



**Indian American
Muslim Council**



State of Religious Minorities in India

June - July Report

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Introduction

Even though India will mark 75 years of independence on August 15, 2022, the descent of once the world's largest democracy into a Hindu fascist entity is nearly complete. Under the rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), religious minorities have witnessed the gravest violations of their human rights and religious freedoms.

The hateful ideology of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) espoused by the BJP seeks to turn India into a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) and paints religious minorities (Muslims, Christians, etc.) as the biggest threat to its Hindu majoritarian vision. Extreme polarization through hate speech, discriminatory policies, and violence targeting religious minorities have been normalized to reduce the country's 300 million minorities into second-class citizens.

In June and July 2022, India has been staring at an economic uncertainty with a consistently falling¹ Indian Rupee and soaring prices. However, even amid such a precarious situation, the Hindu extremists backed by state actors continue to commit acts of discrimination and violence against religious minorities. The culture of impunity enjoyed by Hindu extremists only emboldens their actions, and this report for June and July is a testament to the same.

¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-22/worries-rise-for-india-s-economy-as-rupee-falls-past-80-a-dollar>

Bulldozing Muslim Properties

At just 25, Muslim activist Afreen Fatima has shaken India's Hindu nationalist regime to the core. Since the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), a citizenship law that discriminates against Muslims, Afreen has been at the forefront of protests against the Hindu supremacist policies that seek to erode India's secular fabric. Bulldozer politics (demolishing of Muslim properties), which was first introduced¹ by Hindu militant monk and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath in the wake of anti-CAA protests in 2019, has gone on to become a model across various BJP-ruled states, causing extreme anger and anguish among Indian Muslims.

In just the past two months, Muslims have been at the receiving end of bulldozer politics, which, in simple terms, means the razing of the homes and properties of any and every individual, especially Muslims, engaged in any kind of protest against the establishment. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Assam,

Karnataka, and several other BJP-ruled states, the state administration, in complete disregard for the laws of the land, have demolished homes of Muslims, thereby showing that if an individual protests, their entire family will have to pay the price.

In the Saharanpur city of Uttar Pradesh state, which witnessed protests on June 10 over the blasphemous remarks of former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the houses of two² Muslims, Muzammil and Abdul Waqir, were razed to the ground by the local authorities. This idea of collective punishment would be considered barbaric even in a dictatorship, let alone a democracy.

However, the differences between the two have become increasingly blurred over the past eight years, especially in June and July 2022.

Afreen's family house in Prayagraj was demolished on June 12 by authorities on the grounds that it was an illegal construction. The house stood for decades, yet, it became illegal only when the police accused her father, Javed Mohammad, of allegedly orchestrating protests against Nupur Sharma's remarks. Bulldozing Afreen's home was a collective punishment to the family that has been leading a fight for the rights of religious minorities.

¹ <https://thewire.in/government/watch-how-yogi-perfected-bulldozer-justice-bjps-new-weapon-against-muslims>

² <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/kanpur-friday-prayers-violence-nupur-sharma-prophet-row-bulldozers#read-more>

The issue of Afreen Fatima's house being demolished³ was picked widely by international media, from the BBC⁴ to Al Jazeera,⁵ yet, it is clear that international condemnation is no longer effective in these cases. The BJP leaders and pro-BJP mainstream media outlets cheered and welcomed the demolition.

But perhaps the most shocking stance has been that of the Indian judiciary. It has firmly remained mum or acted like this was not an important issue in the nation. The Supreme court of India finally took up the matter in July and denied putting a blanket ban on demolition drives mainly targeting Muslims.

Brazen Witchhunt of a Muslim fact-Checker

As we will show in this report, the months of June and July were particularly tough for Indian Muslims as the Hindutva onslaught continued unabated from Uttar Pradesh to Assam and from Kerala to West Bengal. On June 1, an FIR was filed against⁶ Muslim journalist and Alt News' co-founder Mohammed Zubair at a police station in Uttar Pradesh's Khairabad after he called Hindu extremists Yati Narasinghanand, Mahant Bajrang Muni, and Anand

Swaroop "hatemongers" in a tweet.

