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FALSIFYING THE TRUTH

PUCL Condemns the Systematic Manipulation of Census Data and the Suppression of Ground Realities in the Ongoing Census Exercise

The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), views with the gravest alarm the revelations published in [The Hindu](#) on 3 June 2026 regarding the conduct of the ongoing Census House listing Operations (HLO) across Rajasthan and other states. The reports disclose a disturbing and unconscionable pattern: that ground-level enumerators are being systematically pressured by senior officials to alter, revise, and falsify data that accurately reflects the lived conditions of India's most marginalised citizens, and to replace truthful enumeration with figures that serve the political interests of the ruling dispensation. PUCL condemns this in the strongest possible terms.

The Census as a Fundamental Rights Instrument

The Census is not merely a bureaucratic exercise in counting heads and tabulating assets. It is the foundational instrument through which the Indian State fulfils its constitutional obligations to its citizens. The data collected determines the allocation of welfare entitlements, targeted poverty programmes, infrastructure investments, and, crucially, delimitation of parliamentary constituencies. The Census is therefore inseparable from the right to equality (Article 14), the right to life and dignity (Article 21), and the right of citizens to be counted truthfully as bearers of rights. To falsify Census data is not an administrative irregularity: it is a violation of fundamental rights.

What the Ground Reality Discloses

The testimony of enumerators, government school teachers, anganwadi workers, and other frontline functionaries paints a picture of deprivation that is profoundly at odds with the government's self-congratulatory claims. Enumerators across Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have reported:

- Households without toilets, where residents defecate in the open, contradicting the government's declaration that India is Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- Households without piped or treated tap water, contradicting the Jal Jeevan Mission's claim of near-universal household water connectivity.
- Households dependent on firewood, dung cakes, and kerosene for cooking, contradicting data on LPG connections under the Ujjwala scheme.
- Households with tin roofs being instructed to be reclassified as having concrete roofs, a naked falsification of housing conditions.
- Households without electricity or internet, contradicting claims of digital inclusion.

- Residents so impoverished and excluded from state welfare that they pleaded with enumerators to help them access basic entitlements, housing, LPG, water, pensions, that they had never received despite being counted as beneficiaries in government data.

These are not discrepancies in methodology. They are the face of structural deprivation of a welfare architecture that has been constructed on paper while millions remain without its basic provisions in reality.

The Direction to Falsify: A Grave Institutional Offence

PUCL Rajasthan draws particular attention to the letter issued on 2 June 2026 by the Director of Census Operations, Rajasthan, to all district-level functionaries, directing them to 'verify' and correct 'discrepancies'. Read alongside the testimony of enumerators who have been explicitly told 'not to select options that may show the government in a poor light', this letter constitutes institutional cover for data manipulation.

The instruction to enumerators to check whether households practising open defecation have access to a neighbour's toilet or a public urinal, so as to revise the classification away from 'open defecation', is particularly egregious. It is not enumeration; it is the manufacture of consent to a falsehood.

This is not the first time that official welfare data has been found to diverge sharply from ground realities. The SIR exercise, deletions from voter rolls, manipulated BPL lists, these form part of a consistent and dangerous pattern of state-manufactured invisibility of the poor. The Census, which carries unique constitutional weight and long-term demographic and electoral consequences, cannot be permitted to become another instrument in this edifice of official falsification.

The Vulnerability of Enumerators

PUCL is equally alarmed at the position in which frontline enumerators, government school teachers, anganwadi workers, and other contractual and regular state employees, have been placed. These individuals are being required to choose between their professional integrity and their institutional subordination. Many have raised their voices on social media at considerable personal risk. They deserve full protection, not coercion.

We note that the Census exercise is being conducted entirely on digital platforms using enumerators' personal phones, in conditions of inadequate mobile connectivity in rural and tribal areas, with grossly insufficient reimbursement (a mobile recharge of Rs. 66 has been reported from Uttarakhand). These conditions, compounded by the simultaneous performance of regular duties, render the exercise not merely flawed but structurally compromised.

A Warning to the State

PUCL reminds the Central and State Governments that a Census whose data is manufactured to validate governmental claims rather than to enumerate lived realities is not merely a statistical fraud, it is a political and constitutional one. The decennial Census shapes delimitation, welfare targeting, fiscal devolution, and the entire architecture of representative democracy. Falsified Census data will not only deprive the poor of entitlements they urgently need; it will corrupt the very basis of democratic representation for decades.

The invisible poor, those without roofs, toilets, electricity, or clean water, have a fundamental right to be seen, counted, and heard by the Indian State. Their erasure from official data is not a technicality. It is a rights violation.

PUCL Demands

In light of the above, PUCL demands:

- An immediate halt to all instructions, formal or informal, to enumerators to revise or 'correct' data that truthfully reflects ground conditions. The CMMS portal must not be used as an instrument of real-time surveillance to pressurise enumerators into data revision.
- A full, independent, and transparent inquiry into the letter issued by the Director of Census Operations, Rajasthan, on 2 June 2026, and all allied communications issued by Charge Officers, Sub-Divisional Census Officers, and District Coordinators in this connection.
- Guaranteed protection for all enumerators who have raised concerns about pressure to falsify data, whether on social media or through other means, against any form of institutional retaliation, transfer, or disciplinary action.
- The constitution of an independent oversight mechanism, including civil society, retired senior bureaucrats, and statisticians with no government affiliation, to audit and verify Census data at the block level before final records are compiled.
- A public statement from the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India reaffirming the constitutional obligation of the Census to capture truthful ground realities, and explicitly disavowing any instruction to enumerators to align data with government welfare scheme claims.
- Adequate material support to enumerators, including data reimbursement, dedicated time, and relief from concurrent official duties during the HLO exercise.

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