



IAMC Report

State of Religious Minorities in India

Introduction

The Hindu right-wing orchestrated brutal violence against Muslims during the Hindu festival of Ramanavami and the subsequent police crackdown on Muslim victims, and use of bulldozers to destroy Muslim homes and livelihoods in states ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) that peaked in April continued throughout May.

Observers and human rights advocates assert that since the PM Modi-led federal government came to power, its approach toward its minorities especially Muslims have exacerbated hatred and communal polarisation. Many scholars and activists have expressed concerns over the massive surge in hate crimes and peaking of genocidal sentiment against the Muslims.

This report examines and analyses the continued rise in hate crimes, genocidal speeches, vandalism, destruction, and assaults on the bodies and property of Muslims and Christians during the month of May. This report also chronicles the frequent assertion of Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) groups over the historical architecture preserved by the country's Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), mainly mosques, which they falsely claim were temples and purportedly destroyed by Muslim rulers in the past.

In addition, the role of the police over the years, particularly in 2022, demonstrates the institutionalisation of violence against the Muslims. This report focuses further on the police's role in not just downplaying violent attacks on minorities but also actively participating in the acts of violence. Discriminatory laws against Muslims have become increasingly prevalent in states where the BJP is in power. Minorities are being pushed to the side even more by the aggressive use of laws that go clearly against the spirit of the Indian constitution.

Violence and Discrimination Against Muslims

Incidents of large-scale violence occurred in April in multiple Indian states after Hindu extremist mobs rallied into Muslim neighborhoods with



weapons, chanting genocidal slogans to celebrate Ramanavami, which was later followed up by a police crackdown on Muslim victims.

In Madhya Pradesh's Khargone, horrific accounts of Muslim minors subjected to humiliation and torture inside juvenile homes were reported by the media. They were forced to sing Bhajans (Hindu religious hymns), read Bhagwat Gita (Hindu religious scriptures), and were denied food.¹

Furthermore, ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) governments in multiple states have weaponised the use of bulldozers to target Muslims. Muslim-owned properties are demolished, citing

“illegal encroachments” without any due procedure. The ‘bulldozer justice’ popularised by Yogi Adityanath — the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Hindu nationalist leader infamous for his inflammatory speeches against Muslims was a major poll plank in the state’s elections held earlier this year. The same model has now been implemented by authorities in other BJP ruled states.

On May 4, a 50-year-old madrasa building in the Ghatampur area of Uttar Pradesh’s Kanpur district was demolished without officials giving any prior notice. Madrasa Islamiya had been functioning for 50 years on the land before it was demolished. To everyone’s shock, students were still in their classrooms taking lessons at the time of



¹ <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-muslim-minors-allege-brutality>

demolition, and they could escape with incredible difficulty. The administration justified its actions by saying the madrasa was built on the government land. Denying the allegations, Intzar, the



Principal and Manager of the institute, reportedly said, “Madrasa is built on our land and we have papers to prove it. Our madrasa is recognized. If it was not our land, how did the government give recognition? Could this also be subject to investigation? But there will be no hearing on this. I spoke to the SDM sahib on mobile. He took unilateral action, and the madrasa was bulldozed. This is sheer injustice.”²

On the same day, in the national capital of New Delhi, another demolition drive was carried out by the BJP-ruled South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) in Shaheen Bagh. The Muslim-dominated area was in the national news in 2019 for initiating the massive Muslim women-led sit-in protest

against the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the Indian government. Hindu right-wing leaders have repeatedly characterised the area as ‘mini-Pakistan’.

However, the residents and local leaders resisted the demolition drive. Aam Aadmi Party’s leader and member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Amanatullah Khan, was arrested and jailed for protesting against the use of bulldozers to attack Muslim properties. “I am ready to go to jail if it saves the houses of poor people. There is no encroachment here. I will support them (the SDMC) if there is any encroachment”, he reportedly told the media minutes before he was arrested.³

On the same day, in Assam’s Nagaon district, the administration demolished the houses of seven Muslims for their



alleged involvement in attacking a police station. The locals in the area were protesting against the custodial death

² <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/05/08/bulldozer-terror-kanpur-administration-demolish-50-year-old-madrasa-islamia/>

³ <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/12/delhi-bulldozers-roll-in-again-mla-amanatullah-khan-detained-during-protests/>

of Sakiful Islam, a fish trader. He was detained by the police while boarding a bus. The locals, angered by his custodial death, allegedly due to torture, torched the local police station. The police



retaliated by razing as many as seven structures to the ground, including that of deceased Islam, leaving his wife and daughter homeless. Talking to the media, her wife said, “The police had demanded Rs 10,000 and a duck as bribe for his release. We only could afford a duck, so they [police] beat him to death”.⁴

Two weeks later, on May 23, the Assam Police booked five people, including Islam’s wife, under UAPA, a draconian terror law, and daughter, a minor, under juvenile justice rule.⁵

The memories of the tragic events of the Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya and the consequent incidents of violence against Muslims in 1992-93 across the

country have been brought back into the minds of India’s 220 million Muslims.