Yati Narsinghanand Giri, a Hindu militant leader, has had a long history of hate speech and calls to violence, the most notable being his involvement in mobilizing Hindu extremist mobs before the Delhi pogrom of 2020, as investigated by The Wire.⁷ In December 2021, Narshinghanand organized Dharma Sansad (Hindu religious parliament) in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, where calls for arming Hindus and genocide of Muslim⁸ citizens were made.

Mahant Bajrang Muni, a priest of the Badi Sangat Ashram in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur district, threatened Muslim women with mass rape⁹ in the presence of the police on the occasion of the Hindu new year in April this year.

On June 28, Delhi Police arrested¹⁰ Zubair, days after registering an FIR



based on an anonymous Twitter handle complaint, who had been tagging the Delhi Police on social media alleging that

3 <https://time.com/6193648/modi-india-bulldozer-justice-muslims/>

4 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61793828>

5 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/13/act-of-vendetta-afreen-fatima-on-her-house-bulldozed-in-india>

6 <https://thewire.in/government/fir-against-mohammed-zubair-for-calling-militant-hindutva-leaders-hatemongers>

7 <https://thewire.in/communalism/delhi-riots-conspiracy-anti-muslim-cleric-yati-narsinghanand>

8 <https://thewire.in/communalism/hindutva-leaders-dharma-sansad-muslim-genocide>

9 <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/police-arrests-seer-bajrang-muni-das-who-issued-rape-threat-against-muslim-community-in-up-news-190825>

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/28/delhi-police-arrest-muslim-journalist-mohammed-zubair-india-bjp>

Zubair hurt his religious sentiments and that legal action should be taken. The arrest followed days after Zubair had spotlighted former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma's comments on the Prophet Muhammad.

Over the next three weeks, six FIRs were registered by the Uttar Pradesh police against the Muslim journalist with the intent to keep him indefinitely behind bars.



Zubair's work of busting fake news, misinformation, and disinformation has been a cause of concern for the Hindu rightwing in India ever since Alt News came into existence. And this is not the first time he has been targeted. In August 2020, Delhi Police booked Zubair in a Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Bill (POCSO) case based on a complaint filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) chairperson Priyank Kanoongo, a BJP supporter.

The NCPCR complaint referred to a tweet shared by Zubair on August 6,

2020, which had the photo of a minor girl with her face blurred out. In February this year, the Delhi HC asked the Police to file a further status report on the investigation. During a hearing in May, the Delhi Police told the high court that the tweet made by Zubair "does not constitute any cognizable offence."¹¹

On July 20, India's Supreme Court granted him interim bail¹² in all FIRs lodged by the Uttar Pradesh police.

Persecution of Muslims

June started with the FIR against Mohammed Zubair, and while that grabbed national headlines, several other instances of violence against Muslims remained underreported. On June 1, a professor at a private college in Aligarh,¹³ Uttar Pradesh, was sent on compulsory leave after footage showing him offering 'namaz' on the college lawns was shared multiple times by workers of BJP and other Hindu rightwing outfits who demanded action against him. In Delhi, several Muslim residents of Jahangirpuri¹⁴ who witnessed communal violence during a Hanuman Jayanti procession in April and a demolition drive afterward alleged that they have had to face police harassment since the riots occurred. Five women, all Muslims, alleged that they were picked up by Delhi Police¹⁵ and illegally kept in custody for 42 hours over the Jahangirpuri violence

¹¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/no-cognizable-offence-in-tweet-of-altnews-founder-police-7928521/>

¹² <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/mohammad-zubair-bail-sc-power-to-arrest-8042237/>

¹³ <https://thewire.in/communalism/aligarh-college-namaz-professor-bjp-hindutva>

¹⁴ <https://thewire.in/communalism/muslim-men-leaving-jahangirpuri-out-of-fear-of-police-harassment-say-locals>

¹⁵ <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-muslim-family-police-detained-illegally>

case.

Muslims in several Indian cities registered protests against the blasphemous remarks by former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma. The BJP government in several states used official machinery to punish the protestors. In Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, 36 Muslims, were booked under draconian¹⁶ laws like the



National Security Act (NSA). As expected, Hindu extremists who pelted stones at Muslims while they took out the rally were not booked under any law. Days later, several Muslims continued to be picked up,¹⁷ even those that had little to

do with the protests simply because they were Muslim. As if this was not enough, the homes of those who participated in protests were demolished by authorities¹⁸ in Kanpur, once again keeping aside all respect for the due judicial process.

