc. from the government, from other organisations and the party.



By the time it was 4 o'clock we found people assembling at the school and at a camp near a tea shop. A big banner put up in the CPI(M) camp – "Leave us alone. Outsiders do not interfere. The people want to live

together and in peace.” We were told that everyone was getting ready for their compulsory evening ritual of marching for the party with red flags.

The Role of the Administration: Relief

On November 13th, we spent the entire night at a relief camp at a high school in Nandigram town. The team members conducted a quick survey to understand how many people were in the relief camp and to assess their needs.

The camp is in 24 rooms and in each room there are about 60-70 people, including children and women. The camp therefore consists of about 1500 people. There are a number of very small children there – we estimate that the number would be about 150, and these children are in need of special nutrition in the form of baby food or milk.

About 500-700 people are living in houses of friends and relatives nearby and come to the camp for food everyday. Thus the camp on the 13th was catering to about 2000-2200 people.

The cashier of the BUPC central committee who is in charge of the kitchen at the camp informed us that the camp have even more people a few days ago – almost 4000 people.

The Government is providing very few facilities to the camp. 15 quintals of rice were given on 9th November and another 10 quintals on 13th November on demand by social activists and Anuradha Talwar as advisor to the Supreme Court appointed Commissioner in the right to food case. These 25 quintals of rice have been enough to provide only 3-4 meals for the huge numbers of people who are at the camp. The camp has to depend on whatever little collection they can do otherwise. On the day we were at the camp, rice was being provided only once a day, while the refugees were having “muri” or “chira” at other times. People kept complaining of a shortage of food.

No sanitation facilities have been provided at the camp. The entire population of 2500 people are dependent on a few public toilets that are available at a toilet complex nearby.

Many of the camp dwellers ran away from their homes with only the clothes on their back, hence bedding and clothes are a very big problem. We found families sleeping on the bare floor with only a thin sheet on the ground and barely anything to cover themselves with in the winter season too. Infants and children, the aged and sick faced enormous difficulties.

A number of camp dwellers are also suffering from trauma. We found a woman crying and screaming loudly at midnight. When questioned repeatedly, she could only say that her brother had been taken away and was being beaten up. She had had a nightmare.

The lack of facilities in the camp and the non response of the District Magistrate to letters asking for relief citing Supreme Court orders on the Right to Food show that the Government is still taking a partisan approach. The severity of the violence inflicted again and again on the people of Nandigram and the criticism of the Government’s actions by a wide range of people seems to have left them unmoved.

The Role of the Administration: Security

While we were at Nandigram on the 13th and 14th, we saw the CRPF being deployed in the town, There was huge presence of the State Armed Police also. Yet people in the camps were feeling insecure. The women staying at the camp reported that a few days ago, CPI(M) supporters had entered the camp and had threatened them and asked them to go home, emptying the camp. There were reports of young men who were BUPC supporters being picked up in front of the police and the CRPF by groups of 6-7 men on motorcycles and of their being taken to the CPI (M) party office. In front of us, the BUPC leadership went to the police station to complain about the abduction of one of their members, Mustafa, on 14th morning. The police phoned up the party office and Mustafa was released after that.

On 14th morning we were told that CPI(M) supporters on motor cycles had gone through the town, tearing down BJP flags that were put up on the previous day for LK Advani’s visit. They declared that only the CPI(M) flag could be put up.

On the same night, at about 7 PM we heard slogan shouting outside the camp. Many of the women were shivering with fear. We were told that a CPI(M) procession was passing the relief camp and would do so a couple of times. We were told that this was happening everyday. The previous day about 50-100 motorcycle riders with bands on their heads had raced through the town, shouting slogans.

We also found on 14th night, that no police was posted at the gate of the relief camp. The matter was reported to the DIG CRPF when we met him later at night. He assured us that he would visit the relief camp the next day and ensure a guard.

Those living at relatives’ places also complained of intimidation. People living in room number 19 in the relief camp from Shyamsundari Chak, Simulkundu and Sonachura told us “*Those who have taken shelter*

at relatives' places are also not safe. The party people are coming and asking which village they are from, what their names are, what party they belong to. They are pressurising the relatives to send the refugees back to their own homes. And when one goes home, one gets beaten there."

