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Report of the Public Hearing on Police Brutality against Protesting Youths
प्रदर्शनकारी युवाओं के साथ पुलिस की बर्बरता के विरुद्ध जन-सुनवाई की रिपोर्ट

22 August 2026, IMA Hall, Gandhi Maidan. Patna

Background

On 25 July, several PUCL members raised their worries after watching and reading the news about Bihar police's brutal action against protesting students in Patna and other parts of the state. Hundreds of student protesters and others were detained in several police stations, and some were even sent to judicial custody. There was also news of injuries sustained by several protesters due to lathi charge, police firing, and tear gas shelling. Police picked some students and youth activists from their homes. Some non-participating youth who just happened to pass by the site of protests were picked up by the police and detained or sent to jail. We also received news of the beating of some students in police custody.

It is in these circumstances that the PUCL Bihar Unit decided to play an active role in providing immediate legal support to detained or jailed protesters and other youth and, for this purpose, collaborated with the Jan Nyay Abhiyan in Patna and other districts. A group of lawyers worked day and night to identify detained or jailed protesters, file their bail petitions, meet those in police custody to assess their physical condition and needs, and accompany them when police presented them before a judicial magistrate. While performing this important role of a human rights defender and also as officers of the court, two of the PUCL lawyer members were kept in illegal confinement and implicated in false cases. Currently, they are on bail.

PUCL Bihar Unit constituted a fact-finding team to investigate the cases of police firing and bullet injuries sustained by students, custodial torture of students resulting in severe hearing loss sustained by a student, and intimidation acts of the police. The team visited Siwan on the 15th and 16th August and met all the injured victims of either police firing or custodial torture. It also came across cases of intimidation by police, house raids, damage to property and beating, profiling of victims on the lines of caste and religion, and attempts to destroy evidence. The team is right now writing its report. Similarly, PUCL acted on a complaint regarding police brutality unleashed on the students of a welfare hostel in Sitamarhi, where a day before the 22 July protests, the police entered the hostel and brutally beat students. This incident is currently under investigation.

Public Hearing

As part of PUCL's decision to comprehensively document cases of police brutality, violating the human rights of Indian citizens guaranteed by the law, PUCL decided to hold a public hearing so that the voices of the victims could be captured and incorporated in its report.

The public hearing was organised on 22 August 2026 at the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Hall, South-East Gandhi Maidan, Patna. Over one hundred people participated, comprising mostly students, PUCL members, and civil society activists. Most students belonged to organisations such as AISA, AISF, Disha Chhatra Sangathan, and NSUI. One student activist, and a victim of police violence as well, belonged to Chhatra RJD. A panel, comprising Basant Chaudhary (senior advocate, Patna High Court), Sudha Varghese (Padma Shri awardee, social worker), Arshad Ajman (social activist), and Pranav Chaudhary (former Assistant Editor of the Times of India, Patna edition), presided over the proceedings. A total of 19 victims of police brutality presented their testimonies. Of these 19 victims of police violence, a recorded video testimony of Bullet Kumar Gond, an ST youth from Siwan district, was presented as his bullet injuries and subsequent intramedullary nailing did not permit travel.

Based on the testimonies during the public hearing, also supported by the fact-findings in Siwan and Patna, the following types of cases of police brutality, seriously infringing upon human rights of the protesters, were recorded:

1. Brutal lathi charge deliberately targeting students to injure them. In some cases, beating of students happened outside the sites of protests or at the timings of the bandh call.
2. Hitting girl protesters on their private parts.
3. Firing directly on students, without any warning or immediate provocations, resulting in several cases of bullet injuries. In some instances, those injured by bullets were further beaten up.
4. Using a firearm as lethal as the AK-47 on students, though this firearm is not supposed to be used on protesting citizens.
5. Custodial torture of students by the police, resulting in injuries, loss of hearing, etc.
6. Illegal detention of students without presenting them before a magistrate within 24 hours.
7. Detained students' families not informed of their whereabouts, thus denying the students the support of their families and lawyers.
8. Students sent to judicial custody without informing them of the charges against them or providing them with a copy of the FIR.
9. Students sent to judicial custody without access to a lawyer to defend them before the magistrate.
10. Destruction of evidence by police, such as seizing students' and passerby citizens' mobile phones to destroy video recordings related to the use of force by them.
11. Raiding students' and activists' homes in the dead of night without any search warrant. Beating of residents, damaging household items, abusing women, including older women, and infringing the right to privacy by checking mobile and personal belongings.

