

Citizens demand arms seizure



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Syed Miraz Ahmed 4 May 2014 Updated 4 May 11846 views

The anti-talk faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (IK-Songbijit) allegedly opened fire killing 34 and injuring several since Friday. Inspector General of Police for the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) L. R. Bishnoi confirmed that the rebels who engineered the massacre belonged to the anti-talk faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. The dead include women and infants.

Some 70 and more houses were raised to the ground in the fringes of the famous Manas National Park falling under Baksa of the BTAD so far. 22 people have been detained for burning homes and aiding the banned outfit. The outfit however, denied the charges in an email release to the media blaming the administration for the same.

NDFB (IK-S) seeks to obtain a sovereign Bodoland citing under-development of the region and influx of immigrants a large number of whom are Muslims of East Bengal origin.

The election tempo in BTAD took a somersault when Naba Kumar Sarania alias Heera Sarania, a reformed ULFA militant supported by 72 per cent non-Bodos, who are opposed to the creation of a Bodoland state decided to contest the elections as an independent candidate from Kokrajhar (ST) constituency where Chandan Brahma was projected as BPF's candidate. Provisions in the ULFA's constitution prevents its members from participating in the Indian Parliamentary system. Sarania was expelled by the ULFA (Pro-talk) following his decision to contest the Lok Sabha polls.

Hagrama Mohilary's BPF found a stiff competition with non-Bodos finding a savior in Heera Sarania as a strong contender. BPF insiders had expected 80 per cent of the Muslim votes in their favor to stay afloat which they fear otherwise.

In a press conference preceeding the polls, Heera Srania said, "The BPF is already scared of me. But my intention to fight the LS polls is neither to fight against any political party nor individuals. The common people living in BTAD are deprived of their political rights. They are suppressed, oppressed and depressed by a section of leaders who are discriminating the non-Bodos. The people in the area are seeking a change and asked me to lead them. It's not an election only, it's now a revolution. Let time decide my fate."

In the backdrop of the BTAD killings, members of the civil society and commoners alike came together to demand the immediate seizure of illegal arms from the BTAD. The Guwahati Sanmilita Nagarik Adhikar Suraksha Mancha (GSNAM), a Citizens' Forum Saturday convened to charter a solution to the issue at hand. It vouched for the unconditional seizure of available illegal arms and appealed to the people not to give it a communal color.

Presiding the gathering, Marxist literary critic, poet and social scientist, Hiren Gohain said that the present administration has utterly failed in containing communal flareups and providing security to the peace loving citizens of the state. "Political ramifications have given rise to unfortunte incidences in Assam," he said.

Senior advocate and Samajwadi Party State President, Hafiz Rashid Ahmed Choudhury said that the arms available in the BTAD should be seized. "Arms are the main problem. The government is well aware of the availability of arms but is doing nothing. We demand that the arms be seized as soon possible," he said.

“The arms which are available in the BTAD area have led to these killings. This is a very unfortunate incident and we condemn it. We have been appealing to the State Government for the seizure of all the illegal arms at the earliest but there is no action from the authority,” said Aditya Khaklari, General Secretary of the All Assam Tribal Sangha (AATS).

He slammed the role of the Central Government in dealing with the insurgency problem in the state saying, “The Centre has failed in solving the insurgency problem. That is the reason why the people of the state are suffering like this.”

Khaklari appealed to the people to be careful that the violence does not turn into a communal one. “We would like to appeal to the people as a whole that this is not a communal violence but a political one. The people are being killed for political reasons. The leaders and public representatives should also be careful from making statements which can ignite communal sentiments,” he added.

The Citizens’ Forum decided to visit the affected areas in their effort to cull violence and bring peace. Udayaditya Bharali, former principal of the Cotton College said that the illegal arms which are now available are a threat to democracy.

“This is an extreme thing to happen in democracy when political parties accuse each other of possessing illegal arms. Everybody knows about it but the Government is not doing anything in this regard,” Bharali said.

Of the 105 killed and 4, 45,586 displaced from both communities in the 2012 bloodbath, 1327 families yet await to be rehabilitated.

Assam Governor JB Patnaik had long asked the State Government to seize the illegal arms from the BTAD region. The Governor opined that house to house search should be made to bring an end to the problem.

Photo: Security during curfew at Tamulpur. Photo by UB Photos

Syed Miraz Ahmed

Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

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