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The Buddhist organization Ma Ba Tha in Burma has been at the forefront of attacks against the Rohingyas and other Muslims in the country. Burma's new government is beginning to take steps to weaken their influence. (Photo from <http://frontiermyanmar.net>)

Admonishment of Burma's Ma Ba Tha Long Overdue

Burma Partnership

The Ma Ba Tha, an organization of Buddhist monks in Burma led by Ashin Wirathu, issued statements of hate directed at the country's Muslims, such as the Rohingyas, and

instigated violence against them with impunity under Burma's previous government of President Thein Sein. One of the most significant acts of the new government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) since it took office in March this year is to publicly criticize the Ma Ba Tha as part of its efforts to bring unity and reconciliation to the nation.

[\[Read more\]](#)

International Donors to Stop Food Rations for Displaced Karen in 2017

Saw Mort

What do people do who have fled fighting in their country when they are told that their supply of food will be stopped in about a year and they don't feel it's safe to return to their homes? These are the questions confronting the Karen people in the Ei Tu Hta camp for internally displaced people in Burma. [\[Read more\]](#)



Responsibility, Not Dominance, over the Earth

Max Ediger

Interfaith Cooperation Forum's (ICF) national forum in Indonesia organized a mini-School of Peace (SOP) for 10 days in May in the indigenous village of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in West Java. The Sundanese people of the community became not only the hosts for the program but also the teachers. [\[Read more\]](#)



BBL Deserves Our Much-Needed Critical Support and Political Awareness under the New Presidential Administration!

United Youth for Peace and Development



Rodrigo Duterte, inaugurated on June 30 as the new president of the Philippines for a six-year term, faces numerous challenges confronting his country: entrenched poverty, widespread human rights abuses and a guerrilla war with the New People's Army (NPA) of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) that began in 1971. One leftover issue from the

previous administration of Benigno Aquino III that has received less attention, however, is the need for Congress to enact the Bangsamoro Basic Law, or BBL, that would finalize the 2014 peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and establish the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) in Mindanao. This statement by United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) is a reminder of this task. [\[Read more\]](#)

Child Labor in Nepalgunj



Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal

This article is compiled from sections of a recent report entitled "The Freedom: Freeing Children from the Worst Form of Child Labor in Nepalgunj." The problem of

child labor in this Nepalese city is outlined in this article, and the campaign of Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal (RUSUF-Nepal) and others in reaction to this social issue is explained as well as what needs to be done further. [[Read more](#)]

Turning Cows in India into Man-Eaters

Avinash Pandey

From this article, it appears that cows have more rights and freedoms in India than the country's people, especially such marginalized sections of society as the Dalits, or Untouchables. This conclusion is deduced by a series of violent incidents from throughout the country. In reality, the issue is about power and the use of religion as a façade to wield it with impunity. [[Read more](#)]





The Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu, center, has led the hate speech campaign of Ma Ba Tha in Burma since its inception in 2014 and its predecessor, the 969 Movement, that was accused of sparking attacks against Muslims in Rakhine State in 2012. (Photo from <http://jezebel.com>)

Admonishment of Burma's Ma Ba Tha Long Overdue

Burma Partnership

The ultranationalist Buddhist organization, the Ma Ba Tha, also known as the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, has received considerable pressure during the past two weeks. Criticism of the group likely stems from its role in promoting hate speech and inciting violence against Burma's Muslim minorities—condemnation which the organization had not experienced under the previous government of Thein Sein.

While on a trip to Singapore, the chief minister of Rangoon, U Phyo Min Thein, [stated](#), for example, that the Ma Ba Tha was “not necessary because we’ve already got the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee,” referring to Burma's national, government-appointed authority on Buddhist practice.

The Ma Ba Tha soon [responded](#) to the comments made by the chief minister, demanding action from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Htin Kyaw before July 14, 2016. The group later [backed off](#) plans for staged protests against the government, expressing that they believed the chief minister's comments were made independently and were not reflective of government policy.

Meanwhile, on July 12, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka—shortened to Ma Ha Na—issued a statement [declaring](#) that the Ma Ba Tha was “not a lawful monk's association,” adding that “it was not formed in accordance with the country's monastic rules.”

