

Rise!

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REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC FRONT (RDF)

Contact: revolutionarydemocracy@gmail.com

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Press Release

RDF strongly Condemns the Dalit Massacre in Lakshimpeta in Srikakulam

Punish the Culprit Upper Caste Brahmanical Forces Including their Abettors, the Ruling Party Leaders like

RDF Hails the Exemplary Courage of Dalit People of Lakshimpeta for Putting Up Brave Fight to Own the Land.

Rally Around All Dalit and Adivasi People's Struggles for Self-Assertion and Dignity

Develop Self-Defense to Protect the Movement and its Gains Against Murdours Attacks of the Brahmanical Forces.

Yet another massacre on dalit people in Andhra Pradesh shows that the landowning castes still turn violent when dalits assert themselves to take over land. Four dalit people were hacked to death, and about 30 dalit men and women were critically injured in a well-orchestrated attack by Turpu Kapu backward caste brahmanical forces in Lakshimpeta village of Vangara block in Srikakulam District on 12 June 2012. The brahmanical forces targeted 60 dalit families in the village with crude and brutal weapons like bombs, sickles, hatchets and axes supported and patronised by the ruling Congress Party leaders of the region. Burada Sundara Rao (45), Chitri Appadu (35), Nivarti Venkati (65) and Nivarti Sangameshu (40) died in the bloodbath. Bodduru Papaiah died in King George Hospital, Vishakhapatnam on 20 June while taking treatment. With his death, the number of people killed in the massacre increased to five.

Land was acquired by government for Madduvalasa reservoir built on two tributaries of Nagavali river, Suvarnamukhi and Vegavathi which, while displacing thousands of people irrigated 15000 acres of land. In Lakshimpeta village, after the construction of the reservoir, 240 acres of land intermittently comes out of the submergence when water dries up. As the land turns fertile, rich crops were being raised on it with profitable cultivation in the past five years. The government paid a compensation of two lakh rupees per acre to Kapu land owners and settled 190 Kapu families and 60 dalit families about seven kilometres away from the reservoir. The dalit families were not paid any compensation or given employment though they were also displaced and resettled except for four families, who had assigned lands—only 40 thousand rupees per acre were paid to each of these four dalit families. Meanwhile one

each from 40 families of the Kapu caste was provided with employment in the reservoir office departments in addition to compensation amount for land. All 250 families were settled in pacca houses built by the government. Having been deprived of land for centuries, the dalits of Lakshimpeta, as in most other cases, aspired to take over the unaffected land under the project and they have been asserting their rights over the land which now falls under the control of the government.

As the 240 acres of land—that once belonged to Kapu community became government land after compensation was being paid—came out of submergence every now and then, 180 acres of land has been cultivated by the Kapu families while only 60 acres by 60 dalit families in the last five years. Kapu community in the village claimed that the entire land belongs to them as it once belonged them. Dalits argued with the local revenue administration that they should be allowed to cultivate this land as it was now government land.

The local administration maintained silence as the Kapu caste people were supported by powerful lobbies within the ruling party from the state to the bloc levels within the same caste. Both sides of the dispute approached the court for justice. The court as usual stayed the cultivation from both sides till its judgment. This triggered fury among the Kapu backward community and they blamed squarely the dalit community for the court order, though both communities had approached the court. The former local block president of Congress Party, Botsa Vasudevanaidu instigated the Kapus against the dalit people with the active encouragement from PCC chief, Botsa Satyanarayana. Congress leaders like Botsa Satyanarayana, Dharmana Prasada Rao (Minister for Roads and Buildings in Andhra Pradesh Government) from North Andhra Region have become the powerful agents of land grab in the region for thermal power plants, industrial corridor projects and mining. They are maintaining land mafia's and have acquired thousands of acres of for their own families. They are responsible for the police firings and state-sponsored killings of the people, who are protesting against land grab in the region. They are the powerful political leaders of the region who are in real sense representatives of globalisation and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in the region.

