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Press Release

During the first and second phases of the elections National Dalit Election Watch had reported to the EC over 250 violations constituting intimidation and violence against Dalits, having watched 121 constituencies.

Intimidation of Dalit voters continues unabated, atrocities galore, no concerted action being taken by the authorities, free and fair elections still a distant dream for the Scheduled Castes.

We had consistently forewarned the EC about this type of intimidation and violence and requested EC through an RTI to provide information on the Vulnerability Mapping done by them to verify whether it had taken into account the real vulnerability imposed on Dalit communities by such intimidation, threats and violence by dominant caste elements in all political parties. However the EC has refused to part with this information, while reassuring that all provisions would be made to ensure the right of franchise of the Dalits.

However our experience in the 3rd phase also proves that the intimidation, threats and violence continues unabated. Some of the instances are narrated below:

- In Atrauli village of Bhrahan block in Hardoi District of UP, a Thakur lady (wife of Thakur Chotte Singh) was sitting inside the polling booth and intimidating dalits, warning them of dire consequences if they did not vote for the INC candidate. This polling station falls under Misrikh constituency. Such a nexus between such anti-social elements and the presiding officer of the polling station is condemnable.
- In a similar instance of criminal intimidation Arun Kumar Singh Thakur of the SP openly threatened dalits of the same village (above) if they voted against his party.
- In another incident of the collusion of election officials with vested interests, 37 Dalit voters were forced to vote on a faulty, non-functioning EVM in spite of their protests. This happened in Polling station Sidhauli, in District Sitapur, under Parliamentary Constituency Mohanlalganj.

- In Mumbai South – Central Constituency, the henchmen of INC candidate Eknath Gayakwad under the leadership of Ravi Raja (INC corporator for ward 166), Challa and Vishal Mahadik threatened the Dalit voters in Kokari agar rehabilitation camp with eviction from the camp if they did not vote for Eknath. In spite of filing police complaint no action has been taken and the voters were feeling fearful of the consequences. Eknath Gayakwad's campaigners have unleashed terror in Wadala MMRD rehabilitation camp, threatening the Dalit voters of dire consequences if they did not vote for him.
- There was a raging gun battle between the Brahmins of the INC and the Thakurs of BJP to gain 'control' over Dalit votes, in Ratikapura village under polling station Amba of Morena PC. Over 179 Dalit voters had to forego their votes in fear – they could not step out of their houses.
- In the same Morena constituency, in another village Kaspura, a similar firing incident involving Thakurs and Shikarvas led to terror and Dalits could not go to vote.

National Dalit Election watch condemns this blatant violation of the fundamental right of franchise of Dalits and calls upon the EC to look into these matters seriously and take firm action, and also seek the support of civil society organisations and human rights groups to strategize as to how to put an end to such violations which make a mockery of our electoral system and weaken our democracy.

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