This stance was supported by Burma's minister of religious affairs and culture, Thura U Aung Ko, who [called](#) upon the Ma Ha Na to take action against members of the Ma Ba Tha who are found to have engaged in hate speech. In an interview with Radio Free Asia's Myanmar Service, Minister Aung Ko stated, “I requested [Ma Ha Na's] head monks to stop or take action against monks or others who make hate speeches that can incite bad blood between people or conflicts because it is very important that we have stability and development in the country.”

Finally, a charity group known as Thet Daw Saunt has also recently [issued](#) a formal defamation complaint against the Ma Ba Tha to authorities in Rangoon's Tamwe Township. The suit relates to a 2015 protest led by the Ma Ba Tha leader, Ashin Wirathu, who had [called](#) the U.N. special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Yanghee Lee, a “whore” after she had leveled criticism against the passing of the discriminatory Protection of Race and Religion legislation.

The anti-Muslim and hateful speech of the Ma Ba Tha, and in particular Wirathu, has been used to incite communal tensions against Muslim minorities. Along with the 969 Movement—the predecessor to the Ma Ba Tha—the Ma Ba Tha has been [accused](#) of operating as a political tool of the previous government of Thein Sein, fueling communal clashes, such as the 2012 Arakan State riots that left hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands internally displaced. Furthermore, the political influence of the Ma Ba Tha has also been used to [promote](#) the passing of last year's controversial Protection of Race and Religion Laws. These laws have been widely condemned by women's rights groups, civil

society organizations and human rights defenders as discriminatory against religious minorities and women in particular.

The extremist beliefs of the Ma Ba Tha have no place in Burma's society where interreligious friction remains consistently high. Just recently, two separate [attacks](#) on Muslim-owned properties demonstrate the underlying tension present across the country.

Fortunately, the new NLD-led government has taken a positive first step in condemning the culture of hate speech surrounding religious minorities. Still, an official policy addressing the promotion of hateful ideas and the enforcement of that policy is required. If Burma is to move forward in building a democratic country in which its highly diverse ethnic and religious communities coexist peacefully and side by side in harmony, the Burma government cannot afford to remain silent on the factors that exacerbate societal tensions. The rule of law must be established to protect against hate speech in any form.

Burma Partnership is a network of organizations throughout the Asia-Pacific region that advocate and work toward realizing a movement for democracy and human rights in Burma. Based in Thailand, it acts as a link between groups inside the country and solidarity organizations around the world.



The Karen residing in the Ei Tu Hta camp for those displaced by one of Burma's civil wars ponder their future next year when it is expected that food rations from the international community will be stopped in September. *(Photo by Saw Mort)*

International Donors to Stop Food Rations for Displaced Karen in 2017

Saw Mort

Ei Tu Hta is a camp for internally displaced people, or IDPs, located in Mutraw District on the banks of the Salween River. Its total population is 3,352 people living in 475 houses. The camp was set up in 2006 when the Burmese military in the Nay Pyi Daw area occupied the Karen National Union (KNU) areas, including the Taw Oo District by Brigade 2 and Klerlweehtu District by Brigade 3. The displaced people of Ei Tu Hta are from Taw Oo District, Klerlweehtu District and Mutraw District.

Today, 10 years later, residents are concerned and worried about their futures as international food donors have said they will stop funding the camp in 2017. This decision has forced many of the camp residents, unable to provide for themselves off of the poor farming land on the surrounding mountains, to consider moving back to land that is land mined and occupied by the Burmese army.

“We would like to ask the international countries to put pressure on the Burmese government’s military to leave from our areas. If the Burmese military stayed away from our areas, our Karen people would return to our places and earn our living in freedom and in peace. And we would no longer need the free contribution of food; we can depend on ourselves for our living,” says Saw Lah Pwe Moo, the secretary of Ei Tu Hta camp.

Ei Tu Ta camp receives only rice and salt. Every month each adult gets 12 kilos of rice and 0.15 kilo of salt. For each child under 5 years of age, they get six kilos of rice and 0.05 kilo of salt a month. The assistance comes through the Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD).

The camp residents also worry about the presence of the military in the area.