In Gujarat, twenty Muslim protesters were arrested¹⁹ by the police. In Ranchi, the capital of the eastern state of Jharkhand, two Muslim youths were shot dead²⁰ by police, including a teenager Mudassir Alam. Over 18 people sustained severe injuries after police opened fire when Muslim protesters had gathered at the Ranchi Main Road near Daily Market. Later, the family of the 15-year-old Mudassir accused Hindu extremist Bhairon Singh of opening fire from the terrace of a nearby temple, which caused the death of their son. They also alleged that police have been shielding those who killed the boy by refusing to file an FIR.

In Bengaluru, Karnataka, a Muslim popcorn seller was roughed up by a Hindu mob in Lalbagh²¹ on the allegation that he spit into oil before making the popcorn. In Jharkhand's Ranchi, two youths were beaten up²² by a Hindu mob chanting Jai Shree Ram (Glory to lord Ram). In Jamshedpur, another city in Jharkhand, girl students wearing hijab were not allowed to take the exam at a local Women's College.²³

In the Gonda area of Uttar Pradesh

¹⁶ <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/04/kanpur-violence-nsa-against-36-muslim-men-muslims-call-police-action-discriminatory/>

¹⁷ <https://thewire.in/communalism/kanpur-violence-ground-report-muslims-police>

¹⁸ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/kanpur-friday-prayers-violence-nupur-sharma-prophet-row-bulldozers?>

¹⁹ <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/twenty-muslims-held-in-gujarat-for-protesting-without-permission/>

²⁰ <https://thewire.in/communalism/ranchi-one-suspected-to-have-died-10-injured-as-protests-over-remarks-on-prophet-turn-violent>

²¹ <https://bit.ly/3wzHCEj>

²² <https://thewire.in/communalism/two-muslim-youth-beaten-mob-ranchi-protests>

²³ <https://www.siasat.com/not-allowed-to-take-exam-in-hijab-students-in-jamshedpur-protest-2353292/>

state, Muslim Fakirs were harassed,²⁴ called ‘jihadis’ And ‘terrorists’ while one senior citizen, a Muslim, was forced to remove his roadside stall by Hindu vigilantes. In Aligarh, two Muslim students and one former student from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) alleged that they were brutally beaten²⁵ up over not having a platform ticket when they went to see off acquaintances at the railway station on June 22.



for an economic boycott of Muslim shopkeepers and vendors.²⁹ Issuing an ultimatum to the administration, the panchayat urged the gathering to form village-level committees to enforce the boycott in their respective villages. The panchayat also called on people to “not buy anything” from Muslim-owned shops and businesses.³⁰ More than 200 people participated in the panchayat, including



In Kerala, Muslim Student leader and Fraternity Movement national secretary Aysha Renna²⁶ suffered injuries during a police lathi charge in Malappuram. In July, a Hindu priest, Pram Hans Das, burnt a poster²⁷ of All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi ²⁸in protest against the killing of Udaipur’s tailor. He said that he would burn Owaisi alive one day.

A panchayat organised at a temple in Haryana’s Manesar on July 3, claiming to represent the Hindu society, called

members of Hindu right-wing groups Bajrang Dal and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Participants also included people from nearby villages of Manesar, Kasan, Dharuhera, and Gurgaon. The members submitted a memorandum meant for the deputy commissioner to a deputy magistrate stating that “illegal immigrants” must be evicted. “There should be an immediate enquiry into this, and those found staying illegally should be evicted. They are involved in religious conversion,

²⁴ <https://thewire.in/communalism/uttar-pradesh-fakirs-harassed-kanpur-shopkeeper>

²⁵ <https://thewire.in/communalism/amu-students-allege-brutal-beating-by-aligarh-rail-police-2-cops-suspended>

²⁶ <https://www.siasat.com/kerala-activist-aysha-renna-lathi-charged-for-protesting-up-demolition-2347701/>

²⁷ <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/hindu-priest-vows-to-burn-asaduddin-owaisi-alive/>

²⁸ <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/hindu-priest-vows-to-burn-asaduddin-owaisi-alive/>

²⁹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/run-names-hindu-detites-panchayat-manesar-economic-boycott-muslim-businesses-8006518/>

³⁰ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/manesar-mahapanchayat-economic-boycott-of-muslim-keeping-weapons#read-more>

and strict action should be taken against them,” it read.