The BUPC put in a request asking for 12 CRPF camps inside the villages.(list in Annexure 2) .The CRPF had only started two camps in the villages.A third one was at Khudambari (to protest CPI(M) leaders, said the BUPC leadership sarcastically) and a fourth in Nandigram town itself. The DIG CRPF felt he did not have enough person power to set up so many camps.

The news from Nandigram received yesterday, Nov 18 is that CRPF camps are to be removed from the Relief camps in the Nandigram school and villages and shifted to the borders near Khejuri. This has made the BUPC supporters, refugees in the camp and in the villages very, very insecure.

The Commander, CRPF – Alok Raj has publicly complained of non-cooperation by the West Bengal government.

Conclusions

Operation Nandigram, the capture and subjugation of rebellious villages in Nandigram area, is not an aberration or a mistake. It is a planned action with full coordination between the state administration and the party. The proof for this is overwhelming- arms, criminals and party goons were assembled in a planned manner; police camps were removed to allow the *harmad* to function freely; in spite of appeals and complaints by the victims to the police, the police took little or no action to stop the violence; capture of villages was planned like a war campaign, with village after village being invaded and the strong holds left for the last; human shields were used to subdue the most rebellious areas; media, opposition leaders and civil society was shut out to ensure that the capture was without hindrance; after capture, looting, beating and intimidation has followed along with indoctrination and forced marches in processions to subdue any rebellion that may remain; relief camps are being seen as centres where the BUPC can re-group, so the attempt is to force people out of the camp and other shelters and to send them home again;



rumours of finding Maoist arms and literature are being spread to justify the invasion; and, finally the CPI(M) leadership continues to make provocative, irresponsible statements to justify its action and to rally its supporters.

The Maoist bogey has been invoked to justify many of the actions. What evidence did we find of this? A land mine that appeared stage managed? Accusations by a crowd of villagers of finding Maoist literature and arms, with no physical evidence to back their accusations? Perhaps we had gone to a very small area. Perhaps the bombs are in Sonachura, you may say. However, we talked to at least 150-200 people both from the CPI(M) and BUPC. Not one of them mentioned

armed resistance by the BUPC. On the other hand, many of the CPI(M) supporters admitted that war was waged to get them home. The CPI(M) has also not been able to show the most irrefutable evidence of Maoist or BUPC armed resistance - injured or dead CPI(M) supporters. All the wounded we met were BUPC supporters – victims of the *harmad* attack.

It has always been clear, as it was during this visit also, that no matter how much our town bred intellectuals and media may shout to the contrary, this is not a TMC versus CPI(M) fight. The BUPC is not a TMC outfit. Nor is it a Maoist outfit. So this is also not a Left versus ultra Left issue. The BUPC consists of angry villagers from the Nandigram villages who have rebelled against the CPI(M)'s oppressive ways and its bullying tactics to take away their land. These villagers are from the TMC, the SUCI, the Jamaite Ulema Hind, CPI(ML), Congress and also most importantly even from the CPI(M) itself.

The sad truth is that there are now villages in Nandigram that are sharply divided and neighbours are at war with each other. It is true that some people were in refuge camps in Khejuri- for 11 months or for less. There may be a dispute about numbers, but it cannot be disputed that these people are bitter and are backed by a powerful party and the state administration. They want to get their own back on the BUPC members. They also must have the Panchayat elections on their minds - if they lose these elections they

may get beaten up again, with village politics in rural Bengal always taking this kind of an ugly turn. Mediation between these warring groups is necessary. A fair and unbiased administration can do this, but will that be possible? The line that should firmly exist between the party and the administration has been wiped away. Can it be re-established?

People from both sides of the political divide need food and other daily necessities, they need help to rebuild their houses. Many have lost all their possessions. Many have been without work for many months and this must have meant a serious erosion of resources for those who are already on the brink of poverty. Intimidation by the CPI(M) of the BUPC members is continuing. The reverse may also happen in a few pockets on a much more minor scale. The administration must show the maturity to deal with all groups in an even handed manner. It must punish the guilty, provide food and homes to the needy and protect the weak. But will that happen?

Civil society groups and people's organisations with sensitive, peace-supporting activists must reach and interact with the people in camps and communities. Before all this, CPM and the West Bengal government must be compelled to take a political and official decision to withdraw all armed forces and publicly announce protection to the families, resident of villages since decades. NHRC must bring out an interim report with clear directives for the state and central governments and ensure that those are implemented.

