



Case Study - 15

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You are posted as an SDM in a division of district which is undergoing ethnic turbulence since sometime. There has been a substantial loss of lives and property due to the disturbance, following which you are given implicit orders by the ruling party of the area to move a certain section of population, belonging to a particular ethnic group, out of the area to control the situation. This order has put you in a difficult position as it goes against your own ethical values of targeting a section of population and moving them out of their homes. However, not following the orders will be taken as dereliction of duty and will put the onus on you for the loss of lives.

A. In this situation, what are the options available to you?

B. In your opinion, what can be the most appropriate course of action and why? (250 words)

Answer

Approach

- Explain the given case and the ethical dilemma faced.
- Mention the options available with their merits and demerits.
- Mention a course of action with explanation.

The given case poses a challenge to choose between political orders of evicting a particular ethnic group against personal ethical values of targeting a section of population and moving them out of their homes. It highlights the ethical dilemma between duty ethics and social justice.

Options available

Options

Merits

Demerits

1. Follow the orders and evict the particular group of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May control the situation. • Meeting expectations of the political leaders. • Avoiding dereliction of duty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will create ethical dissonance as forceful eviction is against human dignity. • May even further arouse communal tensions.
2. Take time to control the situation and assess whether there is a need to remove them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to show administrative leadership. • Showing impartial attitude of administration. 	Delayed response can give time to wrongdoers to spread violence.
3. Not following the orders and allowing the group to stay.	Avoiding moral dissonance .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for the loss of lives. • May lead to political backlash against the SDM.
4. Informing appropriate higher authority and seeking direct government intervention.	Avoiding any conflict with the political leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not showing accountable behavior. • Showing escapist tendency by avoiding the situation.

Option (2) seems to be the correct method to handle the situation.

It is to be noted that evicting a particular group can be viewed by locals as targeting a specific community. This can encourage others to indulge in violent activity. Also, the order could be politically motivated without rational basis. Following such an order is not only **against individual dignity** but also against code of conduct of civil services.

Course of Action

As the SDM of the district, following could be the possible courses of action:

- Perform first hand investigation of the ground reality and keep the political leadership informed about the gravity of the situation.

- Foremost priority should be to control the law & order situation. Ensure safety/security of the people by:
 - Increased patrolling, deployment of force.
 - Adopting zero-tolerance against wrongdoers.
- Persuade the political leaders to give some time to control the situation and convince them that forced eviction of the group could further deteriorate the conditions.
- Use **social influence**/ persuasion
 - Directly talking to community leaders taking help from locally influential people, grassroot workers, NGOs, etc to convince people not to indulge in ethnic clashes.
 - Approach of saintliness and empathy to involve them to win their trust.

Further, once the situation is in control, long term steps should be initiated. Developing harmony among the groups and maintain strict vigilance to avoid any instance that could trigger further conflict. Panchayat leaders should be encouraged to convince people and maintain **social harmony**.

Thus, by taking into confidence the political leaders, and controlling the law and order situation could prevent loss of lives and property. This way one can fulfill his/her **administrative duty** without neglecting social justice simultaneously showing the **objectivity and non-partisan attitude of administration**.