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## **Bihar killers were criminals, not Maoists: Police**

Criminals—not Naxals — may have carried out Wednesday night’s massacre of 16 people on the outskirts of Amousi village in Bihar’s Khagaria district, some 200 km from Patna, investigations have revealed.

Police had earlier claimed that the outlawed CPI (Maoist) was responsible for the killings. Police now suspect the involvement of a gang led by Boran Sada, who is said to have a support base among the Musahar caste in the riverine belt of Kosi.

Most of the victims were backward caste Kurmis.

Sada was a member of the CPI (Maoist) till a few years ago but was thrown out of the outlawed organisation. Another gang led by Sada’s relative Sikandar Sada and Sajjan Choudhary could also be involved, sources said.

“We are still carrying out investigations. But the possibility of Maoist involvement is less,” Superintendent of Police of Khagaria Indranand Mishra told Hindustan Times.

Mishra, however, reiterated that a land dispute between the Musahars and Kurmis led to the massacre.

Direct Maoist involvement also looked unlikely because Maoists usually do not target children (five children were among the victims) and of late have started using sophisticated weapons during their operations, the police said.

“Sophisticated weapons were not used. We have only recovered bullet casings of .315 bore,” said Mishra.

Seven people have been arrested in connection with the killings. Thirty-seven people, mostly from Amousi village, have been named in the FIR lodged in the case.

Sources said Boran Sada, Sikandar Sada and Sajjan Choudhary have been active in the area for four years, after snapping ties with the CPI (Maoist).

Sada and his men have been mobilising Musahars to assert themselves and grab land that belonged to the erstwhile estates in the Kosi region.

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