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Who Killed Mohd. Qateel Siddiqi?

Mohd. Qateel Siddiqi of Darbhanga had been in jail since November 2011 after being arrested on charges of involvement in several blast cases. On 8 June, inside Yerawada jail in Pune, two gangsters, Sharad Mohol and Alok Bhalerao, are said to have strangled Qateel to death.

It should be noted that the Maharashtra ATS had failed to file a chargesheet against Qateel in the 7 months from November 2011 till June 2012. We can recall that recently, the Adarsh scam accused got bail because the CBI failed to file a chargesheet within the stipulated 6-day period. If the same norms had applied to terror cases, Qateel should have been free, given the failure of authorities to assemble any proof against him. Yet, he remained in jail, and the ATS kept claiming he was a 'key Indian Mujahideen (IM) operative.'

The gangsters claim they killed Qateel because he was 'anti-national'. It is a telling comment on the state of democracy in India, that criminal gangsters can claim to be 'patriotic' on the strength of having murdered a young Muslim terror-accused, who they can brand 'anti-national,' even without charges being framed, let alone proved in court!

The custodial murder of Qateel raises serious questions about the role of the jail authorities. Qateel was lodged in the high security part of the jail; where it would surely have been difficult for the murder to be committed without the knowledge of jail authorities.

The investigative agencies too are under a cloud. Their failure to file a chargesheet

indicates that sooner or later, their lack of evidence to back up their allegations would have been exposed in court. And there are strong reasons to suspect that they too might have had a role in the suspicious murder of Qateel inside jail. Jails are notorious for attacks on accused prisoners, and there have been many cases in which key witnesses, who stand to embarrass governments or investigative agencies, have been eliminated within jails, either in contrived 'suicides' or at the hands of hired criminals.

As it is, the intelligence agencies stand deeply discredited in successive high-profile cases including Malegaon, Mecca Masjid, and Samjhauta Express blasts. Muslims jailed and tortured for years were proved innocent, while today, members of Sangh Parivar outfits stand implicated. Increasingly, instances of false framing of innocents are also being exposed. In a recent case, Nagee Ahmad from Darbhanga, an informer for the Delhi Police Special Cell, was overnight transformed into one of the main accused by the Maharashtra ATS in the 13/7 Mumbai blast case, with a public tug-of-war between the two agencies over him.

Rather than risk embarrassment in the case of Qateel being proved innocent, it might well have seemed convenient to investigative agencies to have him eliminated within the jail itself. Had he remained alive, he was likely to disown his 'confession' which he had claimed was obtained under torture. Now that he is dead, his 'confession' is likely to be used to implicate others.

Qateel's fate underlines the vulnerability of Muslim youth arrested on terror charges.

There are many cases of fake encounters and custodial deaths; and it is common for them to be kept in illegal custody for long periods. A recent instance is that of Bihar-origin engineer Fasih Mahmood, who was picked from his home in Saudi Arabia on 13th May, allegedly on the request of Indian investigative agencies, but who is now missing.

The murder of Qateel also exposes the duplicity and hypocrisy of the Congress. During the UP elections, Salman Khursheed invoked 'Sonia's tears' for the Batla House victims, while Digvijay Singh similarly tried to invoke Batla House in order to garner

votes at Azamgarh. But Congress-ruled Governments like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are foremost, on par with BJP-ruled Gujarat, in the false framing and custodial attacks on Muslim terror-accused.

An impartial enquiry must be ordered at the earliest to establish the truth in the murder of Qateel Siddiqi, and compensation must be given to his family by the Maharashtra Government, in whose jail the murder took place. Above all, there is a need to strongly resist the disturbing trend to make Darbhanga another stage, like Azamgarh, for the communal profiling and witch-hunt of Muslim youth.

Human Chain and Condolence Meet for Comrade TPC at Delhi

On June 9, a human chain and condolence meet was held at Kerala House in Delhi, in memory of Comrade TP Chandrashekharan who was brutally murdered in Kerala in May. Participants in these memorial programs included students and professionals hailing from Kerala, journalists, teachers, and leaders of the All India Left Coordination (AILC).

Participants wore badges that had images of Comrade TPC and Gulmohar flowers, with the slogan, "Indraprastha salutes the Gulmohar that was torn off on a May twilight." A long line of people joined hands in the Human Chain outside Kerala House, with placards saying, "Punish the Killers of Comrade TP Chandrashekharan"; "Opportunist Left Should Know: Vendetta and Violence Cannot Silence Genuine Revolutionaries like Comrade TPC"; "Long Live Comrade TPC – Brave Communist Who Upheld the Legacy of the 1948 Onchiyam Martyrs!"; "Who Is the 'Traitor' to the Left Movement? Those who hack to death a young Left activist for ideological differences? Or those like TPC who lay down their lives for the Left cause?" and "All Genuine Leftists Know TPC Is a

Martyr! Shame on Those Who Brand Him a 'Traitor'!"