A Muslim family in Pratapgarh city, Uttar Pradesh (UP),³¹ claimed that shops owned by them were partially bulldozed on July 4 by the police over the inter-faith relationship of a family member with a Hindu woman. A Muslim eatery owner was arrested in Sambhal, UP, on July 5 for allegedly selling meat dishes wrapped in a newspaper³² that had images of Hindu deities printed on them, even though he had packed Rotis and not meat, in newspaper cuttings. In Mathura district, a Muslim man was assaulted³³ and forced to chant ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ by Hindu extremists. A 24-year-old woman accused two men,³⁴ including a Bharatiya Janata Party leader, of hiring her³⁵ to frame a 27-year-old Muslim businessman of “love jihad” in Kasganj district, UP.

In Karnataka’s Chitradurga district, a Muslim man named Samiullah, 38 was

stabbed³⁶ by a Hindu extremist Nutan Gowda on July 2, when the former was coming home after performing evening prayers at a local mosque. The family of the victim claimed that the incident was a hate crime. The Instagram profile of the accused Hindu youth Gowda shows that he believed in Hindutva ideology. “Jai Shri Ram, Fan of Chatrapati Shivaji, Fight for Hindutva,” his bio says.

But perhaps the most damaging, albeit overlooked narrative that has now

found credence among the Hindu right-wing media was witnessed recently in Assam, which suffered one of its worst floods in recent times. The term “flood jihad” was coined after it emerged that the embankments had been broken allegedly by ‘Muslims.’ Soon, Twitter began trending Flood Jihad. According to the BBC,³⁷ Nazir

Hussain Laskar was arrested on July 3 over accusations of “damaging public property” - more specifically, an embankment meant to protect communities from flooding. Laskar



31 <https://thewire.in/communalism/pratapgarh-muslim-family-inter-faith-relationship-hindu-muslim>

32 https://scroll.in/latest/1027611/muslim-man-arrested-in-up-for-selling-meat-items-packed-in-newspapers-with-pictures-of-hindu-deities?utm_source=social&utm_medium=FB&utm_campaign=OG&fbclid=IwAR2nnpFlh9DPs0ZzdIc-hWyhesuwkxJW_m6eAerBQfg30zUg05JBv8yVRyQ&fs=e&s=cl

33 <https://thewire.in/communalism/up-muslim-man-assaulted-forced-to-chant-bharat-mata-ki-jai-two-arrested>

34 <https://scroll.in/latest/1028939/woman-accuses-two-men-of-hiring-her-to-frame-a-muslim-businessman-of-rape-in-ups-kasganj>

35 <https://scroll.in/latest/1028939/woman-accuses-two-men-of-hiring-her-to-frame-a-muslim-businessman-of-rape-in-ups-kasganj>

36 <https://twocircles.net/2022jul06/446285.html>

37 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-62378520>

spent nearly 20 days behind bars before being released on bail. No evidence of his involvement has been found, but the social media storm around him has raged ever since. Right-wing platforms were inundated with “flood Jihad” posts on Twitter, and news channels like NewsX³⁸ and top anchors of Aaj Tak and India Today³⁹ wasted no time in turning this baseless argument into a “national issue” for debate. This, despite several reports making it amply clear that embankments are broken by locals time and again to release water. Even though the Superintendent of Police (SP) Cachar, Ramandeep Kaur, rubbished such claims



makeshift ‘temple’ in the area on July 4. Banners and flags of the organisation, along with photos of Uttar Pradesh’s chief minister Adityanath, were installed around the makeshift temple.

On July 9, members of different Hindu right-wing groups holding saffron flags in their hands while chanting ‘Jai Shri Ram’ slogans marched on the streets of New Delhi, India’s capital city. According to media reports, the event was marked with calls for anti-Muslim violence. Calling Muslims “freeloaders,” Sant Siyaram Saraswati, also a member of the VHP, told The Wire, “These people are unfaithful to the country. When



and said anyone using such terms would be acted upon as per law, it mattered little.