Medha Patkar, Anuradha Talwar, Debjit Dutt, Swapna Tripathi and Bijoya Chanda for the team of activists visited Nandigram.

Annexure 1 :

Background: Events That Preceded Our Visit

We give below a chronology of the events since 31st July 2006 that preceded our visit. This has been done from news reports.

31st July 2006 :- West Bengal government signed MoU with the Salim Group of Indonesia for establishment of a chemical hub

August 2006 to December 2006:- Two independent people's organisations named "Gana Unnayan and Jana Adhikar Sangram Samity" (Association for The Struggle for People's Development and Rights) and "Krishi Jami O Janaswartha Raksha Committee" (Committee for protection of agricultural lands and public interest) are formed and began movement against chemical hub.

29th December 2006:- In a public meeting , Lakshman Seth, Chairman of Haldia Development Authority (HDA) and CPI(M) MP, announces their firm determination to have chemical hub in Nandigram.

2nd January 2007 :- Notice from HDA on 29 mouzas to be acquired reaches Nandigram.

3rd January 2007 :- People go to Garchakraberia GP to ask about notice. Unprovoked police action on them when they are returning. 5 injured in police firing. Police jeep meets accident. Policemen captured by mob but returned unharmed. Roads begin to be cut and barricades are put up to prevent entry of police.

5th January 2007 :- Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee formed by merger of two committees and all other political groups in the Nandigram area. Many CPM rank and file join the BUPC.

6th January 2007:- Police camp at Bhangabera bridge packs up. People see armed CPI(M) goons (locally known as *harmad*) coming into the village by boats at night.

7th January 2007 ÷ 4 persons die due to gun fire by *harmad* from the house of Shankar Samanta , a CPI(M) leader. An enraged mob attacks the house and chases out the *harmad*.

Shankar Samanta is lynched by the mob.

January to March 2007:- Nandigram villages do not allow police to enter. Some CPI(M) leaders flee. Schools, pulse polio, ICDS centres etc. continue. 3 Panchayats stop functioning as CPM leaders are also Panchayat Pradhans and members. People live in constant fear that their land will be taken away and that the *harmad* will invade. Skirmishes along the Talpatti canal between the BUPC masses and the *harmad*'s arms are reported. Government states that the HAD notice was a mistake, but does not give anything in writing. People get mixed signals - an economic blockade is tried on Nandigram by the CPM, CPM camps on the road to Nandigram search vehicles, intellectuals and activists travelling into Nandigram are harassed, CPM leaders make provocative statements.

11th -13th March 2007:- BUPC leaders including TMC MLAs send faxes and appeals to the Government saying they fear an attack on Nandigram. Police is amassed on the Khejuri side. An all party meeting with BUPC absent decides that the police must go in.

14th March 2007:- BUPC organises a Puja and Namaaz reading to resist the police invasion. In a combined *harmad*-police action, 14 die, at least 85 people are hospitalised, over 200-300 people are injured, many more have eye injuries due to tear gas. Reports of missing people pour in, the *harmad* and police go in for a looting and burning spree . Reports of gang rape and molestation of women in huge numbers pour in. Reports of children being killed, bodies being disposed off abound.

15th March 2007 :- The mayhem continues. High Court gives order for a CBI enquiry, with a report to be submitted within a week.

16th March 2007 :- CBI team reaches Nandigram, with a stop to atrocities.

17th March 2007 ÷ 10 persons are arrested with arms and red flags from Janani brick field . They are handed over by the CBI, but let off 10 days later due to inaction by the State police.

March 2007 to October 2007:- Nandigram situation continues as a stalemate. In April, Government officially withdraws plans for SEZ. However it refuses to consider compensation for those killed, injured and raped on March 14th 2007. Nor is any process of identifying and punishing the guilty started. Peace talks between political parties are tried in a half hearted manner and fail. The BUPC is never called for peace talks at the state level. CPM claims that about 3500 of its members and supporters have been forced to flee. Attempts to meet them by many civil rights groups do not meet with much success. Skirmishes along the Talpatti canal continue. It gradually takes on the feel of a civil war with a border in between Khejuri and Nandigram. Police camps are established inside Nandigram, but police stands by idly whenever there are skirmishes. People in Nandigram villages start gradually to put their lives together again. Paddy is sown, economic and other activities are again becoming normal.

