

THE BRIDGE INITIATIVE

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IS A GENOCIDE OF MUSLIMS UNDERWAY IN INDIA?



PHOTO: AP

BY: MOBASHRA TAZAMAL

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The Bridge Initiative is a multi-year research project on Islamophobia housed in Georgetown University. The Bridge Initiative aims to disseminate original and accessible research, offers engaging analysis and commentary on contemporary issues, and hosts a wide repository of educational resources to inform the general public about **Islamophobia**.

SUMMARY



PHOTO: BIKAS DAS/AP

Over the past decade, India has experienced a dangerous rise in Islamophobia. There are near daily episodes of harassment, public beatings and mob assaults, destruction of property, and lynchings that have created an atmosphere of fear for the country's 200+ million Muslims. The rise in this bigotry has largely come into being with the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a right-wing Hindu nationalist party.

Hindu nationalism now dominates India. The drumbeat of hatred, discrimination, and exclusionary rhetoric is steadily raised by those in power as they seek to exclude Muslims and other non-Hindu communities from the country's civil and public sphere. Journalists and activists who call attention to the hate speech and growing violence have been targeted by the authorities as the government clamps down on free speech and political dissent. This has led many academics and experts to note that democracy is in decay in India.

Islamophobia has seeped into all sectors of Indian society through the proliferation of conspiracy theories characterizing Muslims as a menacing, nefarious threat to the Hindu population. Right-wing politicians have instrumentalized these theories to support the passage of discriminatory legislation that violates the rights of Indian Muslims, namely their right to freely practice their religion. From hijab bans to laws essentially criminalizing inter-faith marriages, Indian Muslims are navigating an environment where they are increasingly relegated to second-class citizenship.

BJP politicians and right-wing Hindu leaders have waged public campaigns to destroy mosques, Muslims homes, and businesses, with law enforcement and the judiciary often green-lighting these acts. The daily occurrences of anti-Muslim harassment, beatings, and killings are rarely met with prosecution, resulting in impunity for hate crimes. Along with

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egislative and judicial measures, there have been sporadic deadly acts of persecution that have taken place since PM Modi's rise to power, many of which have come with the direct involvement of law enforcement and/or silent approval from the ruling party.

Videos of BJP politicians and right-wing Hindu religious leaders calling on Hindus to bear arms and to kill Muslims have become a normal feature in Modi's India, where the Prime Minister has failed to condemn these voices or speak out against the rising instability and divisions within society. The inaction and appeasement by the judiciary, law enforcement, and senior levels of government has signaled to the followers of Hindutva, a far-right political ideology that advocates for Hindu supremacy, that those in power support their efforts to carry out their mission of making India a Hindu-only nation. With this, the threat of mass atrocities is growing and becoming a dangerous reality.

This report examines the situation in India utilizing Gregory Stanton's 10 stages of genocide, and finds that examples of the first 8 stages of genocide are present in India. Currently, the country is teetering at stage 8 (persecution) with the indicators of stage 9 (extermination) becoming more and more visible. The country's 200+ million Muslims are seen as an impediment to Hindu nationalists goal of remaking India as a Hindu-only nation. Islamophobia has been central to the BJP and the Hindu nationalist movement, as their goals are reliant on the subordination and dehumanization of Indian Muslims.



IS A GENOCIDE OF MUSLIMS UNDERWAY IN INDIA?

UNDER THE RULING HINDU NATIONALIST, BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP), INDIA IS EXPERIENCING DANGEROUS LEVELS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is experiencing dangerous levels of Islamophobia. Right-wing Hindu nationalism has skyrocketed in popularity as Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Hindu religious leaders openly call for India to be a Hindu-only nation. Excluded from this nation-building are millions of India's religious minorities, with the country's 200 plus million Muslims becoming the primary target of discriminatory nationalist fervor. In the past decade, India has experienced increasing polarization, near daily reports of anti-Muslim harassment and violence, and even large-scale violent episodes. All of this has occurred within an environment of a growing and steady drumbeat of daily Islamophobic rhetoric from Hindu religious leaders, right-wing media, and BJP politicians, who consistently utilize their platforms to call for the exclusion, forced expulsion, and even elimination of Indian Muslims.

Anti-Muslim hate has seeped into all segments of Indian society, with a growing number of violent episodes resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Muslims who have been targeted solely due to their religious beliefs. In the face of this unstable and dangerous environment, PM Modi and his BJP have either supported the conspiratorial anti-Muslim views of the Hindu right that have given rise to this violence, or have remained silent in the face of ever-increasing Islamophobia.

In addition to widespread mob violence targeting Muslim-owned businesses, homes, and Muslims themselves, experts have warned of a decaying of democracy as Modi's government clamps down on political dissent. Authorities have harassed, arrested, and imprisoned journalists, academics, and even comedians, who comment or report on the rampant anti-Muslim bigotry across the nation. The country's independent institutions, such as the judiciary, seem to have fallen in line with the BJP's exclusionary agenda, with courts issuing rulings in favor of discriminatory measures that curtail the civil rights and liberties of Indian Muslims.

