Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

With multipronged strategy of the Central and State Governments specially in the last few years, the naxalite problem has been resolved to a large extent in the affected states of the country. However, there are a few pockets in certain states where naxalite problem still persists, mainly due to involvement of foreign countries. Rohit is posted as SP (Special Operations) for the last one year, in one of the districts which is still affected by the naxalite problem. The district administration has taken a lot of developmental works in the recent past in the naxalite affected areas to win the hearts and minds of the people. Over a period of time, Rohit has established an excellent intelligence network to get the real time information regarding the movement of naxalite cadre. To instill confidence in the public and have moral ascendancy over the naxalites, a number of cordons and search operations are being conducted by the police. Rohit, who himself was leading one of the contingents got a message though his intelligence source that about ten hard core naxalites were hiding in a particular village with sophisticated weapons. Without wasting any time, Rohit reached the target village with his team and laid out a foolproof cordon and started carrying out a systematic search. During the search, his team managed to overpower all the naxalites along with their automatic weapons. However, in the meantime, more than five hundred tribal women surrounded the village and

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started marching towards the target house. They were shouting and demanding the immediate release of insurgents since they are their protectors and saviours. The situation on the ground was becoming very critical as the tribal women were extremely agitated and aggressive. Rohit tried to contact his superior officer, IG (Special Operations) of the state on the radio set and on mobile phone, but failed to do so due to poor connectivity Rohit was in great dilemma since out of the naxalites apprehended, two were not only hard core top insurgents with prize money of ten lakhs on their heads, but were also involved in a recent ambush on the security forces. However, if he did not release the naxalites, the situation could get out of control since the tribal women were aggressively charging towards them. In that case, to control the situation Rohit might have to resort to firing which may lead to valuable loss of lives of civilians and would further complicate the situation.

(a) What are the options available with Rohit to cope with the situation?

(b) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Rohit?

(c) Which of the options, do you think, would be more appropriate for Rohit to adopt and why?

(d) In the present situation, what are the extra precautionary measures to be taken by the police in dealing with women protesters?

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EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Naxalism, public order, proportionality, minimum force, protection of civilian life, rule of law, tribal sensitivity, women protesters, negotiation, ethical leadership

Model Answer

Introduction

Rohit faces a complex conflict between **operational necessity, protection of civilian life, rule of law and maintenance of public order**. His response must prevent the escape of armed insurgents while avoiding unnecessary loss of innocent lives.

Body

(a) Options Available

Rohit can negotiate with the tribal women through local leaders, tribal representatives and trusted community intermediaries and request them to withdraw peacefully. He can create a secure buffer between protesters and the apprehended insurgents, seek reinforcements and attempt communication with senior authorities through alternative channels.

He may temporarily suspend movement of the arrested persons while maintaining the cordon. If the mob becomes violent and threatens lives, graded and proportionate crowd-control measures may be used, with lethal force only as an absolute last resort.

(b) Ethical Dilemmas

The major dilemmas include **rule of law versus immediate public safety**, protection of civilian life versus prevention of insurgent escape, professional duty versus compassion, and use of force versus restraint.

Rohit must also balance collective security with respect for tribal sensitivities and avoid treating the entire community as hostile because of the actions of some individuals.

(c) Appropriate Option

The most appropriate approach is **negotiation combined with a strong defensive cordon and minimum-force crowd management**. The insurgents should not simply be released because they are legally apprehended and pose a serious security threat. Simultaneously, firing on the women would be disproportionate unless there is an imminent threat to life.

Rohit should use community intermediaries, women police personnel and senior local officials to calm the protesters, create safe evacuation routes and obtain reinforcements. His decision should preserve both **lawful authority and moral legitimacy**.

(d) Precautionary Measures with Women Protesters

The police should deploy adequate women personnel, maintain respectful communication, avoid unnecessary physical contact and provide clear warnings before any coercive action. Barricading and safe-distance management should be prioritised. Elderly persons, children and vulnerable individuals should be separated from the potentially violent crowd. Medical teams and ambulances should remain available.

Any force used must be **necessary, proportionate and properly documented**, with accountability for police conduct.

Conclusion

Rohit's leadership should demonstrate **courage with restraint**. A combination of lawful arrest, dialogue, community engagement, tactical patience and proportionate crowd control can protect both national security and civilian lives while strengthening public trust.

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