The Human Chain was followed by the Condolence Meet inside the Conference Hall of Kerala House. The meeting was chaired by Comrade Kumaran Kutty, President of the Left Coordination Committee, Kerala, which is an AILC constituent, and is the platform of which Comrade TPC's party, the Revolutionary Marxist Party, was a part. Comrade Kutty introduced the meeting, telling people about the series of attacks on Comrade TPC and other RMP activists who had left the CPI(M) in 2008. He pointed out that there were many in Kerala who left CPI(M) to join the Congress; yet it was Comrade TPC, who remained committed to Left ideals, whom the CPI(M) branded as 'betrayer.' He also gave details about the ongoing spate of arrests of CPI(M) leaders for involvement in the case. He said that just a few days before the murder, CPI(M) cadres, while observing Onchiyam martyrs' day on 30 April, raised threatening slogans such as 'TPC your days are numbered' and 'TPC you will be laid out in white cloth,' in the presence of CPI(M) Politburo member Kodyeri Balakrishnan.

The murder took place following a series of attacks and such explicit threats.

Comrade Mangat Ram Pasla, Secretary of CPM Punjab, saluted Comrade TPC as a true communist. He said that the CPI(M) has a history of attacking those who present an ideological and political critique from a radical Left perspective. In Punjab too, he said, his party comrades had been attacked when they left the CPI(M). He called for Left supporters to show true solidarity with Comrade TPC by strengthening the struggle to build a fighting Left movement in Kerala and in the country.

Comrade Swapan Mukherjee, CC member of the CPI(ML), said Comrade TPC was killed for offering a powerful ideological challenge for the CPI(M). Perhaps those who killed him hoped to confine the RMP to a few pockets of Kerala; but the murder has had the opposite effect. RMP and LCC leaders are being contacted by Left supporters from all over Kerala, eager to join the movement represented by Comrade TPC. He said Comrade TPC had upheld the legacy of the historic communist martyrs of Onchiyam.

Sumit Chakravarty, editor, Mainstream, spoke of how JNUSU President Comrade Chandrashekar had been killed at the behest of a criminal ruling class politician Shahabuddin. It is tragic that another idealistic Left activist, Comrade Chandrasekharan, had been murdered, but this time it was a Left party which stood implicated in this heinous murder.

Gopi Krishnan, journalist with the Pioneer, warned of the poor track record of justice in cases of political murders in Kerala, and called upon people to maintain vigil during the course of investigation and trial so that the killers and conspirators were truly identified and punished. RG James, former JNUSU office-bearer also addressed the meeting. Kavita Krishnan, CC member of CPI(ML), and Shivani Nag, JNUSU Councillor, spoke of their visit to Onchiyam to meet Comrade TPC's family earlier this month.

Ravi Rai, General Secretary of AISA, said that in an aberrant instance, an SFI leader of Delhi joined NSUI citing the murder. He said that students would reject such shameful attempts to use the murder to garner support for the politics of the Congress. Instead, students and youth would continue to be inspired by the example of Comrade TPC, who shunned the Congress and struggled to build a genuinely radical Left movement. Historian Tripta Wahi, and senior journalist Jawed Naqvi also participated in the meeting.

The meeting adopted a pledge saying, "politics based on violence will only weaken healthy political movements. We respect the political consciousness showed by Com. TP Chandrasekharan. We will do our best in order to ensure that such crimes will not repeat

anywhere in the future," and a Condolence resolution detailing major highlights of Comrade TPC's biography, and stating, "In the land where political murders are a part and parcel, martyr Comrade TP Chandrasekhar has become a hope of an ideal political culture."

CPI(ML)'s Statewide "Dhikkar Diwas" against Nitish Govt's Double Standards

The CPI(ML) organised and observed 'dhikkar' (damning) marches and street corner meetings at various district centres throughout the State including Patna on 8 June against utter insensitivity of the Nitish Govt to the constantly maintained demand of CBI enquiry into the Forbesganj Police firing and the political murders of Bhaiyaram Yadav and Chhotu Kushwaha; against disbanding of the Justice Amir Das Commission and giving nod for CBI enquiry into the murder of Ranvir Sena chief Brahmeshwar Singh. Through these marches and street corner meetings the Party cadres and members everywhere in Bihar condemned and opposed this deeply biased act of agreeing for CBI enquiry in Ranvir Sena chief's murder. On the other hand the Govt is showing reluctance in filing review petition in the Supreme Court to challenge the Patna High Court's verdict acquitting all the accused in Bathani Tola massacre.