“It seems the peace negotiations in the country are good. We asked them to reduce the Burmese military in our areas and for them to return to their land; but instead of reducing and returning to their land, they brought in more military to our land. They have reinforced their camps and brought in more rations and arms to our land. Seeing this makes us dissatisfied,” says Naw Kay Paw, a resident of the camp.

“The new government must reduce their military in our land and should not bring in more ammunition. They should return the military to their own territory. If that happened, the villagers would go back to their homeland,” they added.

Saw Mort, a 2007 School of Peace (SOP) alumnus working for Karen News as a filmmaker and photographer, is producing a video about the Ei Tu Hta camp. This article is taken from his video script.



The indigenous people of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar have preserved the environment for generations, and, in turn, the environment has rewarded them with bountiful harvests and the preservation of their way of life. *(Photo by Max Ediger)*

Responsibility, Not Dominance, over the Earth

Max Ediger

In Kasepuhan Ciptagelar is a traditional Sundanese community in the province of West Java in Indonesia. The people here maintain their ancient traditions under the rule of a young king by the name of Abah Ugih. He inherited the position from his father. The king, called Father by the villagers, is a humble man who spends much of his time listening to his people and responding to their needs. He is guided by a group of elders who are fully versed in the oral history and traditions of the Sundanese people.

For the people of this village, rice is life, and it must never be sold in any form. After each harvest, which happens only once a year, the queen will select the rice which will become

the seeds for the next planting. No seeds from outside the community can be planted. With plenty of water from the many natural streams in the mountains, more than one crop could be planted a year, but the people believe that the earth also needs to rest, so tradition dictates that they can till the soil and plant only once each year. Consequently, their rice yields are very high, and they have saved enough rice for three years if needed. Meanwhile, neighboring communities that try to squeeze two or three crops out of their land each year struggle to have enough to eat.

The rice is kept in special granaries where it is protected until the family needs it. The granary of the king is sacred, and villagers say there is rice inside which is at least 100 years old and still can be eaten. No special effort is made to keep birds out of the fields or mice out of the granaries. "They too need to eat," says the king, "and they don't eat much anyway."

Many festivals are held throughout the year to honor rice and the environment which helps it grow. Some festivals are only held for the environment because, as the people believe, the earth, sky and water also need to celebrate.

Surrounding the village, three different forests exist. One is sacred, and no one can enter without permission. Trees in the second forest can be cut if needed for houses or firewood. The third forest is available to everyone for collecting food or medicinal herbs. This strict tradition has protected the environment in this area for many centuries, and it is still practiced so the future generations will also have a healthy world to live in.

After spending a short time with the people of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, I found myself reflecting back to the creation story in Gen. 1.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of the Earth." (Verse 26)

We perhaps have not been as responsible as God planned in the beginning. We overuse the resources of the world, try to force the earth to give us more and more of its limited gifts and make the soil, water and air unusable with all of our pollution and poisons. Consequently, we live less comfortably and with less sense of satisfaction than the people of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, even though their lives are very simple and uncluttered.

Indigenous communities around the world have much to teach us about taking responsibility for God's Creation, but we tend to ignore them. It would be good for all of us to occasionally make a pilgrimage to a village high in the mountains like Kasepuhan Ciptagelar and reconnect with the earth as God created it.

"God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: 'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of the Earth.'"

Max Ediger is the coordinator of Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF).

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The Moro youth of Mindanao hope that the new Congress of the Philippines will enact the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that has been awaiting its passage since 2014 so that further protests are not necessary. *(Photo from www.ucanews.com)*

BBL Deserves Our Much-Needed Critical Support and Political Awareness under the New Presidential Administration!

United Youth for Peace and Development

We, the Bangsamoro youth, strongly believe that the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is our most viable option for the cessation of conflict-related violence in Mindanao. It is the consummation of the already signed Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). As stated in the 2016 report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission

(TJRC), it is a political framework, which shall enable the practice of good governance, the development of the Bangsamoro region and people and the possibility for them to proudly assert their identity and constructively engage with their own multiethnic constituency. It is also a result of massive consultation and inclusive discourse among various sectors and stakeholders.

