

CPI-M supports the Prevention of Communal Violence Bill with some Comments/Reservations:-

<http://www.cpim.org/tags/communal-violence-bill>

Prakash Karat at the NIC meet:- Communal Violence Bill: There is a need for legislation on communal violence which can give teeth to the administrative and legal measures that have to be taken to curb communal violence and to ensure speedy punishment for the perpetrators of such violence. The law should provide for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of such violence. It should make the administration and the police accountable for firmly putting down incidents of violence.

While doing so, two factors need to be kept in mind. The law should focus only on “Communal Violence” and not broaden itself to other forms of conflicts and violence. Secondly, the legislation should be in keeping with the federal principle wherein the state governments have the primary responsibility for maintenance of law and order and policing.

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Note to NIC Meeting

Saturday, September 10, 2011

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Press Release

We are herewith releasing the note submitted by Prakash Karat, General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist) to the National Integration Council Meeting held in New Delhi today.

1. It is nearly three years since the last meeting of the National Integration Council was held in October 2008. At the outset it should be stated that the NIC has not been an effective body to tackle issues of national integration and the problem of communalism. Today we are once again going to discuss issues related to communalism and the steps to curb communal violence. The other issues on the agenda are discrimination against minorities, handling of civil disturbances and the radicalization of youth on the basis of religion and caste.

2. Communalism has social, political and economic dimensions. I do not think anyone here would argue that communalism has abated or has been significantly reduced. One of the main indicators of the malaise is the number of communal incidents that are taking place. In 2009, there were 791 communal incidents reported, resulting in 119 deaths and injuries to 2342 persons. In 2010, there were 658 incidents resulting in 111 deaths and injuries to 1971. These are figures provided by the Home Ministry. Between 2005 and 2009 on an average, 130 people have died and 2200 injured in communal violence each year. Though there is a slight reduction in the number of communal incidents in the last three years, there is no cause for satisfaction or complacency.

3. Continuance of communalism which erodes national unity and weakens the secular basis of the Republic is the result of communal ideology and the practice of communal politics; it is fuelled by religious fundamentalism and the social and economic grievances being given a communal colour. To combat communalism, it is necessary, therefore:

(i) To combat all forms of communal ideology and politics. The secular nature of the polity is getting eroded by resort to communal mobilisation. We saw the disastrous effects of such politics in 1992 on the Ayodhya issue. This politics which is sought to be given the garb of nationalism is nothing but majority communalism. Minority communalism also mirrors this approach and weakens secularism. Till political parties eschew all forms of communal politics, the problem of communalism will remain.

(ii) The espousal of communal ideology through the educational system and other State-supported institutions is a feature in some states. All such manifestations of anti-secular and communal ideology need to be curbed. Hate speech and demonisation of the minorities should be illegalised and action taken whenever required.

(iii) **Terrorism:** In India, a major source of terrorism is religious extremism and communal hatred. It is not enough to say “terrorists have no religion” when we know that religious extremism and communalism are the breeding grounds for terrorism. There is a direct link between communalism and terrorism in India.

In the recent years, we have seen religious extremism fuelling terrorist violence. This has been the motivation for some of the Muslim extremist groups. They continue to pose a threat as seen by the gruesome attacks recently like the blasts in Mumbai in July and the bomb blast at the Delhi High Court this week. It would be wrong to ascribe terrorism to any one community alone and make them a target of communal mobilisation. The investigations into the Malegaon, Mecca Masjid, Ajmer Sharief and the Samjhauta Express terrorist attacks have found them to be the handiwork of certain extreme Hindutva groups. The task of combating terrorism can be successfully taken forward only when communalism and religious extremism are firmly checked.

4. Communal Violence Bill: There is a need for legislation on communal violence which can give teeth to the administrative and legal measures that have to be taken to curb communal violence and to ensure speedy punishment for the perpetrators of such violence. The law should provide for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of such violence. It should make the administration and the police accountable for firmly putting down incidents of violence.

While doing so, two factors need to be kept in mind. The law should focus only on “Communal Violence” and not broaden itself to other forms of conflicts and violence. Secondly, the legislation should be in keeping with the federal principle wherein the state governments have the primary responsibility for maintenance of law and order and policing.

5. Discrimination: The largest minority in India, the Muslim community, suffers from deprivation and discrimination. The Sachar Committee report has brought this out comprehensively. The status of Muslims in education, employment and access to the benefits of development lags well behind the mainstream. Most of the measures suggested by the Sachar Committee remain unimplemented including the setting up of the Equal Opportunities Commission. The CPI(M) has been advocating a sub-plan for the minorities to ensure a fair share in development and social sector expenditure.

As far as the scheduled tribes are concerned, gross injustice is being done to them. We would like to point out only one issue which poses a serious threat. It emanates from the Government’s own policy. The mining policy of the government is leading to large-scale alienation of tribal land and displacement of the tribal people. The throwing open of mining to the corporates has unleashed a ferocious onslaught on the basic rights and livelihood of the tribal people.

6. **Civil Disturbances:** The methods to deal with civil disturbances are mired in the colonial framework. This was seen graphically in the civil unrest witnessed in the Kashmir valley in 2010. During the summer months of that year, more than 120 young people were shot dead by the police and security forces all across the valley. 'Shoot to kill and maim' was the method adopted to deal with stone-pelting youth. Tackling civil mass unrest like an insurgency is at the root of this inhumane approach. Urgent measures are required to train the police to deal with mass protests and civil unrest.

We also find increasing intolerance of mass protests and demonstrations. The right to assembly is being drastically curtailed. In city after city there are no places for people to assemble to protest and to demand their rights. These democratic rights are being curtailed by permanent bans on such assemblies in public places by the administration and often by judicial fiats. We have seen recently how in the Capital too peaceful protests against corruption were sought to be suppressed. Curtailing democratic rights and blocking avenues of peaceful protests will only fuel unrest and civil disturbances.

7. **Radicalisation of Youth:** Youth being radicalized would be a positive phenomenon if it results in the youth embracing a radical vision for social, economic and political change. In the absence of such a phenomenon, the radicalization of youth on religious, communal and sectarian agendas will be harmful and damage the development of a secular and harmonious society. First of all, it is necessary to understand the roots of the alienation and why there is an appeal of some extremist platforms for the youth. This stems from a system which produces glaring socio-economic inequalities and the deprivation of the basic needs of young people. Unemployment is a blight on the future of the youth. The latest National Sample Survey data (2009-10) shows a dramatic deceleration in the total employment growth from an annual rate of around 2.7 per cent during 2000-2005 to only 0.8 per cent during 2005-2010. The policy of the Central Government is to cut employment in the State sector. There are 10,81,336 vacancies lying unfilled in the central government. The government's philosophy seems to be that 'let jobs be created by the market' and the State has no role to play in generating employment. Unemployed and deprived of social justice, some of the frustrated youth get inveigled by divisive slogans based on communalism, sectarianism, caste and regional chauvinism.

The challenge is to provide the youth of our country with a stake and commitment to social and economic transformation; to be able to give them scope for productive employment and a belief that they can lead their lives with social justice and dignity. This requires a change from the present economic order and policies which promote greed, crony capitalism, loot of national resources and corruption. The youth will definitely respond to such a change and a radical vision.