In Agartala, the capital city of Tripura state, a Hindu-majority state in Northeast India and under the BJP rule, the Nandan Nagar area on the outskirts of the city saw tension after Muslim residents claimed⁴⁰ that members of a Hindu rightwing group Hindu Yuva Vahini brought in a bulldozer, cleared parts of a graveyard and installed a

crores of vaccines were being given, when rations are distributed, these people will be the first in line to grab them. And then go on to damage peace and harmony in the country.”⁴¹

In Lucknow, UP, Police filed a case against unknown persons⁴² who offered namaz at the city’s newly-opened Lulu Mall on July 12. Several Muslim students who went to appear for the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) 2022 examinations in Rajasthan’s Kota and

³⁸ <https://bit.ly/3dYDZ4j>

³⁹ <https://bit.ly/3CC3hQb>

⁴⁰ <https://thewire.in/communalism/agartala-temple-hindu-yuva-vahini>

⁴¹ <https://thewire.in/communalism/hindu-right-groups-issue-warning-to-muslims-at-delhi-rally>

⁴² <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/07/15/up-police-file-fir-against-muslims-who-offered-namaz-at-lulu-mall/>

Maharashtra's Washim faced trouble for wearing a hijab.⁴³

An 18-year-old Muslim youth, who was injured in an attack by members of the Hindu right-wing group Bajrang Dal in Karnataka's Bellare succumbed to his injuries in the hospital on July 21, Thursday. In Haridwar, Uttarakhand, eight people were arrested for offering 'namaz'⁴⁴ at a weekly market.

On July 19, Aqeel Ahmed, 29, a local driver in Lakhimpur, UP, was assaulted by four men, including a district-level BJP leader, while visiting a fair in the city with his nephew, Chunnan, and one Baba Khan. Ahmed was taken to a hospital, where he eventually succumbed to his injuries.⁴⁵ Relatives and several members of the Hindu community in Nagpur, Maharashtra, have asked a widow and her two daughters to vacate their home in Kamptee after news of the trio embracing Islam a month ago came to light. Unfounded fear of mass conversion has gripped the sensitive



area, on the outskirts of the area, after the development. On July 26, six men dressed as 'seers' were beaten up by Bajrang Dal⁴⁶ extremists with sticks in Hajipur, Bihar.

In Karnataka state, after a BJP worker was murdered in Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada, a Muslim youth Mohammed Fazil was brutally murdered at Suratkal near Mangaluru⁴⁷ as a retaliation. As tensions flared in Karnataka, violence-inciting statements by Hindutva leaders have added fuel to the fire. "If that was (murder of Fazil in Mangalore) done by our people, then I'm happy. Nine heads will be pending. There must be ten heads against 1 head," reiterated the Rishikumar Swami of the Kali Mutt in Chikkamagalur, calling for



the beheading of ten Muslims to avenge the death of one Hindu.⁴⁸

Persecution of Christians

⁴³ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/muslim-girls-face-trouble-at-neet-examination-for-wearing-hijabs-1976859-2022-07-18>

⁴⁴ <https://thewire.in/government/haridwar-eight-arrested-for-offering-namaz-in-public>

⁴⁵ <https://thewire.in/government/lakhimpur-man-killed-at-fair>

⁴⁶ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/muslim-men-disguised-as-seers-beaten-by-hindutva-group-members-case-filed>

⁴⁷ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2022/jul/28/48-hours-after-bjp-workers-murder-another-youth-stabbed-near-mangaluru-dies-2481660.html>

⁴⁸ <https://www.siasat.com/9-heads-pending-karnataka-godman-incites-violence-against-muslims-2379587/>

Christians in various BJP-ruled states continue to be jailed⁴⁹ on the charges of forced conversion, according to a U.S.-based persecution watchdog, which says churches now fear they may



Christianity. Pastor V Kuriyachan, 62, and his wife Selenamma, 57, were accused of forcible conversion of nearly 1,000 tribal people.

On June 5, a bomb exploded on the premises of a Catholic school⁵³ in the Indian state of Manipur. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the bomb only damaged portions of the school building.