October 19^h - 26th 2007:- Reports filter in that police camps are being withdrawn from various points in Nandigram and that known criminal gangs and *harmad* are being amassed in Khejuri.

October 27^h 2007 :- In an attack by the *harmad*, one dead and four injured including two school going boys.

October 28, 2007:- Bomb exploded in Sherkhanchawk near Khejuri. 5 CPI (M) *harmad* dead and four injured.
BUPC member's houses were attacked and ransacked by the *harmad*
Mamata Bannerjee, leader of the opposition party, Trinamul Congress fired at Tekhali Bridge in Nandigram.

October 29, 2007, the *harmad* enter Takapura, Kamalpur and Ranichowk. 16 houses belonging to BUPC supporters were set ablaze at Takapura. Media access to Nandigram is restricted.

October 30, 2007, *harmad* from Khejuri fire on a peaceful rally of thousands of BUPC supporters who were on their way from Nandigram to Tekhali. Bombing and firing from Khejuri on the houses of BUPC members at Satengabari, Ranichowk, Takapura, Kamalpur, Giribazar and few other villages. Armed miscreants, allegedly hired by the CPI(M), attacked Ranichowk village and set fire to two houses of BUPC supporters and looted yet a few. There was one death and 10 injured. Three scribes belonging to three separate media houses were beaten up and TMC leader Mr. Partha Chattopadhyay alleged that he was not allowed to visit the areas under attack.

October 31, 2007 *Harmad* bomb Bhangabera.

November 01, 2007 at the 4th conference of the CPI (M) Nandakumar zonal committee, in Srikishnapur High School, Mr. Laxman Seth, CPI (M) MP, exhorted his party men. "*We have been pushed to the wall. The only option now is to kill or get killed. We have to fight till the last drop of blood in our bodies,*"

November 02, 2007 *Harmad* from Khejuri started firing while policemen deployed in the area turned a blind eye. All entry points into Nandigram have been sealed off by the cadres and there were attempts to take control over villages. Huge arms were amassed at Bhangabera, Tulaghata, Tekhali Bazaar, Takapura, Kamalpur, and Reyapara.
In Hanschora near Nandigram, CPI (M) supporters stopped a bus and searched every person on board. Women faced sexual humiliation.

November 03, 2007 Satengabari reduced to a virtual graveyard by *harmad* and the firing continued unabated. More than 200 thatched houses were burned to ashes after they were looted and ransacked, rendering approximately 1,000 people homeless. The homeless took shelter in makeshift camps or under the open sky.

November 04, 2007 the CPI (M) Politburo member Brinda Karat prescribed "*Dum Dum Dawai*" (severe bashing — a slogan of the sixties advocating public thrashing for the corrupt) as a solution for Nandigram in the presence of Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

November 05, 2007 *Harmad* rained bombs and fired shots from Khejuri side. In the wee hours of the morning, nearly 500 armed offenders tried to cross the Talpati canal and enter Nandigram. BUPC members, guarding the bridge, blew conch shells. Over 3,000 villagers formed a human wall to block the advancement of the invaders. The attackers retreated, but another attack was launched around 10.30 a.m. Police remained silent spectators.

November 6, 2007, nine villages were torched by the *harmad*. Three declared dead officially, actual number suspected to be larger. Armed cadres initially entered Satengabari, Ranichak, Bhangabera and Sonachura. Later in the day, they entered Simulkunda, Kanungochak, Satengabari, Uttarpurbapally, Giribazar, Brindabanchak and Akandabari and set houses on fire. At least 15,000 people were hounded out of their homes and many of them had to be given shelter at relief camps set up at Nandigram. The state home secretary Mr. Prasad Ranjan Roy admitted that firing started from Khejuri, a clear admission that CPI-M cadres unleashed the violence. Mr. Ray admitted there had been virtually no police presence in the areas like Gokulnagar, Ranichak, Bhangabera and Satengabari which turned into a "*war zone*" witnessing "*widespread violence*".