As the tension in the village grew, the government put up a police picket in the village, instead of solving the issue and the bloc has been placed under the atrocity-prone area. This shows such an attack as the one on dalits on 12 June has been expected to happen. In these circumstances, the government itself is directly responsible for the massacre of dalits. On June 12, majority of police personnel at the picket were sent away on by-election duty. The police forces returned to the village only after giving enough time to the caste chauvinists to carry out the massacre unhindered. History testifies to this set pattern of conduct of the state forces as every time they remained mute witnesses to the upper caste brahmanical fascist attacks on dalits. In fact the India state forces like police, paramilitary and army always either sided with upper caste big landing owning communities or stayed as onlookers over the atrocities as they represented the interests of the brahmanical upper caste Indian state.

As the dalit people were not prepared to face the brutal attack from the brahmanical casteist forces, they either prayed their attackers to leave them or couldn't move away to safety. The motivated and calculated nature of the attackers was evident from their preparedness to strike on the dalits fatally. All the victims targeted were the main bread-winners of their respective families. All of them were mainly landless peasants.

The infuriated dalits of Lakshimpeta refused to bury the dead for the next three days as the government did not arrest the culprits and their abettors, the kingpins in the massacre and the ruling parties' leaders. The dalit people protested the government's inaction placing the dead bodies of their kith and kin in front of the village. The administration did not use SC and ST Atrocities Act against the culprits and their abettors till all dalit and democratic forces raised their voices in protest. A week after when the law was evoked, it was used against small insignificant elements among the culprits, leaving out safely the main abettors and political leaders like Botsa Vasudeva Naidu, Botsa Satyanarayana and others.

The political leaders of all ruling parties hovered over the surviving victims of dalit families pouring out their crocodile tears and false promises of jobs, lakhs of compensation and distribution of land. People have seen through the cunningness of these leaders as well as the empty rhetoric of their false promises. The upper caste brahmanical forces would never allow land to come into the hands of dalits as it is both symbolically and in real sense economic and political power. Further it will nullify all the coercive methods of surplus maximisation of the landed through the forced rendering of the dalits landless and hence dependent on the upper castes for their survival. The powers that be have only ensured through their police and paramilitary hand in glove with politician and the landowning classes to perpetuate this system by careful promotion of their interests. Dalit people of Lakshimpeta village have shown exemplary self-assertion to own the land despite continuous threats and atrocities from the powers that be.

RDF appeals to all democratic, progressive and revolutionary individuals and organisations to rally around the dalits in their attempt to self-assertion for dignity and to acquire land as a source of livelihood. Traditionally land mainly remained in the hands of the upper caste brahmanical feudal landowners. It is important to understand that at present the biggest land grab by the upper caste feudal and comprador forces in the name of projects, companies, mining, etc, are further depriving the dalits and adivasis, while at the same time preaching them that agriculture is not a profitable profession to live on. But the dalit and adivasi people are increasingly asserting themselves for their rights over land and other natural resources as they provide livelihood to the largest number people in the subcontinent. The movement for self-assertion and dignity is invariably linked to the land question for the vast majority of the oppressed people from oppressed castes and communities like Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and a vast majority of oppressed other weaker castes, though a section of the land owning among them turned brahmanical and caste oppressors.

The Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and other communities of oppressed people need to have self-defence mechanisms while asserting themselves in every aspect in life, otherwise they are being massacred or facing genocidal attacks. In this context it is important to remind ourselves of the call given during Dalit Panthers uprising for self-defence of dalits in 1970s.

Most of the demands raised by all democratic organisations are for more compensation for the deceased and injured families of dalits. While compensation is required as an immediate relief and justice by punishing the culprits, what is important as the permanent solution is to build self-defence cover for dalits to protect themselves as well as a sound deterrent against the massacres from brahmanical upper caste fascist forces. Only through acts of retaliation can we stop and prevent atrocities on dalits.

(This statement is based on Fact-finding done by various people's organisations in which an RDF executive member was part).

President
Varavara Rao
09676541715

General Secretary
Rajkishore
09717583539