Indian academics, journalists, and public figures have described the BJP as a fascist organization and warned of the dangers that are fast approaching, such as the ongoing efforts to undermine the country's secular foundations and sow social disharmony. Authorities have also taken measures to rewrite Indian history in an effort to align with Hindu nationalist propaganda. Over the past few years, rights organizations have called attention to the growing persecution of Indian Muslims, based on an increasing body of evidence demonstrating that some of the human rights violations in the country may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes, and incitement to commit genocide.



THE QUINT

In January 2022, Gregory Stanton, the founder of Genocide Watch, publically warned that India could very well be sprinting into a genocide of Muslims, comparing the situation to the environment in Rwanda in 1994. He drew comparisons to the current situation in India to the time period just prior to the mass violence that erupted in Rwanda, resulting in the deaths of over half a million Tutsis, or 70% of the Tutsi population. This report utilizes Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide as a rubric to investigate the current state of affairs in India. Taking into account Stanton's observations of genocide as a process, and one that is not linear, as stages may occur simultaneously, this report seeks to provide a holistic overview of the present hostile conditions in India. It will address the rising religious polarization, the popularity of Hindu nationalism, the role of right-wing mainstream and online media, the erosion of fundamental rights, and the growing efforts to alienate and criminalize the country's 200+ million Muslims.

1. CLASSIFICATION

"ALL CULTURES HAVE CATEGORIES TO DISTINGUISH PEOPLE INTO "US AND THEM" BY ETHNICITY, RACE, RELIGION, OR NATIONALITY: GERMAN AND JEW, HUTU AND TUTSI. BIPOLAR SOCIETIES THAT LACK MIXED CATEGORIES, SUCH AS RWANDA AND BURUNDI, ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO HAVE GENOCIDE. THE MAIN PREVENTIVE MEASURE AT THIS EARLY STAGE IS TO DEVELOP UNIVERSALISTIC INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSCEND ETHNIC OR RACIAL DIVISIONS, THAT ACTIVELY PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING, AND THAT PROMOTE CLASSIFICATIONS THAT TRANSCEND THE DIVISIONS. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COULD HAVE PLAYED THIS ROLE IN RWANDA, HAD IT NOT BEEN RIVEN BY THE SAME ETHNIC CLEAVAGES AS RWANDAN SOCIETY. PROMOTION OF A COMMON LANGUAGE IN COUNTRIES LIKE TANZANIA HAS ALSO PROMOTED TRANSCENDENT NATIONAL IDENTITY. THIS SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IS VITAL TO EARLY PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE." (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))

India is a pluralistic country: a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious nation made up of 1.406 billion individuals. While there are hundreds of languages and countless dialects spoken in the country, the Indian constitution recognizes 22 official languages. The country is home to 95 percent of the world's Hindu population, as Hinduism was founded in the region, in addition to millions of Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and many more. Muslims make up 14 percent, or around 200 million of the country's 1.4 billion total population.

While India's constitution defines the country as a democratic secular nation, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government seeks to restructure India into one where Indian citizenship and identity is rooted in religion, with Hindus seen as the true and real citizens of the country. Modi and his Hindu nationalist BJP, have taken several actions to carry out their mission to make India a Hindu rashtra (nation). This has included rhetoric from BJP politicians and legislation passed by the government that has amplified divisions, framing one segment of the population (Hindus) as true Indians and others (primarily Muslims) as foreign, threatening, and untrustworthy invaders.

This binary viewpoint has been used to justify discriminatory policies against the non-Hindu minority populations, with Muslims being the primary target. It has advanced Islamophobic rhetoric to the point that anti-Muslim racism has become a mainstream phenomenon. It has also meant that governing authorities remain silent in the face of Hindu nationalist mobs who harass and assault Muslims on the daily, and includes the passage of discriminatory legislation that is sowing division. Additionally, BJP politicians have renamed towns and cities along with rewriting history in an effort to erase anything associated with Islam and Muslims from the country (both past and present). To hone in and deepen divisions, visible markers or practices associated with Islam and/or Muslim identity have been marked as antithetical or even dangerous to Indian identity.

In terms of classifying anything associated with Islamic culture as contrary to Indian identity, BJP politicians and right-wing Hindu religious leaders have made efforts to rewrite history, specifically framing the Mughal rulers as an invading and oppressive force. These voices have also laid claims to historic Islamic landmarks and mosques in the country,

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arguing the centuries old structures were built atop Hindu temples and should thus be demolished in order to reconstruct the original Indian monuments. Other actions aimed at classifying true Indian identity as aligned or equal to Hinduism includes instituting school curricula that teach “Hindu scripture as historical fact.” Instead of “developing universalistic institutions and promoting tolerance and understanding,” the BJP has actively supported and inflamed communalism as part of its hinduization of India.