We also believe that the BBL deserves critical support, which means informing our understanding of the real historical cause of the Mindanao armed conflict and the roadmap for political transition to bring this conflict to its ultimate end so that we are able to make informed decisions to urge our new president and policymakers to pass the BBL. This much-needed support also means honoring the BBL as a product, not of an overnight speedy process, but of a decades-long painstaking and genuine effort to build the most comprehensive formula for viable peace in the conflict-stricken regions of Mindanao.

With our critical support and political awareness, we, the mass constituents, have all the power to push for an important legislative measure that paves the way for inclusive peace and sustainable development in the entire country.

Even church leaders and constitutional experts have pinned their faith on the BBL. The renowned Jesuit priest, Father Joel Tabora, himself urged that we pass the BBL as an organic law for genuine political autonomy in Muslim Mindanao. Soliman Santos, a staunch peace advocate and human rights lawyer, contends that the proposed BBL is the best, or at least most feasible, legislative measure to address the Bangsamoro problem and secure peace in Muslim Mindanao. Attorney Christian Monsod, one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution, opined that the BBL does not claim excessive powers and that we should look at it in its core principle in addressing the marginalization and exclusion of the Bangsamoro people.

We therefore remain firm and committed in our position: **PASS THE BBL IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM.**

With this, we earnestly appeal to the following:

To President Rodrigo Duterte:

You have finally been sworn in as the 16th president of the Philippines after your landslide victory in the recent national elections. You have categorically stated in your inauguration speech that your administration is committed to implement all signed peace agreements. You also committed to restore faith and trust in the government. With your public pronouncements, we rely on your strong political leadership to urge popular support for the passage of the original version of the BBL. We are hopeful that the roadmap for political transition for Bangsamoro autonomy, as stipulated in the CAB, will be accomplished during your term. We also depend on you that your plans for federalization will affirm, but not affect, the Bangsamoro roadmap. Most of all, we trust that your administration will save the gains of the peace process that have been made and will continue the search for sustainable peace in Mindanao.

To the 17th Congress of the Philippines:

You have been entrusted to reflect the voices and aspirations of the marginalized population in your legislative actions. We strongly challenge you to set aside your personal political interests and instead listen to our endless stories of systematic discrimination, exclusion and neglect. This way you will understand that every decision you make in the area of legislation strongly affects our well-being and our chance for a sustainable future. We urge you to pass the BBL and let the concerned constituents decide its fate through a plebiscite upon which we can meaningfully exercise our democratic right to make our choice whether or not to be included under the proposed Bangsamoro political autonomy. The choices of the people whom you represent should be considered and respected.

To the Bangsamoro People, especially Our Fellow Youth:

Let us continue to work for peace. Let us follow, not the path towards radicalization of the means for our struggle for liberation, but the one which uses peaceful methods for the resolution of the armed conflict in Mindanao. Let us also not allow other people's ignorance of our way of life, beliefs and attitudes to increase religious intolerance and

hinder intercultural understanding, and instead, we should work hand in hand to celebrate our cultural diversity.

To the Entire Filipino Nation:

The fate of the BBL also lies in your trust. Your support benefits not only the Bangsamoro, but also Filipinos all over the nation. Your solidarity towards our cause will greatly help in generating massive support to encourage policy reforms. Your understanding of our struggles contributes to the healing of the wounds of the past and in promoting reconciliation. Please help us to advocate for passage of the BBL! Please help us urge our national policymakers to allow the roadmap for the political transition for the Bangsamoro! This opportunity is our best chance for a genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao!

United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) has played a role in promoting peace in Mindanao as a member of various networks in the southern Philippines, such as the Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC) and the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), and as the convener of the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC). As its name implies, UNYPAD is a youth organization that seeks to nurture young people to contribute to the spiritual, political and socio-economic development of Mindanao.



A girl works in the carpet industry in Nepal. Child laborers in the country often work long hours for little pay, and their life in the workplace makes it challenging to attain an education, rendering it difficult to break the cycle of child labor in the future. *(Photo from <https://humantraffickingwatch.wordpress.com>)*

Child Labor in Nepalgunj

Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal

Nepalgunj, as in other cities and urban hubs in Nepal, experiences the problem in which many children are engaged in work in hotels, restaurants and various modes of transportation. The wider societal acceptance of child labor in the city has resulted in difficulties in monitoring and rescue and legal interventions as well as adequate and proper data and information on child labor. The general observation in and around the city, as well as past research and studies, have provided evidence that children have been severely exploited and victimized by health hazards, long working hours, debt bondage,

trafficking or other similar practices while being employed as child laborers, which reflects the poverty of their families.