A pastor in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, claimed that police assaulted him⁵⁴ after being reported worshipping in a relative's house. The police officers tied pastor Pravesh Kumar to a tree and physically attacked him while abusing him with foul words at the Bijauli police outpost. He was threatened not to file a complaint, or his life would be jeopardized.

At least four Hindu right-wingers barged into a house of a Christian family⁵⁵ at Mallenu village in Chitradurga district

be implicated in a case if they conduct even small group prayers.

The homes of three Christian families⁵⁰ in Ejariguda village, Odisha⁵¹ state, were destroyed on Easter Sunday, Morning Star News reported. The families have been threatened with death if they return to the village. According to the reports, one of the three families was attacked by a mob of about 100 people. A Christian couple was arrested⁵² in the Karnataka state over allegations of illegally securing conversions to



of Karnataka on June 28 and set a Bible on fire. The house belonged to Ekantamma, a 62-year-old Christian lady. The

49 <https://www.christianpost.com/news/india-jails-30-christians-on-charges-of-forced-conversion.html>

50 <https://thealabamabaptist.org/villagers-threaten-lives-of-christian-families-destroy-their-homes/>

51 <https://thealabamabaptist.org/villagers-threaten-lives-of-christian-families-destroy-their-homes/>

52 <https://www.barnabasfund.org/us/news/christian-couple-arrested-in-karnataka-india-on-charges-of-forced-conver/>

53 <https://www.persecution.org/2022/06/12/catholic-school-bombed-india/>

54 <https://www.christianitydaily.com/articles/16268/20220620/police-india-allegedly-assault-threaten-pastor.htm>

55 <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/30/hindutva-men-barge-into-christian-familys-house-burn-bible-in-karnataka/>

assailants entered Ekantamma's house,⁵⁶ questioned those inside as to why they were holding prayers in the house, and burnt the Bible, India Today reported.

"Ekantamma, a 62-year-old lady



went to a Church in Hiriyur because she was not feeling well. She also informed her father, Rama Naik. The people from the Church went to Ekantamma's house in the evening and held prayers. When they were on their way back home, at least four men created a ruckus and asked them why they were holding prayers in the house," India Today quotes Parashurama, the SP of Chitradurga, as saying. The assailants were members of the Bajrang Dal, according to Public TV. The Hindutva men also accused the Christian family of forced religious conversion.

On July 2, Police officials in Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka raided a Christian prayer hall after a

Hindu right-wing group claimed⁵⁷ that forced religious conversions were being carried out there, The New Indian Express reported.⁵⁸

On July 10, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) falsely claimed that some Christian missionaries from⁵⁹ Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh, were trying to convert women and children, but police said they found nothing like religious conversion there.

Human Rights Abuses in Jammu and Kashmir

Mohammed Zubair's case may have garnered national attention, but the truth is, in Kashmir, journalists have always been at the receiving end of unfair treatment, especially after the rescinding of Kashmir's autonomous status in 2019. There has been a massive rise in attacks on press freedom, and journalists are being slapped with draconian anti-terror laws and arrested frequently.



⁵⁶ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/miscreants-barge-house-burn-bible-karnataka-s-chitradurga-1968282-2022-06-29>

⁵⁷ <https://scroll.in/latest/1025658/karnataka-hindutva-group-alleges-forced-conversion-at-prayer-hall-police-deny-claim>

⁵⁸ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2022/jun/06/forcible-conversions-allegeshindu-jagran-vedike-police-deny-2462238.html>

⁵⁹ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/jul/11/vhp-claims-christian-missionaries-tried-to-convert-people-in-mathura-village-cops-find-nothing-2475081.html>

Kashmiri journalist Aasif Sultan, who in 2019 was given the John Aubuchon Press Freedom award, has been in jail for the past four years only because of his journalistic work. In April 2022, authorities in Jammu and Kashmir re-arrested⁶⁰ Aasif under the 1978 Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, days after he was granted bail in a separate case. Aasif's family said that it has been most difficult for Areeba Aasif, who does not know her father well and has been forced to grow up without one.