Hindu extremist groups have reasserted the slogan of “Ayodhya to bas jhanki hai, Kashi-Mathura baki hai” (Ayodhya is just a glimpse, Kashi-Mathura are yet to come) 30 years after they were first used. This month, several mosques across India were subjected to vandalism, destruction, and attacks.

The 17th-century Gyanvyapi Mosque in Varanasi, also viewed as Hinduism’s holiest city, has emerged as the latest flashpoint in the escalating onslaught by India’s Hindu nationalists on its Muslim minority. In first week of May, the court of civil judge of Varanasi ordered videography of the Shrinagar Gauri temple in the Kashi Vishwanath - Gyanvyapi Mosque complex and other places. The court order, however, goes



against the Places of Worship Act (1991) which protects all places of worship -

⁴ <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/22/assam-govt-demolishes-house-of-muslim-man-day-after-killed-in-police-custody/>

⁵ <https://thewire.in/rights/assam-wife-of-custodial-death-victim-four-others-charged-under-uapa>

except for Babri Masjid - as it were on August 15, 1947.⁶

Despite the law in place, Hindu nationalists have been rallying to reclaim the Gyanvapi Mosque, which they claim was built upon a Hindu temple.



In another instance, Hindu extremists demonstrated outside the Qutub Minar complex in Delhi on May 10, demanding that the global heritage monument be turned over to Hindus.

Vinod Bansal, the national spokesperson of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu religious militant organisation that is an affiliate of BJP's ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), said, "Muslim invaders destroyed 27 Jain and Hindu temples, the remains of which can be clearly seen on the walls of the mosque.

How long will we continue to tolerate this insult? Now that we have a government which is proud of our Sanatan dharma, we demand that gods and goddesses present inside the Qutub Minar complex be restored to their dignity."⁷

Diya Kumari, a Member of Parliament from the ruling BJP, claimed that the Taj Mahal, a world-famous heritage site, was built on land belonging to a Hindu ruler from Jaipur.⁸ Hindutva organisations have been arguing for a long time that the structure [of the Taj Mahal] stands upon the ruins of a temple. The same week, four Muslims were arrested for offering prayers inside the Taj Mahal Complex.⁹



The southern Indian state of Karnataka has been making national headlines since the beginning of this year, for its discriminatory policies

⁶ <https://countercurrents.org/2022/05/gyanvapi-mosque-why-the-issue-is-being-revived/>

⁷ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/dispatches/hindu-groups-protest-outside-qutub-minar-demand-renaming-the-monument-as-vishnu-stambh/article65428688.ece>

⁸ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/land-on-which-taj-mahal-built-belonged-to-jaipur-ruler-jai-singh-says-bjp-mp-diya-kumari-2965750>

⁹ <https://www.siasat.com/4-arrested-for-offering-namaz-at-taj-mahal-premises-2335174/>

against Muslims and for providing impunity to Hindu extremist groups to target minorities. After the ban on hijab inside educational institutions, calls for economic boycotts, and attacks on Muslim businesses, extremist groups in Karnataka now claim that Tipu Masjid, also known as Masjid-i-Ala in the Srirangappattana, was a Hindu temple destroyed by Tipu Sultan, a Muslim ruler in the 18th century.¹⁰

In a similar trend, the VHP also staked their claim over another 700-year-old Jumma mosque in Malali village near the Ganjmath area on the outskirts of Mangalore, Karnataka. The VHP and its other militant offshoot Bajrang Dal also organised a Hindu ritual or puja outside the mosque.¹¹



On May 16, a violent Hindu extremist mob set fire to a mosque in Neemuch city of Madhya Pradesh while trying to install idols at an adjacent Muslim shrine.¹² According to reports, the mob

also vandalised the other religious places in the Court Mohalla area of the city.