November 7, 2007 police picket on the strategic Tekhali Bridge in Nandigram removed. Armed *harmad* crossed the Talpati canal and stormed several villages. Hundreds of armed men entered Maheshpur in Nandigram, nearly 4 kilometers beyond Tekhali Bridge. Two injured on November 5, 2007, passed away, taking the official death toll to five. *Harmad* took control of several villages, including Satengabari, Keyakhali, Brindabanchak and Ranichak. Several houses in Roynagar and Jhatiboni were torched. At least 3,000 more villagers were rendered homeless, total homeless being 25000. The CPI(M) formed camps at Reyapara, Mograjpur, Sashigunge Bazaar, and several other places on both sides of the Chandipur-Nandigram Road to seal off Nandigram from the rest of the world.

November 8, 2007 Our team of 25-30 activists, intellectuals and academicians was ambushed in Kapaseria village and refused admission into Nandigram, inspite of a police escort. The glass window panes of our vehicles were smashed, driver, some press activists, including Medha Patkar were beaten by male cadres of CPI-M and others manhandled. Trinamul MP Mukul Roy, MLA Subhendu Adhikari and Congress Legislative Party Chief Whip, Manas Bhuiyan were also assaulted at another place and time as was reported in the media and were not allowed to enter the affected area and even relief material was prevented from entering. The Bar Association was also barred from entering the villages. The police stood by and watched.

Homeless people staged a *dharna* in front of Nandigram police station in the afternoon alleging police inaction but were later chased away by policemen with tear gas shells and firing.

November 09, 2007 in a strong criticism of the Nandigram carnage, Honourable Governor Mr. Gopalkrishna Gandhi termed the manner in which the villages in Nandigram were recaptured as "*unlawful and unacceptable*" and described the area, "*as the Home Secretary aptly put it, as a virtual war zone*".

November 10, 2007 *harmad* fired on unarmed peace processions of BUPC. With road blocks and entry of media barred and total non cooperation by the police in rescue operation, unconfirmed reports put the toll as high as 100 with bodies being fished out of a canal. Police would confirm only three deaths, including a woman, and at least 13 others injured. BUPC alleged that 600 villagers, many of whom had received bullet injuries, had been abducted by the *harmad*. Two women alleged gang rape. Those captured were taken to the Amratala Khejuri Primary School and tortured by *harmad*. 11 of them were rescued by the police. An ambulance driven by CPI(M) cadres carrying fourteen dead bodies on its way to Belda on West Mednipore was stopped by TMC workers at Egra. The *Janani* brick kiln was used by the cadres for disposing bodies in its chimneys. 8 CPI(M) cadres were caught smuggling out injured persons from amongst BUPC members in a Panchayat car (belonging to Khejuri I Panchayat Samity) at Egra.

BUPC supporter's *gheraoed* Nandigram police station alleging inaction. Policemen allegedly resorted to *lathi charge*. All entry points to Nandigram remained blocked 2 days hunger strike by civil society started in Kolkata

November 11, 2007 saw an intensification of protests by the civil society in Kolkata and elsewhere. 8 persons from Sonachura, Nandigram managed to escape and reach the venue of the protest in Esplanade. CRPF contingent making its way to Nandigram was attacked and chased back by CPI(M) cadres in Reyapara and Chandipur. Shyamal Chakrabarty, CPI(M) State Secretary said with pride "*We have taken over Nandigram, and made it terror free.*"

November 12th 2007 Terror continues in Nandigram. Truck of relief material with civil society activists and intellectuals was blocked by CPI(M) cadres in various places in spite of court orders allowing free passage. NHRC decided to send investigation team to Nandigram. CRPF also starts entering Nandigram

November 13th 2007 NDA team reaches Nandigram. Civil society activists reach Nandigram with relief materials. High Court passes order asking for free passage to be assured.

Annexure 2: Demand for emergency CRPF camp

The BUPC had demanded CRPF camps for the following positions , according to information they gave us on 14th November 2007.

