
THE ASIAN AGE

Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, London
Saturday, 5 December 2009

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Rights body claims 2,700 unmarked J&K graves

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Dec. 2: A group of human rights activists working in Jammu and Kashmir for many years has claimed finding as many as 2,700 unmarked graves in the state and urged the government to launch a probe into what it termed a "grave situation".

The International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice (IPTI) also said that these "unknown, unmarked and mass graves" contain nearly 3,000 bodies, mainly of those killed by Indian security forces in alleged "fake encounters".

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir do admit to the presence of a hundred unnamed or unmarked graves, but insist that those buried in them were mainly foreign militants killed in encounters with the security forces. They also dispute the claim on the number of involuntary disappearances of local Kashmiris.

The report "Buried Evidence", released here Wednesday, has been authored by Indian human rights activists Angana P. Chatterji, Gautar Navlakha and Mihir Desai along with Parvez Imroz, Zahir-Ud-Din and Khurram Parvez, their counterparts from the Kashmir Valley.

They claimed these 2,700 graves contain 2,943 bodies across 55 villages in the frontier districts of Bandipora, Baramulla, and Kupwara on the Indian side of the LoC and that the information is based on applied research conducted between November 2006 and November 2009 through interviews with gravediggers, graveyard managers and residents, and police FIRs.

encounters and one was identifiable as a local militant, the report claims.

It says about 180 graves held two or more bodies. "These graves include bodies of extra-judicial, summary, and arbitrary executions, as well as massacres committed by the Indian military and paramilitary forces," the report alleged, asking both the Centre and the J&K government to "commit to, and enable, independent and transparent investigations into unknown, unmarked and mass graves". Ms Chatterji, a professor in anthropology at the California Institute of Integral Studies and IPTK convenor, asserted, "There is bound to be a reasonable correlation between these graves and the people who have disappeared." The Association of the Parents of Disappeared Persons, a partner of the IPTK, claims nearly 10,000 people have gone missing in the two-decade-old militancy in J&K, most of them after their reported arrest by the security forces.

She and other IPTK activists said India and the international community should not ignore this report, unveiled in the presence of dozens of relatives of the missing.
