

Indian forces killed villagers not rebels in Chhattisgarh: Rights groups
By Press TV
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Indian human rights groups say the 17 people killed by government paramilitary forces in the central state of Chhattisgarh were tribal villagers and not Maoist rebels. The report by the Coordination of Democratic Rights Organizations (CDRO) on Wednesday said the villagers, who had gathered for a meeting on June 29, were unarmed and had been "slaughtered," DPA reported.

"The locals stated emphatically that there were no Maoists present in their gathering, and all of those attending the meeting that night were unarmed," the CDRO report said.

The villagers also told rights activists that they were shot at "without warning".

"Those who did not die from the bullet wounds were killed by police with axes," the villagers said. This is while the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force maintains that the 17 people killed in the Bijapur district were miscreants.

There are reports that a 12-year-old girl, a 15-year-old boy and two teenage school students were among those killed.

The state government has already ordered a judicial inquiry into the deadly incident.

Maoists and affiliated separatist groups hold sway in more than a third of India's 600-odd districts.

More than 6,000 people have lost their

lives since Maoists -- known as Naxalites -- launched their bloody campaign against the Indian government in the West Bengal village of Naxalbari in 1967.

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