12. Making misogynist remarks against girls during home raids and in custody. For example, family members being warned that the girl will not find a groom if she participates in protests along with boys.
13. Obstructing an officer of the court (advocate on record of the Patna High Court) in discharging his duty to represent his client, filing FIRs against two lawyers in unsubstantiated charges of liquor consumption and another charge of obstructing the police officer in discharging their duty, parading them handcuffed in public, and leaking their arrest memo photos to the media.
14. Custodialisation and beating of citizens who were passersby at that moment. One such passerby was hit by a bullet fired by police in Siwan.
15. Even minors kept in police custody, not presented before the Child Welfare Committee and the JJ Board.
16. Calling students terrorists. Threatening protesters during their custody of imposing UAPA and making them suffer like Umar Khalid.
17. Profiling of arrested protesters on religious and caste lines, and differential treatment with them based on these lines. In particular, Muslims, SCs, women, and CPI (ML) activists were harshly treated.

The panellists were unanimous in their opinion that the testimonies made the entire state culpable and, rather than calling it merely police brutality, it should be called state brutality or state repression. It is only when the government decides to crush a movement that the police unleash their brutality ruthlessly. Hence, PUCL must seek accountability of the state for human rights violations.

Demands of PUCL

Towards the end of the public hearing, PUCL Bihar Unit presented a charter of demands and also announced its future action plan. The key demands are as follows:

- An independent and impartial investigation into the police actions starting from 21 July to 27 July 2026, including but not limited to the use of firearms in Siwan and Jehanabad, brutal lathi charge against protesters throughout the state, illegal detention, custodial torture, violations of legal provisions while remanding the detained protestors to judicial custody, harassment of activists even after the protests were over, and mistreatment of two lawyer members of PUCL and imposition of false cases against them. The inquiry should also include brutal police action inside the welfare hostel in Sitamarhi on the evening of 21 July.
- Fixing accountability for police brutality and stern punitive action against police officials at various levels who violated the rights of protesters and other victims.
- Fast-tracking the process to withdraw all 64 FIRs against protesting students. Identification and withdrawal of cases filed even after 6 pm on 26 July if they are related to the protests and Bihar bandh, and also related to the protests filed by private individuals against the protesters.
- Adequate compensation for all persons injured in the Siwan firing, commensurate with the nature and seriousness of their injuries.
- Protection of the constitutional right to peaceful protest, so that students, activists and ordinary citizens are not subjected to violence merely for raising their voices.

- Review of the police manual and police training and suitable changes therein so that police are sensitive about civil rights and regulating the protesting crowd, and do not resort to brutal methods.

Action Plan

All testimonies and remarks by the panellists, as well as fact-finding reports, will form an important part of a detailed report on state repression unleashed on protesting students. PUCL sees this report as a useful tool for seeking justice for the victims. The report will be submitted to relevant government offices, commissions, legislative committees, courts, police and judicial training institutions, academic institutions, and other civil rights organisations. The full report will be printed and disseminated, and its summary will be sent for publication to newspapers, news portals, magazines and journals.

On the legal front, PUCL plans to hold a meeting with prominent lawyers to explore the possibility of filing a writ in the High Court and/or other actions, as per their advice. Together with Jan Nyay Abhiyan, PUCL will also monitor the withdrawal of 64 FIRs related to student protests, as per the government's announcement. Moreover, there are still cases filed by private individuals or the police but not listed in the 64 FIRs.

An invitation was received during the public hearing to conduct a similar public hearing in Jehanabad on the use of firearms and other brutal methods employed by the police against protesters. PUCL will pursue the invitation and also explore the possibility of organising public hearings in Siwan and Sitamarhi.