The Modi government’s passage of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) can rightfully be identified as policies of classification. The NRC was created in 1951 to “determine who was born in Assam and is therefore Indian,” and updated for the first time by the BJP in the state of Assam in 2019. The registry fit into the BJP’s exclusionary message, as the goal of the list was to recognize and expel illegal immigrants. As a result in 2019, 1.9 million individuals (primarily Muslims) were left off of the list rendering them stateless, despite having lived in the country for generations. Many of those deemed “illegal immigrants” are poor and/or illiterate who don’t have the formal documentation to demonstrate their citizenship. The rollout of the registry was met with criticism and complaints as many residents of Assam noted how even within their own families, some names were present on the list of citizens, while others were not. In his 2021 book, *No Land’s People*, journalist Abishek Saha investigated how the NRC process took place in Assam and concluded that the process was marred by “bias and arbitrariness.”



AFP

Along with the release of the NRC, Modi’s government passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019. Taken together, these two actions by the government are representative of structural discrimination, as they work in tandem to identify and exclude individuals (primarily Muslims) from belonging and accessing citizenship in the country. Effectively what the BJP’s amendment to the CAA did was make religion a basis for citizenship claims in the country. Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that “contrary to India’s secular constitution, the CAA, 2019 deliberately excludes Muslims and grants citizenship to non-

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Muslim irregular immigrants from the neighboring Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who arrived in India before December 31, 2014.” While the CAA provides an avenue to citizenship for non-Muslims on the NRC, it does not lend this option to Indian Muslims who have been in the country for generations. The BJP’s attempts to classify citizenship based on religion, with Muslims effectively excluded from this right, demonstrates this first stage of genocide.

Classification and sectarianism has touched on numerous facets of day-to-day life in the country – even language has been brought into this campaign of division. Under the BJP, language has been politicized and classified within the “us” vs. “them” binary, with Urdu framed as a foreign import and a Muslim language, one associated with India’s rival, the neighbouring Muslim-majority country of Pakistan.* Some BJP politicians have even gone so far as to promise to ban the language in the country.

In 2021, a famous fashion brand was forced to remove its advertisement following a backlash from right-wing Hindu groups, and members of the BJP who stated that the name of the clothing collection, “Jashn-e-Riwaaz”, a phrase that means “celebration of tradition” in Urdu, was offensive to Hinduism. In 2022, Hindu nationalists along with senior BJP officials claimed that Urdu, one of the official languages of India, was being used for nefarious purposes, including “hiding” information from Hindus. Right-wing news networks have given airtime to such sectarian allegations by amplifying conspiracy theories that characterize Indian Muslims as a threat to the country’s majority Hindu population. For example, in April 2022, *Sudarshan News* aired a segment claiming that a popular food company was using Urdu to “hide” the contents in its food packaging, intending to “deceive” Hindus “into eating food they are not allowed to consume on certain religious occasions.”

The driving forces behind the BJP’s rhetoric have been to redefine and restrict the notions of identity and citizenship to only Hindus, repeatedly describing Muslims as “foreigners,” “invaders,” “Pakistanis,” and even such dehumanizing terms as “termites.” An open letter signed by more than 100 former civil servants accused the government of being “fully complicit” in the subordination of religious minorities in the country.

*Pakistan holds a particular place of contempt within the Hindu nationalist ideology. Indian Muslims who dare voice dissent at the Modi government’s policies, or express any criticism regarding the socio-political situation of the country, are immediately deemed traitors and told to “go back to Pakistan.” Some Hindu nationalists even argue that Indian Muslims’ true religion is Hinduism, claiming that their ancestors were forcibly converted. They believe that Indian Muslims should either convert to their “true” religion of Hinduism or go to Pakistan, established as a homeland for the subcontinent’s Muslim population following the partition in 1947.

2. SYMBOLIZATION

"WE GIVE NAMES OR OTHER SYMBOLS TO THE CLASSIFICATIONS. WE NAME PEOPLE "JEWS" OR "GYPSIES," OR DISTINGUISH THEM BY COLORS OR DRESS; AND APPLY THE SYMBOLS TO MEMBERS OF GROUPS. CLASSIFICATION AND SYMBOLIZATION ARE UNIVERSALLY HUMAN AND DO NOT NECESSARILY RESULT IN GENOCIDE UNLESS THEY LEAD TO DEHUMANIZATION. WHEN COMBINED WITH HATRED, SYMBOLS MAY BE FORCED UPON UNWILLING MEMBERS OF PARIAH GROUPS: THE YELLOW STAR FOR JEWS UNDER NAZI RULE, THE BLUE SCARF FOR PEOPLE FROM THE EASTERN ZONE IN KHMER ROUGE CAMBODIA.

