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Bihar cops thrash Jamia professor, brand him 'Naxal'

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PATNA: Associate professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, Rahul Ramagundam, was assaulted, abused and branded a Naxalite by Bihar police for daring to ask the cops why the hutments belonging to Musahars -- among the most backward of Scheduled Castes -- were being demolished.

Ramagundam, who teaches at Dr K R Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies at JMI, was thrashed and abused and called a Naxalite by Khagaria police at [Amausi](#) village. His local companion was also manhandled and beaten up by [lathi](#)-wielding police constables and officers. The incident took place on December 22.

"How could asking just one question lead to such physical violence? How can one be called a Naxalite and assaulted and humiliated like this," asked Ramagundam.

Amausi had hit headlines on October 1 when 16 villagers, mostly OBCs (Kurmi), were killed allegedly by Musahars. The village has some 300 Musahar families who live in thatched huts.

"On December 22, I rode pillion on the motorbike of Varun Choudhry, a grassroots activist with Khagaria-based NGO Samta, to go to Amausi. When we reached, the village was in turmoil. The cops were breaking thatched houses of people who were said to be absconding. Shankar Sada, whom Varun met in the village, took us to the place where the police party had camped before taking up the rip-and-strip job," Ramagundam said.

"Just as we spoke, a police party arrived and pulled down the thatched roof and walls of a hut. I couldn't control myself. I asked the cops if they had any written orders to pull down the houses of the absconding accused.

"A tall uniformed man stared at me. Instead of answering, he asked me my identity. I teach in Delhi, I told him. 'Name?' I told him. 'Father's name?' I told him. But even before I could take out my identity card, he turned hostile. By then, I was surrounded by the rest of the cops. They

roughed me up and thrashed my colleague, Varun, who suffered a fracture," said Ramagundam.

"They had guns. A constable in green fatigues called me a Naxalite and moved menacingly to break the cordon around me," he said.

After meeting Khagaria SP Anusya Rannsingh Sodhi, Ramagundam lodged a complaint asking whether people had the right to ask police for written orders before dismantling houses of the "poorest of the poor".

The Khagaria SP said she would conduct an inquiry and take appropriate action. She added that she would not take action against anyone merely on the basis of Ramagundam's statement. Ramagundam is author of two books, 'Defeated Innocence' on the Adivasi struggle for land rights in Madhya Pradesh in 2001 and 'Gandhi's Khadi: A History of Contention and Conciliation'.

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