In the Siddharthanagar district of Uttar Pradesh, a 53-year-old Muslim woman named Roshni was shot dead by police when she tried to resist her son Abdul Rehman's arrest in an alleged case of cow slaughter.¹³

In another dangerous trend started by BJP lawmakers and Hindu extremist groups, Bengali-speaking Muslim Indian citizens are conflated with Bangladeshi immigrants. Later, the Bangladesh dog whistle is then used to justify violence against Bengali-speaking Muslim Indians.

After the communal violence on April 16, a number of mainstream

politicians used xenophobic dog whistles to tar the residents of Jahangirpuri. Delhi BJP President Adarsh Gupta alleged that so-called "illegal" Rohingya and Bangladeshi immigrants should

¹⁰ <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-now-hanuman-temple-claim-over-tipu-sultans-mosque-2327401/>

¹¹ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/vhp-bajrang-dal-hold-pooja-outside-mangaluru-mosque-claim-theres-temple-inside-164337>

¹² <https://www.siasat.com/madhya-pradesh-mosque-set-ablaze-in-nemuch-city-2328675/>

¹³ <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/16/up-muslim-woman-shot-dead-by-police-while-resisting-her-sons-detention-in-cow-slaughter-case/>

be blamed for the violence and must be evicted from Delhi. The Aam Aadmi Party took much the same line, accusing “Bangladeshi and Rohingya” Muslims of inciting the violence.^{14 15}

On May 25, dozens of Bengali-speaking Muslim Indians were rounded off by Bengaluru police and were subjected to brutal violence. “Around two dozen policemen suddenly barged into our camp and attacked us with batons on Saturday (May 21). It was around 4 pm, and we had just finished our day’s work when they came and started roughing us up. They wanted us to pack up and leave immediately,” said Tubar Seikh (34) who lives in settlement of 30 Bengali Muslim families that collect and segregate garbage for a living. He also accused male policemen of frisking the Muslim women during the raid.¹⁶

In Madhya Pradesh’s Guna district, three Muslim men accused of poaching were allegedly killed in multiple police encounters. Naushad, Shahzad, and Chotu Pathan, alias Zaheer Khan, were killed by the police in encounters on May 13, 14, and 17, respectively. A fact-finding report by the rights group, the National Confederation of Human Rights Organisations (NCHRO) on May 24 raised questions over the police version and termed the encounters as fake. The report said that these encounters were

carried out to “take revenge and protect the real culprits of the poaching.”¹⁷

To summarise, it is evident through the testimonies and reports that violence against Muslim in India is witnessing an increasing trend every month. In BJP-ruled India, Muslim minorities are forced to live a life in fear and intimidation, whereas the perpetrators enjoy unprecedented impunity from the state.

Discrimination and Violence against Christians

In Hindutva ideology, Christianity is the second religion after Islam, considered foreign, harmful to



Hindu civilization and hence should be eliminated from the country. Therefore, followers of the Christian faith and their places of worship are also frequently

14 <https://scroll.in/article/1022362/how-the-bangladeshi-dog-whistle-helps-justify-violence-against-indian-bengali-muslims>

15 <https://theprint.in/india/rohingya-bangladeshis-behind-jahangirpuri-violence-delhi-bjp-chief-aap-mla-says-not-right-to-target-one-community/920086/>

16 <https://thewire.in/communalism/bengaluru-police-launch-new-anti-bangladeshi-drive-creating-panic-for-bengali-muslims>

17 <https://twocircles.net/2022may27/445931.html>

attacked by the Hindu extremists associated with the Hindutva movement.

In Kadaba, a Tehsil in Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka, miscreants broke open the door of a church, destroyed a cross, and placed a saffron flag. In a complaint registered to police, priest Father Jose Varghese of the Assembly of God Peradka church said that the miscreants illegally entered the centre on May 1 at midnight and also placed a portrait of Hanuman, a Hindu god.¹⁸

Similarly, a group of unidentified mob desecrated statues of Mother Mary, Infant Jesus, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus at a hill shrine in Andhra Pradesh, causing shock and fear among the followers. The newly built shrine came on the target of Hindutva forces last year after ruling BJP national secretary Sunil Deodhar claimed that it was illegally built at a spot where a carving of the Hindu deity Narasimha and footprints of Sita Maa (the wife of Hindu god Ram) existed.

Guntur district police had already debunked this claim, but Hindu right-wing organisations kept pushing this narrative.¹⁹

On May 17, in Geltua village of Bhadrak district in Odisha, the local officials sealed the church by citing a complaint by a Hindu extremist that the church served as a centre for religious conversion of tribal people, causing a law-and-order problem. Christians in Odisha have questioned the sealing of their church and the imposition of orders restraining them from gathering for worship.²⁰ “Our people have been restrained from worshipping since May 17 after the administration sealed the only church in Geltua village under Bhadrak rural police station in Odisha,”

Pratap Chhinchani, a practicing lawyer in Orissa High Court told UCA news agency.