TO COMBAT SYMBOLIZATION, HATE SYMBOLS CAN BE LEGALLY FORBIDDEN (SWASTIKAS IN GERMANY) AS CAN HATE SPEECH. GROUP MARKING LIKE GANG CLOTHING OR TRIBAL SCARRING CAN BE OUTLAWED, AS WELL. THE PROBLEM IS THAT LEGAL LIMITATIONS WILL FAIL IF UNSUPPORTED BY POPULAR CULTURAL ENFORCEMENT. THOUGH HUTU AND TUTSI WERE FORBIDDEN WORDS IN BURUNDI UNTIL THE 1980'S, CODE WORDS REPLACED THEM. IF WIDELY SUPPORTED, HOWEVER, DENIAL OF SYMBOLIZATION CAN BE POWERFUL, AS IT WAS IN BULGARIA, WHERE THE GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO SUPPLY ENOUGH YELLOW BADGES AND AT LEAST EIGHTY PERCENT OF JEWS DID NOT WEAR THEM, DEPRIVING THE YELLOW STAR OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE AS A NAZI SYMBOL FOR JEWS." (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))

In India, the symbolization Stanton outlines has taken a different turn but carries the same intended purpose of creating a pariah group. Instead of forcing a population to take on a symbol, the authorities and local Hindu nationalist groups have sought to criminalize expressions of Muslim identity. This has resulted in classifying anything associated with Islamic culture and Muslim identity as antithetical to India and Indian identity.

For example, in 2022 Hindu nationalist organizations in the state of Karnataka launched a campaign against the hijab (headscarf), a visible expression of Muslim identity. What originally began as an issue at one college in the state, multiplied into a nationwide rallying cry sustained by Islamophobia. Despite previously having worn hijab without any issues, girls and women at state-run colleges across the state found themselves on the receiving end of this symbolization campaign, aimed at stripping them of their identity and/or forcing them out of the public space. Muslim girls and teachers who wore the hijab were denied entry to colleges on the grounds of violating the school's uniform policy, with videos circulating online of girls and women being forced to remove their hijab outside of the colleges. In response, legal complaints were lodged by a group of female students, with the case eventually reaching the Karnataka High Court. On March 15th, the Court ruled that a hijab ban was not illegal as hijab is not an "essential part of Islam." What is troubling here is that in a secular nation, it is not the role of the state to determine and issue verdicts on the essentials of a faith. In this example, the judiciary upheld and supported discrimination against individuals by denying them their right to the free expression of their religious belief. Further, the ruling against the hijab has impacted the educational opportunities of Muslim girls who are now being forced to choose between their faith and identity, and their education. Human rights organizations and activists [criticized](#) the court's decision, with Nobel peace prize winner, Malala Yousafzai [stating](#) "refusing to let girls go to school in their hijabs is horrifying" and "leaders must stop the marginalization of Muslim women."

SYMBOLIZATION



GETTY IMAGES

Further emboldened by the court's decision, Hindu nationalists have expanded their targeting of Muslim expression of faith, with calls to ban the skullcap and halal meat. In this environment, Indian Muslims have expressed fear and have taken active steps to hide their religious identity, including avoiding using the common Muslim greeting, *Assalamualaikum* (Peace be upon you) or any other Islamic phrase in crowded public spaces. Others have shortened their names or used nicknames that make them less identifiable. This discrimination is also visible in dietary habits as the consumption of beef is prohibited in many states in the country, despite India being a leading exporter of beef. Muslims have refrained from eating meat, even if it is not beef, for fear of being targeted by mobs. The fear is well-founded given lynchings of Muslims suspected of transporting/selling/consuming beef have exponentially risen under the leadership of Modi. This Muslim self-censorship is being done to protect themselves from the growing and almost daily expressions of anti-Muslim violence by mobs that have targeted individuals because of their Muslim faith and identity.

3. DISCRIMINATION

"A DOMINANT GROUP USES LAW, CUSTOM, AND POLITICAL POWER TO DENY THE RIGHTS OF OTHER GROUPS. THE POWERLESS GROUP MAY NOT BE ACCORDED FULL CIVIL RIGHTS, VOTING RIGHTS, OR EVEN CITIZENSHIP. THE DOMINANT GROUP IS DRIVEN BY AN EXCLUSIONARY IDEOLOGY THAT WOULD DEPRIVE LESS POWERFUL GROUPS OF THEIR RIGHTS. THE IDEOLOGY ADVOCATES MONOPOLIZATION OR EXPANSION OF POWER BY THE DOMINANT GROUP. IT LEGITIMIZES THE VICTIMIZATION OF WEAKER GROUPS. ADVOCATES OF EXCLUSIONARY IDEOLOGIES ARE OFTEN CHARISMATIC, EXPRESSING RESENTMENTS OF THEIR FOLLOWERS, ATTRACTING SUPPORT FROM THE MASSES. EXAMPLES INCLUDE THE NUREMBERG LAWS OF 1935 IN NAZI GERMANY, WHICH STRIPPED JEWS OF THEIR GERMAN CITIZENSHIP, AND PROHIBITED THEIR EMPLOYMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT AND BY UNIVERSITIES. DENIAL OF CITIZENSHIP TO THE ROHINGYA MUSLIM MINORITY IN BURMA IS A CURRENT EXAMPLE.

PREVENTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION MEANS FULL POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS FOR ALL GROUPS IN A SOCIETY. DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF NATIONALITY, ETHNICITY, RACE OR RELIGION SHOULD BE OUTLAWED. INDIVIDUALS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO SUE THE STATE, CORPORATIONS, AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS IF THEIR RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED." (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))

Since the 2014 [election](#) of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India (he was re-[elected](#) in 2019), the government has implemented a number of laws and policies that have disenfranchised Indian Muslims. The structural discrimination has resulted in denying Muslims their full constitutional rights and essentially rendered them second-class citizens.

The NRC and CAA, as outlined under the first stage, demonstrate the clear discrimination outlined by Stanton in this third stage as both work together to isolate Muslims and deny them of their rights. The CAA provides a path to citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees, and Christians living in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, [regardless](#) of whether "they enter the country without proper documentation or overstay their visas." It even fast-tracks citizenship [claims](#) as individuals in the listed religious groups can file "after six years of residency, down from a residency requirement of 11 out of the past 14 years in the original law." Noticeably, the CAA excludes Muslims. The NRC and CAA are designed to not only exclude Muslims from citizenship, but also

render them stateless, paving the way for the authorities to strip them of their rights and justifying their forced removals. This is visible in Assam, where in 2018, a draft of the NRC was released for the state and excluded more than four million persons from the list. A 2021 piece for *The Wire* [reported](#) that between 1 and 1.5 million left off the NRC were Hindus, and that this is "presumed to be the foremost reason that changes were made to the citizenship law, and that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019." With the passage of the CAA, these 1.5 million Hindus would be able to fast-track their citizenship applications. The final [update](#) to the Assam NRC was undertaken on August 31, 2019, and approximately 1.9 million individuals were excluded from the list, with the [majority](#) being Muslim. Assam's Muslims have [warned](#) that the government is "weaponizing citizenship to manufacture Muslims as the 'enemy within,'" as state rhetoric [frames](#) them as "illegals," "outsiders," "infiltrators," and "foreigners." Taken together, the NRC and CAA demonstrate the institutionalization of anti-Muslim discrimination in India.

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Other examples of discrimination include the BJP's occupation and re-structuring of Jammu and Kashmir. In August 2019, PM Modi revoked the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir by revoking Article 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution, stripping the state of the special status it was granted after Partition.* This action cleared the way for non-Kashmiris to buy land in the region for the first time in decades. Scholars and Human rights activists expressed fears that this move was part of the government's plans for a settler-colonial project for Hindus in Kashmir. Not only did the revocation open up doors for non-natives to permanently settle in the region, it also allowed them to hold local jobs. Further, Modi's government introduced a fast-track process through which "non-local Indians who fit certain nominal criteria could obtain domicile status in the state," resulting in a "large number of non-native Hindu Indian citizens obtaining residency in the predominantly Muslim region in a short period of time." Kashmiris have described this policy as an effort to change the demographic makeup of the state, with Hafsa Kanjwal, an assistant professor of South Asian history at Lafayette College in the U.S., stating "The intent here is to change the demographics of Kashmir from a Muslim-majority state to one that has a Hindu majority. This process could entail ethnic cleansing."

Another instance of structural discrimination has been the BJP's campaign to criminalize the hijab. Similar to campaigns in France, where politicians have described hijab as antithetical to the country's secular values, Hindu nationalists have claimed that hijab goes against India's secular foundations. However, it is important to contextualize these claims as Hindu nationalists' ultimate aim is to make India a Hindu-only nation, so the claims of secularism are being wielded in order to disenfranchise the Muslim population. Take for example when it came to the protests against the hijab ban in Karnataka, counter-protesters who supported the ban adopted visible signs of their Hindu identity, supporting saffron scarves (saffron is traditionally associated with Hinduism, and today also largely associated with the BJP and right-wing Hindu ideology). The counter-protestors weren't upholding some kind of secular ideal, they used symbolization (saffron scarves vs. hijabs) to highlight the classification of groups in Modi's India. Hindu nationalists see no contradiction or hypocrisy when it comes to their own ideological campaigns, such as making the Bhagavad Gita (one of the holy scriptures of Hinduism) part of school syllabi, which violates the secular foundation of India's constitution.

The success of the hijab ban has emboldened Hindu hardliners across the country, as right-wing groups seek to replicate the Karnataka episode across the country. The hijab ban illustrates a common theme that has arisen under the BJP government, as right-wing voices latch on to elements of faith and identity to create divisions along religious lines where they never existed before. This creation is visible in ongoing campaigns to ban the skullcap (worn by Muslims), to eliminate public prayer spaces for Muslims, and the destruction of mosques.

