

# **People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)**

## **Fact-Finding Report on the Communal Riots in Roh (Nawada) on 28–29 March 2026**

On Saturday, 28 March 2026, at around 8:00 p.m., an incident of communal disturbance and rioting occurred during the Ram Navami procession in Roh Bazaar, under Roh Police Station in Nawada district. In continuation of these events, on 29 March, twenty shops belonging to Muslims at the Roh Bus Stand were set on fire. Taking cognisance of these incidents, the Nawada District Unit of PUCL decided to conduct an inquiry and constituted a fact-finding team for this purpose. The team consisted of the following seven members:

1. Dinesh Kumar Akela, National Council Member, PUCL
2. Jahid Ansari, State Executive Committee, PUCL Bihar
3. Narayan Paswan, District Secretary, Nawada, PUCL
4. Ranjeet Prasad, District Joint Secretary, Nawada, PUCL
5. Prof. Viplendra Kumar, Member, Nawada District Executive Committee, PUCL
6. Raqib Khan, Advocate, Member, PUCL
7. Sajid Husain, Member, PUCL

To understand the details of the incident and identify its causes, the fact-finding team reached Roh on 5 April 2026. The team held detailed discussions regarding the incident with shopkeepers of Roh Bazaar, riot victims, public representatives, other residents, and the Station House Officer of Roh. With the consent of the people, some of these conversations were also video-recorded.

### **Details of the Investigation**

Ward Member Bhushan Paswan of Ward No. 03 of Roh Block, under which Roh Bazaar falls, informed the PUCL fact-finding team that on 28 March 2026, the Ram Navami procession started from Viru Kuan and entered the main market from the northern side after passing along the western end of Roh. At a distance of about 100 yards from the Jama Masjid, the generator stopped functioning, as had happened the previous year. Whether the generator stopped on its own due to a technical fault or was deliberately switched off is a matter that requires investigation. The generator remained non-functional for about half an hour, and the participants in the procession remained there raising slogans. As soon as the generator resumed functioning, the procession moved towards the Jama Masjid. As the procession neared the mosque, a stone fell from somewhere. That stone struck an administrative officer. After the stone-pelting near the Jama Masjid, the police and administration somehow persuaded the procession to move forward. As soon as the

procession reached near the Lakshmi Temple situated in Roh Bazaar, stone-pelting started from three sides, resulting in complete chaos there.

The police and administration used a limited amount of force and managed to move the procession forward. This incident occurred at around 8:00 p.m.

The following day, some sensible persons from both communities and social workers initiated efforts to establish peace through mutual dialogue. However, disregarding their efforts, a group of rioters reached the Roh Bus Stand at around 2:00 p.m. and poured petrol on the shops of Muslim roadside vendors and set them on fire. These vendors sold vegetables, fruits, fish, etc. A ready-made garment shop belonging to a member of the Muslim community also suffered extensive damage. Thanks to the administration's efforts, fire brigade vehicles reached the scene immediately and brought the fire under control.

The PUCL fact-finding team visited the residence of Sanjay Kumar Malakar, representative of the Mukhiya of Roh Panchayat, and spoke with him. He stated that he himself was accompanying the procession and, as far as possible, was assisting the police and administration in maintaining peace. After the disturbance broke out, he returned home. He repeated, word-for-word, the account given by Ward Member Bhushan Paswan.

The PUCL fact-finding team spoke with dozens of members of the Muslim community near the Roh Bazaar graveyard. They stated that according to the government licence/permission, the procession was scheduled to begin from Viru Kuan between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., but it actually started at 7:00 p.m. According to government instructions, DJs were prohibited. However, not one but four DJs were playing, while police and administrative officers responsible for enforcing the ban on DJs were accompanying the procession.

They further stated that, as a symbol of communal harmony, the Muslim community had arranged for drinking water for the participants in the procession. Considering the delay in the procession, the time of the azaan had been postponed from 8:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. Residents alleged that the role of Police Sub-Inspector Shivnath Singh was highly suspicious.

They also alleged that the police have falsely implicated several innocent persons in the FIR and have been harassing them. For example, Md. Saeed's name appears in the FIR, even though he is admitted to a hospital in Kolkata. Similarly, the name of Md. Imtiyaz has also been included in the FIR even though he is innocent.

Md. Sallauddin (son of Md. Karim) believed that the real culprit was the administration. Had the police remained alert, not a single shop would have been burnt. He informed the team that one day before the Ram Navami procession, i.e., on 27 March 2026, members of the Bajrang Dal had taken out a procession in Roh Bazaar and announced over a loudspeaker that all shops would have to remain closed on 28 March. If anyone kept a shop open, he himself would be responsible for any loss suffered.

