

An open letter to P Chidambram

(In an open letter written on January 14, 2011 to home minister P Chidambram, Jamia Teachers Solidarity Association lists 'genuine encounters')

Mr Chidambram,

You say there shall be no re-visit of the Batla House encounter. You are of course absolutely right. All those agencies who conducted the encounter have already given themselves a clean chit. What further proof could be required of the genuineness of the encounter than the fact that no less than Karnail Singh, Joint Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, Delhi, (who by the by, was also trying to derail the probe into Ishrat Jahan encounter) wrote to the Lt Governor and the NHRC vouching for the innocence of their gallant heroes. Speaking of gallant heroes, we are sure it has been brought to your notice—or maybe it hasn't—that some of the brave hearts of the Delhi Police Special Cell have been indicted by the courts in the past couple of years for scripting and executing fake encounters. These are the very men whom you have been felicitating with gallantry awards and Presidents' medals. But Sir, rest assured, we are not asking what sort of democracies fete and glorify killers. Our kind, of course. Below we list some of our favourite 'genuine encounters'—in case you need more ammunition (oops, pardon the pun) for your shadowboxing with Mr. Digvijay Singh.

- Connaught Place encounter (1997): Two businessmen were gunned down by the Special Cell, led by S.S. Rathi. Rathi and his band of 9 men were found to be guilty by the lower court. They appealed, were found guilty again by High Court. They appealed yet again. The Supreme Court upheld their conviction in 2011.

- Dhaula Kuan encounter (2005): Ravinder Tyagi of Special Branch—now a leading light of the Special Cell—claimed to have apprehended four men, all Kashmiris and allegedly members of a terrorist group, after a fierce gun battle. In 2010, the sessions court ruled that the encounter had been scripted sitting in the police station. The court ordered filing of an FIR and a departmental enquiry against Tyagi and Co. The police of course filed an appeal.

- Uttam Nagar encounter (2005): the Special Cell congratulated itself for averting an attack on the Indian Military by arresting four Lashkar operatives in a daring encounter. All the arrested men were released

by the court in 2010 after examination of the misrepresentation and fabrications by the Special cell. The court was clear that the men had been set up.

- Sonia Vihar Encounter (2006): Heroes of the Special Cell and Crime Branch—led by Sanjiv Yadav, Addl Deputy Commissioner of Police—battled a dreaded gang from UP in May 2006 near Kahjuri Khas, Northeast Delhi. Years later it has been confirmed that they were picked up from their homes in Meerut and executed in cold blood. Please note that we are not mentioning the Ansal Plaza encounter whose veracity has been questioned by an eye witness, Dr Hari Krishna. After years of battling police intimidation, Dr. Hari Krishna has been successful in getting the court to start recording his evidence. This encounter may yet prove to be 'genuine' as well. Neither are we quibbling about the string of frame ups of innocents and extortion that Special Cell officers have been implicated in. You will also not find us pointing to the fact that a number of Special cell veterans of fake encounters and frame ups were part of the team that raided the Batla House flat on 19th September. We are certain that it's only a minor coincidence.

**Most sincerely,
Manisha Sethi, Ahmed Sohaib, Adeel Mehdi, Sanghamitra Misra,
Tanweer Fazal, Azra Razak, Anwar Alam, Farah Farooqi, Arshad
Alam, Ghazi Shahnawaz, Ambarien Al qadar, MS Bhatt and
others for JTSA**