Following this revocation, there was a brutal crackdown in region that is already described as one of the most militarized in the world, with an additional 35,000 troops deployed, clamping down on dissent by arresting anyone that voiced dissent, expelling journalists, tourists, and pilgrims, and implementing a curfew and communications blackout.

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Mosques have become a battleground in the BJP's project to reconfigure the country along religious lines. Hindu nationalists assert that "all Islamic structures in India, like mosques and monuments, were built either on Hindu land or ancient Hindu temples," and have used this argument to support social and legal campaigns to demolish mosques. In November 2019, the Supreme Court enabled the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of the 16th century Babri Masjid, with the ruling delivering one of the BJP's electoral promises. It also reignited historical scars, as the mosque had previously been desecrated by Hindu nationalists in 1992 in the city of Ayodhya, which touched off horrific riots across the country, killing thousands of people, mostly Muslims. Similar actions to erase Islamic history in the country have occurred in the past few years. In 2021, authorities razed a 100-year-old mosque in Uttar Pradesh, and most recently Hindu hardliners claimed that a fountain at the Cyanvapi mosque is a Hindu relic and thus evidence of the existence of a temple at the site. Even the famous Taj Mahal, which isn't a mosque but was built by a Mughal emperor in memory of his wife, has not been spared.*

Campaigns to erase Islamic history and heritage in India aren't just being played out in unofficial ways, rather right-wing Hindu nationalists are utilizing state institutions such as the judiciary to institute their goals, demonstrating the very central role of the Indian authorities in the ongoing campaign of repression.

In addition to having the courts support the destruction of mosques, access to prayer space has also become increasingly difficult for Indian Muslims.



A HINDU VIGILANTE TRIES TO STOP AN IMAM FROM OFFERING PRAYERS AT SECTOR 37 IN GURUGRAM NEAR NEW DELHI [VIPIN KUMAR/HINDUSTAN TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES]

Take the city of Gurgaon right outside New Delhi as an example. Despite the local Muslim communities having used open public spaces for weekly Friday congregational prayers for years, in December of 2021, these spaces became the center of a religious battlefield. The city is notorious for having a shortage of mosques, with only an estimated 13 to cater for more than 1.5 million people, and when the community has attempted to build one, it has only been met with resistance and hostility. Local Muslims had been granted permission to use open plots of public land for outdoor prayer, but tensions grew as Hindu nationalist groups became aware of this and used it as a rallying cry. Right-wing voices alleged that Muslims were engaging in a "land jihad," an Islamophobic conspiracy theory that claims Muslims are seizing and taking over land belonging to Hindus. Some Hindu nationalist

*For Hindu nationalists and the BJP, the Mughals hold a particularly important spot in their narrative, as the historical Muslim rulers are often framed as brutal oppressors allegedly responsible for mass murder and discrimination of Hindus.

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groups engaged in provocative acts, holding their own religious events in the very spaces Muslims had routinely used for weekly prayers. In one instance, right-wing Hindus placed cow dung on the patch of land that was used by local Muslims to offer Friday prayers.

Not only have Muslims and their businesses faced harassment, violence, boycotts, and restrictions in their day-to-day operations, authorities have also bulldozed entire shops as a form of collective punishment against the community. During the holy month of Ramadan 2022, there were numerous incidents of right-wing Hindu groups walking through Muslim neighborhoods shouting hate-filled slogans, in an attempt to harass and provoke the locals, and in some areas, clashes broke out.

Despite the fighting taking place between individuals from both groups, the authorities responded by targeting the entire Muslim community, carrying out collective punishment against Muslims in the area. This involved bulldozing their homes and places of business without due process and little to no warning. The state's bulldozing of Muslim homes and businesses with complete impunity has become a regular occurrence, as most recently the authorities of Uttar Pradesh tore down the home of Muhammad Javed, a leading figure of the Muslim-led Welfare Party, whose daughter Afreen Fatima led protests against the CAA. The destruction of homes and businesses aims to drive fear into the hearts of Indian Muslims engaging in a campaign of intimidation and harassment against the community.

Muslims are reluctant to trust the authorities

when faced with harassment and violence because law enforcement has also been compromised. There have been numerous events demonstrating that the police have been complicit in and abetted the anti-Muslim attacks that have occurred over the past few years. A 2020 report on the Delhi pogroms by the Delhi Minorities Commission found that the police were filing cases against Muslim victims for the violence, and failed to take action against ruling BJP leaders who incited the mob violence. The commission found that the "entire narrative had been changed to one of violence on both sides rather than a pogrom that was in fact carried out."

Additionally, the authorities have weaponized India's anti-terror law to target Muslim activists, students, and journalists. Police have increasingly arrested and imprisoned Muslims and left-wing activists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). There was a 72 percent increase in arrests under UAPA in 2019 in comparison to 2015, and out of the 5,922 individuals arrested under the law between 2016 and 2019, only 132 were convicted, or about two percent of total arrests. The drastic rise could be tied to the 2019 amendment to UAPA, which expanded the government's ability to designate individuals as "terrorists," (prior to this only organizations could be tagged as "terrorists").