Md. Sallauddin and other persons present there complained that the names of those who had actually set the shops on fire were not included in the FIR. Rather, the persons who committed arson were often seen in the company of the police.

The following persons suffered economic losses due to the Roh riots:

1. Md. Chhotu, son of Md. Kaleem – Egg and poultry shop burnt down.
2. Md. Sonu Rain, son of Md. Jahangir – Egg and poultry shop burnt down.
3. Md. Ehtesham, son of Md. Moinuddin – The glass of a garment shop named *Kumkum Vastralaya* was broken and the shop was looted.
4. Md. Navijan, son of Qudrat Mian – Fruit shop looted and then burnt.
5. Rani Praveen, wife of Md. Chand – Ready-made garment shop burnt.
6. Md. Irfan, son of Iqbal – Fruit shop looted and burnt.
7. Md. Imran, son of Iqbal – Fruit shop looted and burnt.
8. Md. Akhtar Alam, son of Chamari Mian – Fruit vendor looted.
9. Md. Islam, son of Chamari Mian – Vegetable shop looted and burnt.
10. Md. Mustafa, son of Abdul Ghafoor – Fruit vendor looted.
11. Md. Azad, son of Hashim – Fish and poultry shop burnt.
12. Md. Sameed Alam, son of Serajuddin – Roadside shop looted and burnt.
13. Md. Sallauddin, son of Serajuddin – Roadside shop looted and burnt.
14. Md. Aamish, son of Rafiq – Vegetable shop looted and burnt.
16. Md. Shahzad, son of Shafiq – Vegetable shop looted and burnt.
17. Md. Aslam, son of Maqbool – Fruit shop looted and burnt.
18. Md. Faheem, son of Md. Zaheer – Fruit shop destroyed.
19. Md. Alishan, son of Parvez Alam – Fruit shop looted.
20. Md. Shamsher Alam, son of Shahabuddin – Ready-made garment shop and sandalwood kiosk damaged.

Besides, Dr Alam's vehicle was also damaged.

### **Statements of Riot-Affected Families Regarding the Role of the Police**

Shajda Khatun (wife of Md. Sajid) stated that at midnight, the police were trying to force open the door of her house. During this process, the door bolt broke. About 20–25 police personnel were present. They used abusive language.

Safiya Khatun (wife of Md. Haleem) stated that around 12:30 a.m., a large number of police personnel arrived and repeatedly banged on the door. Thereafter, the police entered the house through the roof using a ladder. They searched boxes, cupboards, and other belongings. Then,

abusing and beating her husband, they took him away with them. Safiya said that her husband was completely innocent.

Shayra Bano (wife of Naseebuddin) stated that on 29 March, the day after the procession, police personnel continuously pounded on her door. When the door did not break, they smashed a window and hurled abuses.

Md. Yasin stated that the police jumped into his house from the roof of a neighbouring house and brutally beat his daughter. Out of fear, his daughter went to her in-laws' house. The police took him away for questioning and later released him.

Shabana, Salma, and Khairub stated that dozens of police personnel climbed onto their house and said, "Shoot them so that the trouble ends once and for all."

Gulshan Khatun (wife of Md. Rehmat) stated that at 11:00 p.m., the police entered the house using a ladder and, while abusing the family, chased and mercilessly beat the members of the household.

Sahin Khatun, Majra Khatun, Rehmana Khatun, and Md. Kayam stated that suddenly a large number of police personnel reached Sahin Khatun's house and arrested her husband and sent him to jail, even though on the day of the Ram Navami procession, he had not stepped outside his house. Initially, the police were taking away his daughter-in-law, but due to strong public opposition and pressure from local people, they released her. However, they arrested Nikki and Dilshad, who were present there.

Md. Arman (son of Md. Ikman) stated that the police apprehended him from the road and took him to Qadirganj Police Station. Dozens of police personnel brutally beat him in custody. Out of fear of the police, he sought treatment from a private doctor at Pakribarawan instead of a government hospital.

Rummi Khatun stated that while fleeing after the disturbance broke out, some fanatical Hindus surrounded her, assaulted her, and threatened to kill her.

Sudha Devi (wife of Shiv Kumar Paswan) stated that at about 1:00 a.m., the police picked up Avinash and Ankit from their house while they were sleeping and took them to Roh Police Station. They were released after questioning. However, the police arrested Manish Kumar, the newly elected treasurer of the Ram Navami procession committee, and sent him to jail. Manish's mother stated that only because her son had been made treasurer of the procession committee, both her son and her husband (Baikunth Paswan) were named as accused and arrested at about 1:00 a.m.

