

*Co-sponsored by The Stanford Center for South Asia and
The Indian American Muslim Council*

Fake Encounters in India: Instant Justice By Police and Posthumous Trial by Media

Manisha Sethi, President of Jamia Teachers' Solidarity Association (JTSA), Assistant Professor, Centre for the Study of Comparative Religions and Civilizations, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

A police “encounter killing”, or, simply, “encounter” is a term with no legal validity but which has seeped via the media into Indian English so surely that it has acquired a life of its own. It refers to a face-to-face interaction between the police and suspects leading to the killing of the suspects. While intended to convey serendipity, encounter killings in reality are often pre-planned executions by police or security agencies. First used against Maoists in the 1970s, and counterinsurgents in the Northeast and Kashmir, executions as unstated state policy were perfected in dealing with Sikh militant groups in the 80s and 90s. The ‘Punjab solution’, as it came to be known, became the model for the internal security establishment. Mumbai’s underworld was reined in through a series of high profile encounter killings—much celebrated in the popular media for imposing order into the urban anarchy that the gang-wars were breeding. Indeed, this became the preferred quick-fix method of dealing with a range of ‘undesirables’, from petty criminals to gangsters, to alleged terrorists and separatists. But more often than not, those lumped together as ‘encounterables’ were simultaneously marked out through their caste, ethnic and religious affiliations. The talk will discuss the history of fake encounters in India and the role of the media and judiciary in dealing with them.

Manisha Sethi is Assistant Professor at the Centre for the Study of Comparative Religions and Civilizations, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Her research interests are in the area of gender and religion, communalism, and law and terrorism. She has published extensively on these themes in academic as well as popular publications. She is currently Associate Editor, *Biblio: A Review of Books*, India’s premier book review journal, with which she has been associated for over a decade. Sethi is the President of the Jamia Teachers' Solidarity Association, which has been closely involved in a campaign against extra judicial killings. Her book, *Escaping the World: Chastity, Power and Women’s Renunciation among Jains*, Routledge India, is due later this year.

Tuesday, September 27, 3:00p.m. - 4:30p.m. – No RSVP Required
Philippines Conference Room
Encina Hall, 3rd floor, Central