1. Sonachura
2. Gar Chakraberia
3. Hazrakata
4. Basuli Chawk- Lock Gate
5. Tekhali Bazar
6. Maheshpur
7. Rani Chawk
8. Satengabari
9. Girir Bazar
10. Takapura Basic School
11. Kamalpur
12. Akandobari
13. Dawoodpur
14. Jambari

Annexure 3**Nandigram B.M.Pal B.P.H.C.****Document of injured persons attended Nandigram B.M.Pal ,B.P.H.C. on 10/11/07 & Other dates**

Sl. No	Name	Address	Age	Sex	Remarks
1	Asish Pandit	S/o- Ardhabindu Pandit Vill- Kendemari	37	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 10.11.07
2	Sk. Rezaul	S/o- Sk. Jamsed Vill- Baichbari	40	M	DEAD on 10.11.07
3	Goutam Das	S/o- Phanibhusan Das Vill- Soudkhali	35	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital. on 10.11.07
4	Mani Show	W/o- Srihari Show Vill- Sonachura	30	F	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 10.11.07
5	Joydev Patra	S/o- Lt. Atul Patra Vill- Soudkhali	32	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
6	Prakash Giri	S/o- Lt. Gyanendra Giri Vill- Sonachura	55	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
7	Rabin Mishra	S/o- Lt. Surendra Mishra	60	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
8	Sk. Jahangir	S/o- Sk. Motleb Vill- Satengabari	22	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
9	Jadav Maity	S/o- Sankar Maity Vill- Sonachura	35	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 10.11.07
10	Tapas Khatua	S/o- Lt. Makhanlal Khatua Vill- Gangra	40	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 10.11.07
11	Kajal Das	W/o- Nirajan Das Vill- Sonachura	28	F	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
12	Samiran Bera	S/o- Basanta Bera Vill- Soudkhali	22	M	DORB on 10 th Nov. '07' & again reasund on 11 th Nov. '07'.
13	Sanat Pramanik	S/o- Bhagaban Pramanik Vill- Gokulnagar	35	M	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 10.11.07
14	Krishna Gopal Shee	S/o- Sukchand Shee Vill- Barjamtola	30	M	Released after first aid. on 10.11.07
15	Srikrishna Das	S/o- Amaresh Das Vill- Dinabandhupur	40	M	Released after first aid. on 10.11.07
16	Nishikanta Maikap	S/o- Swadesh Maikap Vill- Dinabandhupur	25	M	Released after first aid. on 10.11.07
17	Shambhu Das	S/o- Sarbeshwar Das Vill- Soudkhali Char	42	M	Released after first aid. on 10.11.07
18	Sakuntala Dhapar	S/o- Anukul Dhapar Vill- Soudkhali	40	F	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
19	Tripti Patra	S/o- Ratan Patra Vill- Kalicharanpur	30	F	Ref. To Tamluk Dist. Hospital on 11 th Nov '07'
20	Sukumar Mondal	S/o- Lt. Kenaram Mondal Vill- Sonachura	55	M	Nandi Gram Hospital on 10.11.07
21	Shyamali Manna	W/o- Prakash Manna Vill- Gokulnagar	35	F	DEAD
22	Sk. Soleman	S/o- Lt. Sk. Moslem Vill- Sonachura	46	M	Male injury transferred to Tamluk on 7/11/07 at 5 a.m.
23	Sk. Akram Ali	S/o- Sk. Entaj Ali Vill- Nalpur	36	M	Scalp injury, admitted on 7/11/07
24	Dulal Das	S/o- Basanta Das Vill- Amgachhia	40	M	Male injury, admitted on 7/11/07 Discharged at 2.30.P.M. 9/11/2007
25	Parul Pal	W/o- Shaktipada Pal Vill- Sonachura	50	F	Injury transferred to Tamluk on 11/11/07 at 1.45p.m.
26	Gunhari Barui	S/o- Ananta Barui Vill- Gangra	20	M	Injury, still Hospitalised at Tamluk
27	Ajit Pradhan	S/o- Lt. Pramod Pradhan Vill- Gangra	53	M	Swelling and tenderness of right hand Not discharged
28	Shyamal Mondal	S/o- Susanta Mondal	18	M	Injury, Not discharged Admitted

		Vill- Gokulnagar			on 14.11.07
29	Rabindranath Pramanik	S/o- Basudev Pramanik Vill- Garchakraberia	28	M	Injury, Not discharged Admitted on 14.11.07
30	Adaul Khan	S/o- Abdul Based Khan Vill- Garchakraberia	68	M	Injury, Not discharged Admitted on 14.11.07