The city government of Nepalgunj, with its social partners, have conducted an assessment on the situation of child labor in the city that has identified almost 3,000 child laborers along with an estimation of up to 6,000 child laborers in seasonal industries.

A large number of child laborers were reported in domestic work with 61 percent followed by the industries, both registered and unregistered, of hotels and transportation. Brick factories are another area where child labor for seasonal employment has been witnessed.

The study reported that 55 percent of child laborers are below the age of 14, and only half of them go to school. Nepalgunj also remains a destination for children from India to be employed. The study found almost 9 percent of child laborers are from this neighboring country, for example. Child laborers are working up to 19 hours per day, and 92 percent of them do not have a break in between work. Child laborers in the study reported various injuries and health problems as well as poor treatment from their employers and the community.

End Child Labor Campaign

Rural Society Upliftment Forum (RUSUF-Nepal), in partnership with the midwest regional office of Save the Children and technical cooperation from Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal, launched a short-term project from July to December 2015 to respond to the existing child labor problem in Nepalgunj. The city government of Nepalgunj, Bheri Zone Labor Office, Banke Women and Children Office, District Child Welfare Board of Banke District and the district police office of Banke were key government authorities that supported and coordinated the interventions.

Key Results and Interventions

The six-month project to combat child labor successfully achieved the liberation of 40 child laborers in Nepalgunj, the prosecution of 13 employers, the formation of the Indo-Nepal Child Protection Forum and the continuing monitoring, rescue and rehabilitation of child laborers even after the end of the project. In addition, the project

was successful in sensitizing stakeholders and making them responsible and proactive to engage in the campaign against child labor.

Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

It is a well-accepted fact that an anti-child labor campaign should not be a one-time program or a periodic campaign but rather needs to be ongoing with child rights and labor-related interventions. The campaign of six months proved, however, that the monitoring, rescue and rehabilitation of child laborers can be possible, effective and efficient if well coordinated and led with proper activism.

The six-month campaign also showed that there is a need to continue the initiatives up to at least three years with strong intervention among employers and the demand for child labor, strengthen legal interventions and the prosecution of the employment of children and promote rural-urban and cross-border partnerships for the prevention of child labor and to sustain the rehabilitation of child laborers.

The campaign also demonstrated that the leadership of government authorities is needed. However, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on taking prompt action, delivering services, sensitizing the public and engaging employers' associations are significant for effective intervention.

It is recommended that future child labor campaigns shall have differentiated, but common, engagement with the authorities and agencies, including NGOs, on delivering education and rehabilitation services, prosecution and punishment, monitoring and rescue actions, promoting social activism and political mobilization of civil society against child labor.

Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal (RUSUF-Nepal) works in the areas of development, education, health, family planning, microcredit and public awareness at the grassroots level, especially among the marginalized and vulnerable sectors of Banke District in Nepal.



Four Dalit men were chained to a car and beaten with iron rods on July 18 in the Indian state of Gujarat because it was alleged that they killed a cow and then skinned it. (Photo from <http://scroll.in>)

Turning Cows in India into Man-Eaters

Avinash Pandey

The state of Gujarat in India is simmering again. Dalits are agitating over criminals indulging in criminality. These criminals, who are fondly referred to as “cow vigilantes” by the mainstream media, have recently stripped and flogged four Dalit youth in the *taluka*, or subdistrict, of Una. The resultant protests have claimed two lives: a policeman has reportedly been pelted to death with stones in the town of Amreli and a youth consumed poison in protest.

These deaths are the latest in the spate of violence caused by criminal cow vigilantism. Worse though has been inflicted across India. Three men, for example, were similarly stripped and flogged in Pratapgarh in the state of Rajasthan [in June](#). Two more were [lynched](#), one a minor, in Latehar in the state of Jharkhand a couple of months ago. Even earlier, members of such a group had [killed another person](#) in Nahan in the state of

Himachal Pradesh. One can count numerous such attacks since the incumbent regime came to power in May 2014.