On May 29, members of the right-wing Bajrang Dal barged

into a Christian prayer meeting in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka, alleging unlawful religious conversion at a private



¹⁸ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2022/may/06/miscreants-allegedly-break-into-church-in-karnataka-place-hanuman-portrait-2450227.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.ucanews.com/news/attack-on-shrine-upsets-christians-in-southern-india/97310>

²⁰ <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/29/christians-question-sealing-of-church-in-odisha/>

hotel. Since the anti-conversion law was enacted in Karnataka, Hindu extremist outfits have used it as a new tool to harass Christians. Hindu right-wing group Sri Ram Sena had said it was preparing a list of what it claimed were illegal places of worship in the state. The group's chief Pramod Muthalik had alleged that people had converted their homes into churches, and such places were used to carry out religious conversions. Muthalik further told the media, "We have so far prepared a list of about 500 such places of worship operating in houses, marriage halls, and community buildings in four districts while work is on in other districts. We will submit it to the government by this month-end".²¹

Hate Speech

On May 7, a ruling BJP legislator Haribhushan Thakur Bachaul said that Muslims should be set ablaze just as Hindus burn Ravana effigies during the Hindu festival of Dussehra. Speaking at an event in Patna, the capital city of Bihar, he said, "We need Hanuman ji so that our youth could be strong, the people of our country could be strong. Just like Ravana's Lanka was burnt by Hanuman ji, the demon-like Ravana, who are hovering over Bihar and the

country, should also be burnt."²²

BJP leader from Delhi, Kapil Mishra, also attended the event.²³ In February 2022, Thakur Bachaul had said that Muslims living in India should be stripped of voting rights and treated as second-class citizens.²⁴ Several members of the opposition parties, mainly the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), in the Bihar assembly had protested against his anti-Muslim statement and demanded suspension.



On May 8, Hindu Jana Jagruti, a Hindu militant group, organised a convention for Hindu Rastra in Bengaluru's Rajajinagar neighborhood.

²¹ <https://www.news9live.com/state/karnataka/dakshina-kannada-police-raid-meditation-centre-after-right-wing-group-alleges-forced-religious-conversion-174526?infinitescroll=1>

²² <https://thewire.in/communalism/muslims-should-be-set-ablaze-just-as-hindus-burn-ravana-effigies-on-dussehra-bjp-mla>

²³ <https://www.aajtak.in/india/politics/story/hanuman-chalisa-row-in-bihar-nitish-kumar-jdu-bjp-mla-ntc-1459935-2022-05-08>

²⁴ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/feb/28/anti-muslim-utterances-of-bjp-mla-mob-lynching-rock-bihar-assembly-2424674.html>

At the event, Hindu extremist speakers made dehumanizing statements against Muslims and renewed calls for a Muslim genocide.



“They are taking over our country like a disease. For one Hindu child, there are five Muslim children. Yet Muslims are the minority. That is why we have organised this meeting to make people aware that we need a Hindu Rashtra,” said Mohan Gowda, Karnataka spokesperson of Hindu Janajagruti Samiti. When asked what does he meant by Hindu Rashtra, Gowda smiled and said, “Is it not obvious? Where there are only Hindus”.²⁵

The event was organised at a local civic body-run community hall in Rajaji Nagar, where doctors, students, housewives, and lawyers all nodded in agreement as speakers explained the terms such as ‘Land Jihad, ‘Economic Jihad,’ Love Jihad’ and discussed why loudspeakers should be banned or why

India needs to become a Hindu nation.

Karnataka High Court lawyer KM Nataraj addressed the gathering and said, “Muslims counter that they play it [Azan] only for five minutes. But it is not just a call to prayer. It is a call from Mosques for every Muslim to wake up and pray and resolve that they will kill others. When a Hindu hears such a call, they get scared”.

At the same event, during the lunch break, a group of doctors discussed how to gather young Hindu doctors from medical colleges across the state and look at legal provisions to set up a hospital only for Hindus. “We have to do this in all sectors. Muslims are taking away jobs and money from us. We need young doctors, techies and industrialists who will insist on only hiring Hindus.”²⁶



In the northeast state of Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, while addressing a seminar in Delhi on May 21, termed Madrasas as “enemy” of humanity. “These Madrasas should

²⁵ <https://www.boomlive.in/news/hindu-rashtra-convention-bengaluru-muslims-are-cancer-land-jihad-17829>

²⁶ <https://www.boomlive.in/news/hindu-rashtra-convention-bengaluru-muslims-are-cancer-land-jihad-17829>

become extinct. As long as the Madrasa revolves in the mind, the child will never be able to become a doctor or an engineer,” he added.