Residents of the locality stated in subdued voices that the police, in order to cover up their own failure, were harassing innocent persons by implicating them in false cases.

Mukhiya Representative Sanjay Kumar Malakar also complained that the police had named and jailed his son, a socially active young man, as an accused, though he is innocent.

According to him, the police arrived at his house at 1:00 a.m., but returned because the family refused to open the door at night. The Mukhiya Representative further stated that the involvement of the police-administration in the incident appeared evident. Otherwise, the police would have examined CCTV cameras and video recordings, identified the actual culprits, and withdrawn the false allegations against innocent persons. Instead, the criminals were being seen moving around with the police.

### **Details of the Meeting with the Station House Officer of Roh**

The fact-finding team met Roh Station House Officer Rahul Abhishek and discussed the incident with him. The SHO stated that the police had managed the Ram Navami procession well from Viru Kuan up to Jama Masjid and Lakshmi Temple, but had failed to prevent the arson. According to him, several minors were involved in the incident. Forty-four persons had been named as accused, including both Hindus and Muslims. In addition, 100–125 unidentified persons had also been made accused. The SHO stated that Panchayat elections were due next year and, therefore, political involvement in the incident could not be ruled out. Such incidents help in the polarisation of Hindu and Muslim votes. Those whose shops had been burnt were being processed for compensation.

The SHO stated that innocent persons would not be harassed. Cases against them would be withdrawn, but the guilty would not be spared.

### **Questions Requiring Consideration Regarding the Roh Riots**

1. According to government orders, the Ram Navami procession on 28 March was scheduled to begin between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. Why, then, was it allowed to start at 7:00 p.m.?
2. When the government had prohibited the use of DJs in the procession, why were four DJs playing in the presence of the police and administration?
3. CCTV footage from around the incident site exists. The police were recording videos of the procession. Moreover, police and administrative personnel themselves were eyewitnesses to the disturbance. Why, instead of using all this evidence to identify and arrest the guilty, are innocent persons being implicated? Is the police trying to protect criminals for political reasons?
4. Despite the open threats issued on 27 March by Bajrang Dal activists regarding the closure of the market the next day, why did the police not take preventive action against them?
5. Despite the disturbance on 28 March 2026, did the police-administration display negligence that resulted in the recurrence of riots on 29 March 2026?
6. The target of the disturbance and riots was the Muslim community. It alone suffered economic losses. Even then, why did the police-administration register cases against members of the Muslim community, arrest them, and subject them to abuse and assault?

## **Conclusions and Recommendations of the Fact-Finding Team**

Nawada has a history of riots since 1974. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in incidents of communal disturbances and riots. The incident of 28 March 2026 should be viewed against this background.

After investigating the entire sequence of events and considering the history of riots in Nawada district, the team believes that if the administration had been vigilant, if its intelligence system had functioned properly, and if it had strictly enforced the law and rules, the riots and disturbances that occurred on 28 and 29 March 2026 could certainly have been prevented.

In Roh, communal forces carried out the disturbance openly and fearlessly, but the administration remained negligent. Such negligence encourages rioters and boosts their morale. Incidents such as those in Roh undermine social harmony, harming the unity of society and the nation.

In addition, ordinary people, especially minorities, have to suffer economic losses. Feelings of insecurity and fear increase among them. The administration should discharge its constitutional responsibilities while remaining neutral towards religious politics. Without the protection of civil rights, rapid social and economic development cannot be achieved.

## **Recommendations of the PUCL Fact-Finding Team**

1. A judicial inquiry should be conducted into the communal riots that occurred in Roh on 28–29 March 2026. The scope of the judicial inquiry should also include the questionable role of the administration during the procession. Strict action should be taken against all persons found guilty.
2. Those who suffered economic losses during the riots should be provided with adequate compensation by the administration immediately.
3. CCTV footage from Roh Bazaar and other affected locations, along with officially recorded videos, should be examined. The real culprits should be identified and arrested, and speedy trials should be conducted against them. Simultaneously, the names of innocent persons should be removed from the FIR, and the cases filed against them should be withdrawn.
4. In view of the background of communal disturbances and riots in Nawada, peace committees comprising members of both communities should be formed as a long-term solution, and regular meetings should be held. Joint educational, training, and other programmes should be organised to promote mutual love and harmony between the two communities.
5. To prevent future riots and disturbances, the administration should adopt a policy of **“zero tolerance.”** Strict vigilance should be maintained over communal elements without any discrimination, and special arrangements should be made to thwart attempts to create disturbances during social and religious occasions.