The attacks imply something sinister, something the government should be taking notice of, and addressing urgently. The criminals, operating in the name of protecting cows that are sacred or deeply respected in Hinduism, have become a law unto themselves. There is something even more sinister: these criminals have the country's law enforcement agencies on their side. The Dalit youth were tied to a car and flogged in Una right in front of the city police station; the police looked away. Consider also the transfer of the station house officer of Chhoti Sadri police station in Pratapgarh. He [was transferred](#) for "arresting the cow vigilantes who had assaulted the suspects" under pressure of Gau Raksha Dal (Cow Protection Force).

And it does not stop here. Law enforcement agencies are not only offering support to these criminals: often they are right beside them too, [particularly in the state of Haryana](#). There are similar allegations about the same alliance occurring in the states of Punjab and Rajasthan.

Ironically, the Haryana government, which miserably failed to protect the lives and property of citizens during the quota unrest a few months ago, is also actively considering forming a Gau Rakshak Task Force (Cow Protection Task Force) along the lines of the home guards, an auxiliary police force. Clearly, protecting cows, even at the cost of killing humans, is crucial to the current regime.

Nothing wrong in this decision perhaps for a country that has acknowledged this rationale as a task in its Constitution itself, despite the idea being impossibly absurd when considering both political economy and implementation. Article 48 of the Indian Constitution directs that:

"The State shall endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving breeds and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."

Any misconceptions about this directive principle allowing for the slaughter of animals that have stopped giving milk (non-milch) or are no more useful for agriculture work

(non-draught), for whatsoever reasons, were cleared by the judgements of the Supreme Court in *Mohammed Hanif Quareshi vs. State of West Bengal* and *State of Gujarat vs. Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat* that imposed a total ban on the slaughter of cows and their progeny.

But then the State must do it by protecting cows and not by killing, or letting self-appointed vigilantes kill, its citizens. Let the State make budgetary provisions for the upkeep of cows and their progeny that are abandoned by their owners in old age when they are past the age of utility for milk and draught purposes. Let the State make budgetary allocations and have them passed in Parliament, even as around 42 percent of its children remain severely undernourished because the State does not have enough resources to nourish them back out of malnourishment, stunting and even wastage.

If the State and the citizenry see cow protection (read: the protection of cows abandoned by the citizens themselves) as far more important than investing in the health, well-being and future of its children, then so be it.

What the State cannot do, however, is what it is doing at this moment. It cannot share its monopoly over the legitimate use of coercive force, or violence, with criminals. If it does that, it cannot survive for long. The cyclical violence that such a devolution of power, in terms of using coercive force, would unleash would prevent the State from lasting.

This position is exactly what the Supreme Court of India took in its verdict in the [*Nandini Sundar and Ors vs. State of Chattisgarh*](#) case when declaring Salwa Judum, a state-appointed vigilante group, unconstitutional. The court made it absolutely clear that Indian states cannot allow any group to operate that “in any manner or form seeks to take [the] law into private hands, act unconstitutionally or otherwise violate the human rights of any person.”

But that is exactly what has begun happening in India. The cow fanatics are on a rampage for a while now. They have attacked, assaulted, maimed and killed many people. The citizenry duly approached law enforcement officials for redress and got none. Citizens tried even harder through other means, such as political mobilization, protests and other democratic methods.

However, law enforcement officials have collaborated with the criminal vigilantes, filing first information reports (FIRs) against them under anti-cow slaughter acts while taking no action against the criminals.

The Dalit citizens learnt their lesson, and the lesson is that the State will fail to protect them. Moreover, this lesson reveals how the State has lost the very basic reason behind its existence.

The citizens did what they could in this situation—took the matter to the streets—and the results are in front of us in the shape of lives lost in protest and in the efforts to contain it. The State must consider what the situation would be if aggrieved citizens themselves were to take a step forward and take the law into their own hands, just like the criminal vigilantes have. Despite its love and devotion for cows, it is unlikely the State would enthusiastically want to witness the mayhem that would unfold.

Cows have always been herbivorous animals that eat grass. The State must not turn them into man-eaters. The only way to ensure this transformation does not occur is for the State to reclaim its authority of being the sole source of legitimate coercion, to prosecute the vigilantes and to send them where they belong: the country's prisons.

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