At many place the Party members also burnt effigies of Nitish Kumar- patron of the feudal-communal -criminal forces in Bihar. In Patna, the 'dhikkar' march started from Radio Station and culminated in a protest meeting at Station roundabout. The march was led by Comrades

Saroj Chaubey (CC member), Santosh Sahar, Abhyuday, Murtaza Ali among others. The speakers in the meeting said that after the murders of Bhaiyaram Yadav and Chhotu Kushwaha thousands of people have been regularly demonstrating on streets demanding CBI enquiry and there was no rampaging and mob violence as perpetrated by Ranvir Sena supporters after the mastermind of several massacres Brahmeshwar Singh was killed. Yet the Govt has been quick in approving a CBI enquiry. The speakers also alleged that Nitish Kumar is mask for feudal-communal-criminal forces of Bihar and the injustices against dalit-poor-minorities is continuing unabated under his tenure. The CPI(ML), they said will also continue unabated the crusade for justice.

The 'dhikkar' marches were held at Arwal, Bhojpur, Siwan, Aurangabad, Jahanabad, Bhabhua, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Purnia, Nalanda, Bhagalpur, Jahanabad, Aurangabad (Haspura, Daudnagar, Obra, Deo, etc.), Siwan, Fatuha, Masaurhi and Fulwari among other district centres and towns. In Bhojpur, street corner meetings exposing the regime were held at Ara, Jagdishpur, Sahar, Tarari, Bihiya, Charpokhari, etc.

Massive Demonstration by Khatta & Forest Dwellers in Uttarakhand

All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKM) organised a massive protest rally comprising Khatta and forest dwellers in Lalkuan (Nainital district) on 11 June against their repression by the State's Bahuguna Govt. The rally was led by Comrades Purushottam Sharma (AIKM's State President), Rajendra Pratholi (Party's State Secretary), Bahadur Singh Jangi

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and Ghulam Nabi among others.

As has been reported in the past two years, the Khatta dwellers and forest gurjars have been agitating for implementation of the Forest Act and their basic rights. Numbering about a lakh and a half, these people have never been given affiliation to village panchayats, nor given basic facilities like ration cards, medical help, education, roads, electricity and water, not even MNREGA, NRHM, Aanganwadi, old age pension and family registration facilities.

Under pressure from a series of agitation led by AIKM, the Nainital administration had begun to deliver in these forest villages/Khattas on some basic demands after a compromise last year on 23 July. However, the new Congress Govt in Uttarakhand has stalled all that and has started instead repressing-harassing these people. On 17 May, 25 forest personnel led by SDO of Forest Dept attacked Vangurjar hamlet of Cheedkhatta and beat up women and young people. The people beaten up were mostly family members of Comrade Ghulam Nabi (AIKM Vice President of Uttarakhand). Three gurjar youth were later arrested by police and sent to jail. Meanwhile, the forest officials have also cut off water sources where cattle and other domesticated animals drink water by putting up barbed-wire fences or by digging trenches in their way. The forest dwellers are also being threatened by the officials not to plant crops any more in any of the forest villages and hamlets.

In this backdrop the AIKM decided to launch wide-spread protest. A conference was held on 3 June at Cheedkhatta. This conference decided to hold a massive rally on 11 June at Lalkuan. The rally was addressed by above leaders who warned that if the repression and harassment is not halted immediately the AIKM will gherao the State Secretariat.

The rally also demanded dropping off of all false charges on the forest dwellers of Cheedkhatta.

The rally started from old tehsil and traversed busiest places in Lalkuan before culminating at new tehsil campus where a memorandum to the Chief Minister was handed to the Dy. DM.

Seminar in Nagpur on Present International Situation & Communist Movement

Comrade Swapan Mukherjee, General Secretary of All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) addressed a seminar as the main speaker in Nagpur on above mentioned topic on 26 May. Other speakers included Comrade Chandrapal Singh (Inquilabi Sarvahara Manch), Comrade Saroj Meshram, Comrade Ashu Saxena, Comrade Ahish Bose, Comrade Namdev Lagwe and Comrade Arvind Ghosh among others.

Party GBM in Nagpur

A GBM, presided over by Comrade Swapan Mukherjee, was held on 27 May in Nagpur. Party members in Nagpur attended the meeting and a seven-member Nagpur District Committee was elected. Comrade Harendra Srivastava was elected secretary of the committee. Some of the organisational decisions were to increase Party membership in Nagpur and hold Nagpur District conference by the year end.

AICCTU Leading Auto-rickshaw Strike in Kanpur

The AICCTU affiliated Tempo-Taxi Federation is leading a strike of auto-rickshaws in Kanpur since 6 June against administrations arbitrary decision of stopping the plying of auto-rickshaws in certain areas of the city. The indefinite dharna comprising mostly auto-drivers is being led by Comrade Anant Ram Bajpayee. They have threatened of a chakka-jam if the administration does not pay heed to their concerns.