Since the BJP's coming to power in 2014, there's also been an uptick in anti-Muslim hate speech, with a 2018 study from NDTV found that "the use of hateful and divisive language by high-ranking politicians [in the past four years] has increased almost 500%." Data regarding hate crimes in India reveals that in the decade spanning 2009-2019,

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around 91 percent of all hate crimes occurred under Modi's first term in office. Another study carried out by Deepankar Basu, an economist at University of Massachusetts Amherst, "linked the massive parliamentary victory of the BJP in 2014 with a 300% increase in the level of anti-minority hate crimes."

However, many academics and rights activists have noted that even with the data at hand, many crimes go unreported and the actual count of hate speech and hate crimes is much higher than what is on record. In some cases, this is because Indian Muslims targeted by hate crimes are reluctant to report the crime to the authorities because law enforcement is involved in the crime and/or give cover to right-wing Hindu forces. Victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes don't report these incidences because they fear harassment and ostracization from their Hindu neighbors. As the family of one victim of an Islamophobic hate crime put it, "If we file a police case, the Hindus will not let us live in the village."

The increasing fear and danger has resulted in migration as Muslims in Delhi are increasingly "leaving mixed-population areas for the city's Muslim enclaves, which often lack basic amenities and are broadly stigmatized as lawless or unclean." The areas offer refuge to Muslims who are being forced to choose between their religious identity and safety, with one individual stating, "I don't have to fear being a Muslim in a ghetto. I don't have to worry about being socially boycotted."

All of this discrimination amounts to social and political isolation and disenfranchisement of a minority community. The discrimination is coming from the seats of power, leaving more than 200 Muslims extremely vulnerable, as they are targeted by social, political, and economic boycotts. The repeated harassment, threats, and the constant fear of violence from mobs and the law enforcement is all being done under the rule of the BJP, which has continuously turned a blind eye. While Modi and his government don't explicitly endorse the attacks, they rarely condemn them and the common silence has largely been interpreted by hardliners as approval.

4. DEHUMANIZATION

"ONE GROUP DENIES THE HUMANITY OF THE OTHER GROUP. MEMBERS OF IT ARE EQUATED WITH ANIMALS, VERMIN, INSECTS OR DISEASES. DEHUMANIZATION OVERCOMES THE NORMAL HUMAN REVULSION AGAINST MURDER. AT THIS STAGE, HATE PROPAGANDA IN PRINT AND ON HATE RADIOS IS USED TO VILIFY THE VICTIM GROUP. THE MAJORITY GROUP IS TAUGHT TO REGARD THE OTHER GROUP AS LESS THAN HUMAN, AND EVEN ALIEN TO THEIR SOCIETY. THEY ARE INDOCTRINATED TO BELIEVE THAT "WE ARE BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM." THE POWERLESS GROUP CAN BECOME SO DEPERSONALIZED THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY GIVEN NUMBERS RATHER THAN NAMES, AS JEWS WERE IN THE DEATH CAMPS. THEY ARE EQUATED WITH FILTH, IMPURITY, AND IMMORALITY. HATE SPEECH FILLS THE PROPAGANDA OF OFFICIAL RADIO, NEWSPAPERS, AND SPEECHES.