He further said, “In schools, only those who make students become



doctors, scientists and professors should be taught. The Muslims who have rote the Quran today all of them were Hindus at one time. If a Muslim child has very good merit in his studies, I will give credit to his Hindu history.”²⁷

In 2020, Assam had passed an order to dissolve all the government Madrasas and convert them into public educational institutions to facilitate the “secular” education system. This year, the Guwahati High Court upheld the Assam Repeal Act, 2020, under which all provincial (government-funded) Madrasas in the state were to be converted into public schools.²⁸

Jammu and Kashmir:

Ever since the revocation of Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status in August 2019, the Indian state has intensified its crackdown on any form of dissent in the region.²⁹

In the latest turn of events, India is creating an extensive surveillance network outsourcing the cost by ordering local shop owners to spend hundreds of dollars to install security cameras. Aakar Patel, former head of Amnesty International in India, called the latest order “a worrying development.” It will legitimise, he said, “a complete surveillance of their civic life, threatening their human rights to privacy, freedom of assembly, autonomy, and dignity.”

Following the abrogation of Article 370, a delimitation panel was formed in



²⁷ <https://english.newstracklive.com/news/assam-cm-himanta-biswa-sarama-statement-on-madarsa-mc25-nu764-ta334-1229979-1.html>

²⁸ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/assam-govt-to-shut-down-state-run-madrasas-sanskrit-tols>

²⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49234708>

March 2020. The panel submitted and signed the final draft on May 5 this year. Six additional constituencies in Jammu and one in the Kashmir Valley have been included in the plan, published in the Gazette of India and the Gazette of Jammu and Kashmir. It also proposes dividing the territory into seven scheduled castes and nine scheduled tribal constituencies. The Congress's Jammu and Kashmir unit has expressed strong opposition to the final draft of delimitation, claiming that it is "dissection, not delimitation," and that it "completely ignores ground realities."³⁰

The proposal has been dubbed "unacceptable" and "discriminatory" by political circles in Jammu & Kashmir. Hasnain Masoodi, a senior National Conference leader and one of the group's three associate members in a report, said, "I personally went to the Commission Secretariat and handed over the objections lodged by NC Associate

members to the draft proposals."³¹

On May 23, the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir announced that the police medal for gallantry and meritorious service will no longer bear the image of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and will be replaced with the national emblem, a move that many see as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government's acrimony against the region's famed political icon.

On May 25, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) convicted Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik to rigorous life imprisonment in a terror funding case. According to media reports, he was charged under ten sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), a terror law. Malik chose not to hire a lawyer to convey a message that Kashmiris have no faith in the Indian judicial system.

³⁰ <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/politics/heres-why-the-jk-delimitation-commission-draft-report-has-stirred-an-outcry-8133201.html>

³¹ <https://thewire.in/law/article-370-jammu-and-kashmir-supreme-court-pending>

Recommendations

- The Indian government must reformulate the existing guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for police and other forces coming under the ambit of the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding their conduct in dealing with protesters. The government must form an emergency response team to track, as well as to register complaints against the improper conducts of law enforcement agencies during the protests.

- The Indian government must also ensure that prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code are applied in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in the case of *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India*, especially that orders are widely published along with reasons and are imposed when the danger apprehended is in the nature of an emergency. As laid down in this report, instances of peaceful protests are met with prohibitory orders while conclaves calling for ethnic cleansing of minorities are allowed to be held freely.

- Assignatories of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based

on Religion or Belief and UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the international community as well as the Indian government has a responsibility to ensure that police effectively investigate, prosecute, and prevent instances of harassment and violence committed against Muslims .

- The Indian government must ratify the Convention Against Torture, to which India is a signatory since 1998, and ensure that comprehensive legislation to prevent, prosecute and punish torture is enacted in line with India's international obligations. Furthermore, it must be ensured that the 2015 DK Basu Guidelines issued by the Indian Supreme Court for the prevention of torture are implemented and action is taken against the erring officials.

- States should repeal their "Freedom of Religion" or anti-conversion laws which have been used to disproportionately target religious minorities and justify harassment and violence.