This year, the Kashmir Press Club was also shut down by the Indian government. Sadly, Sultan's case is neither isolated nor likely to be the last of its kind. Shahid Tantray, a multimedia journalist, associated with The Caravan magazine, accused the Jammu and Kashmir Police of issuing threats and consistently harassing him and his family for more than four months⁶¹ because of his reporting. Tantray, who detailed the months of harassment in a statement he issued on June 8, says that the security forces have been after him since he visited Srinagar in January for reporting assignments commissioned by The Caravan magazine.



Also, in June, in an apparent attack on schools with Islamic affiliations, more than 300 educational institutions run by Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT), an affiliate of now banned Jamaat-e-Islami, were stopped from operating by the Jammu and Kashmir School education department. The decision will affect thousands of students and teachers.

In a shocking case, a 21-year-old Muslim Muneer Lone, who the Jammu and Kashmir Police detained for his alleged involvement in a theft case, died after⁶² the local police interrogated him.

The Police initially tried to blame the victim, saying he was under the influence of drugs.

However, the authorities suspended

five officials following public outrage and demonstrations and launched an inquiry.

One of the crucial reasons why the world has come to know about Indian authorities' excesses and human rights abuse in Kashmir is the never-ending tiring efforts of local journalists, who take huge risks daily to report the region as is. But now, the Indian government has clamped down on Kashmiri journalists

⁶⁰ <https://thewire.in/media/misuse-of-psa-press-bodies-condemn-re-arrest-of-kashmiri-journalist-aasif-sultan>

⁶¹ *issuing threats and consistently harassing him and his family for more than four months*

⁶² <https://thewire.in/rights/kashmir-21-year-old-died-because-of-torture-in-police-custody-alleges-family>

flying abroad for personal visits or professional opportunities.

On July 2, Pulitzer Prize-winning Kashmiri photojournalist Sanna Irshad Mattoo, who was invited to the international photography festival Arles Rencontre was stopped by the immigration officials⁶³ at the New Delhi airport and told she could not fly.

On July 25, Aakash Hassan, an independent journalist, was stopped from flying to the Sri Lankan capital Colombo⁶⁴ by immigration officials at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport.

The immigration officials, Hassan alleged in a series of tweets, did not provide any reason for stopping him from traveling to Colombo to cover the

ongoing political-economic crisis. After taking his passport and boarding pass, the immigration officials made him sit in a room for nearly five hours, he further alleged.

One might even argue that while the condition of minorities in India has become deplorable under the Hindu nationalist government of the BJP, the situation never changed in Kashmir. Such is the fear among the ruling party of the world seeing what is happening behind false promises in Kashmir; they are now stopping journalists from leaving the region even when they are working on projects which have nothing to do with India or Kashmir (as is the case of Hassan, who was simply going to Colombo to execute his professional duties).

⁶³ <https://article-14.com/post/indian-govt-stops-kashmiri-journalists-from-travelling-overseas-gives-no-reason--62df4f050dbda>

⁶⁴ <https://www.newsclick.in/Kashmir-Journalist-Aakash-Hassan-Barred-From-Flying-Sri-Lanka>

Recommendations

As state parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention, the international community and the Indian government are obligated to take the recent calls for genocide and mass violence against Muslims in New Delhi, Kanpur and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Manesar in Haryana, Dakshina Kannada in Karnataka, and condemn the genocidal sentiments and hold those who made the speeches responsible.

2. The police must act with complete honesty and sincerity against people accused of promoting hatred against minorities in India. Police in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka must show no bias in tackling hate crimes against religious minorities.

3. As signatories of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the 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 and Christians.

4. The increasing violence against Muslims and Christians on bogus charges of “conversion” once again stresses the need for states to repeal their “Freedom of Religion” or anti-conversion laws, which have been used to disproportionately target religious minorities and justify harassment and violence.

5. The Indian courts, the bulwark of the Indian constitution, must do much more to show that they stand by their words. Barring the favorable judgment in the case of Mohammed Zubair (for now), the Supreme Court of India has watched silently as hundreds of homes have been demolished in the name of charges that are yet to be proven in any court of law. The courts must realize that when surrounded by a fascist government and biased government agencies too eager to please those in power, the courts are the only hope of India’s minorities. The courts can do much better not to break that trust.

6. The United States Department of State should accept the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommendation to designate India as a Country for Particular Concern (CPC) for its egregious violations of human rights and religious freedoms.