

Jesuit Priest: Situation in Gujarat now worse than it was in 2002



London: Inter communal relations in the western Indian state of Gujarat are "worse' than they were on 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th of March 2002, Jesuit priest Father Cedric Prakash of Ahmedabad told a meeting jointly organised on 30 November in London by the Council of Indian Muslims - UK and South Asia Solidarity Watch. "I say it without any exaggeration", Father Prakash emphasised.

Father Prakash, a human rights activist, who has himself been attacked and beaten up by extremist Hindus on several occasions for opening his mouth against the atrocities committed by them, said, "when there are relief camps, arson, looting, murder, it attracts every body's attention, and then it disappears from the front pages of our newspapers and from TV screens...What is taking place in Gujarat after the smoke, fire, murders, rapes, arson and loot is no longer on the front pages and on our TV screens."

Father Prakash said that this is unfortunate that only grotesque scenes attract our attention but we fail to see what is subtle and hidden. What everyone is failing to see in Gujarat today is that, "If you are a Muslim you cannot buy a property, a house or a shop anywhere in the western side of the city [Ahmedabad]." He said that displaced Muslims are living away from their homes, their businesses, that had been destroyed and those who committed murders, rapes and loot are roaming with impunity, some of whom have even been elected as official representatives of the people. "Why a Muslim from the affluent and educated western part of Ahmedabad has to run away and live in what they [Hindu extremists] call 'Mini Pakistan?'" He asked. He emphasised that only if the cases were heard outside Gujarat, can one hope for justice and despite all the brutalities humans have suffered in Gujarat, "only sense of security and sense of justice can help in establishing peace.

"When one suffers from sense of injustice and sense of insecurity the normal reaction would be to take the law in ones own hands but", Father Prakash added that "no one has done so in Gujarat yet. However the ghettoisation, criminalisation and demonisation of one community in Gujarat is so strong that one does not even know how to react."

He pointed out that all those detained under the ignoble POTA act are Muslims. "I have visited the Sabarmati jail and have been meeting the detainees. Most of them are innocent people. I can tell you that I do not have any brief of any terrorist activity committed by anyone of them."

"One does not need Al-Qaida or any terrorist group to resort to terrorism. For an engineer or a hi-tech person or a bomb expert, suffering from sense of injustice this is so easy to resort to such activities and the act of one person does not make the whole community terrorist."

Father Prakash said that outside pressure was extremely important to stop the fascism of the Sangh Parivar and it was the responsibility of Indians living abroad to use their influence and situation in this regard.

He also criticised Zafar Sureshwala and E Master, Chairman of Lancashire Council of mosques who had met Gujarat's Chief Minister Narendra Modi in London and had therefore given legitimacy to the Chief perpetrator of Genocide.

"Jesus refused to deal with Satan, when the devil came onto him, Jesus abonished him and likewise those people who think they can make deals with Modi are gravely mistaken."

"Modi has made it clear that Christians and Muslims in India are second class citizens and have been targets for rape, looting and murder and given that the state mechanism and police force have been acting against them, wider international pressure is essential. I call upon my Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters in England to stand up for Gujarat."