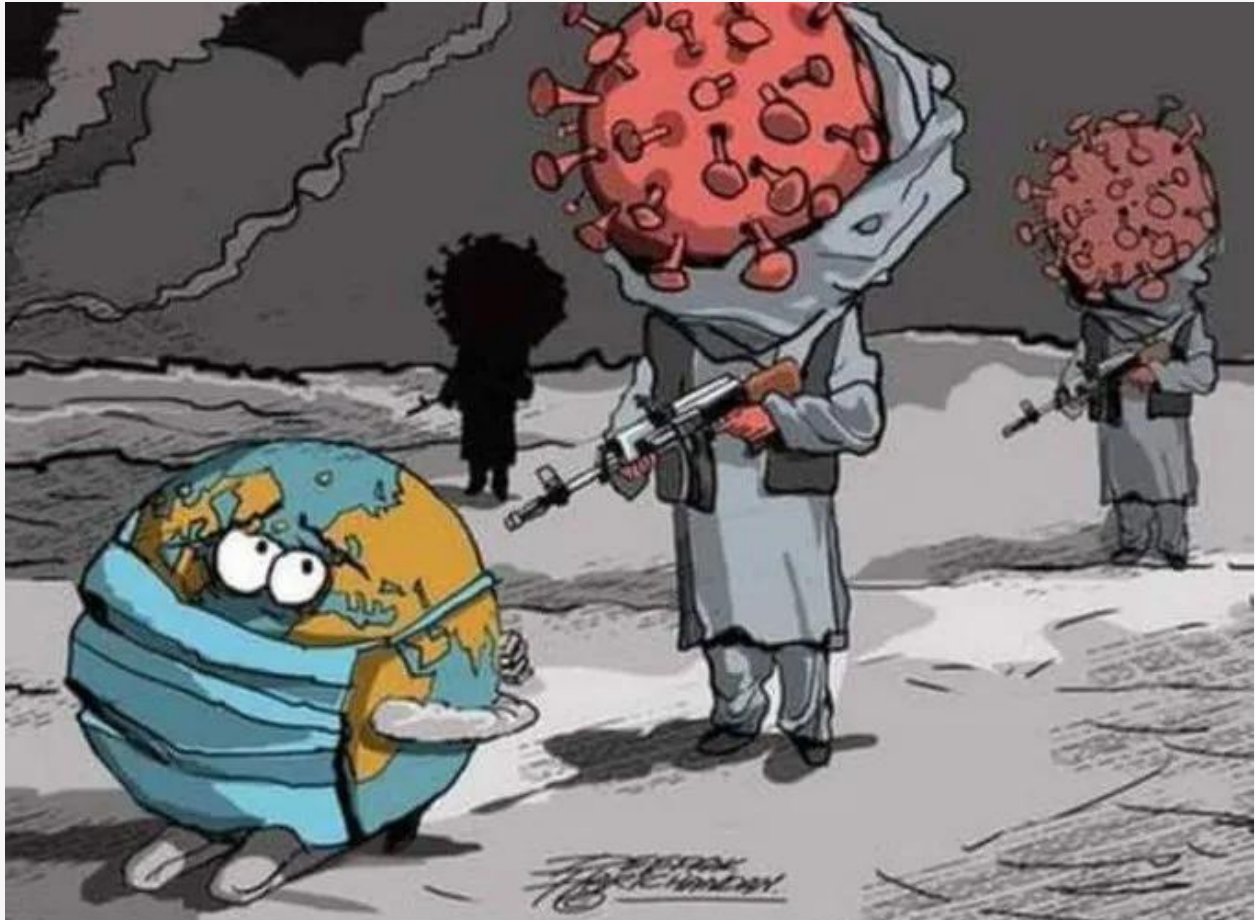
TO COMBAT DEHUMANIZATION, INCITEMENT TO GENOCIDE SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH PROTECTED SPEECH. GENOCIDAL SOCIETIES LACK CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION FOR COUNTERVAILING SPEECH, AND SHOULD BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY THAN DEMOCRACIES. LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEADERS SHOULD CONDEMN THE USE OF HATE SPEECH AND MAKE IT CULTURALLY UNACCEPTABLE. LEADERS WHO INCITE GENOCIDE SHOULD BE BANNED FROM INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND HAVE THEIR FOREIGN FINANCES FROZEN. HATE RADIO STATIONS SHOULD BE JAMMED OR SHUT DOWN, AND HATE PROPAGANDA BANNED. HATE CRIMES AND ATROCITIES SHOULD BE PROMPTLY PUNISHED." (SOURCE: GENOCIDE WATCH)

In Modi's India, BJP politicians and right-wing Hindu nationalist groups have repeatedly utilized dehumanizing terminology when talking about Indian Muslims. A 2019 speech by Amit Shah, the head of the ruling BJP, highlights the severity of this issue, as he described Muslims as "termites" and vowed to throw illegal immigrants into the Bay of Bengal. There have been numerous other incidences of dehumanization, with the government and right-wing media playing a central role in vilifying and alienating the Muslim population.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, India experienced the proliferation of conspiracy theories, especially on social media platforms. Right-wing voices online as well as mainstream media networks with massive audiences made claims about Indian Muslims purposefully spreading the deadly virus. One of the leading daily English language Indian newspapers, The Hindu,

even printed a "political cartoon with the virus dressed up in clothing traditionally worn by Muslims in the region. Where there should be a head there is instead the image of the virus, illustrating an argument that has moved from comparison to direct equivalence." Further, online users accused Indian Muslims of engaging in "#coronajihad," a "term created to describe the belief that Muslims were vectors of the virus and engaged in a sinister plot to infect others." The Islamophobic terminology was so rampant online that a report from Equality Labs found that tweets with the hashtag #CoronaJihad and #biojihad "appeared nearly 300,000 times and had been seen by approximately 165 million people on Twitter." In the digital space, conspiracy theories that Muslims were behind the spread of the novel coronavirus skyrocketed. In the broadcast media space, right-wing media channels alleged that an Islamic missionary organization was deliberately spreading the virus.

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THE HINDU

The proliferation of such dehumanizing allegations resulted in discrimination around the country as reports emerged of patients being segregated based on religion, with some hospitals even refusing to see Muslim patients. One viral video on social media revealed a doctor boldly stating, "We will treat only Hindus, not Muslims." Such scenes of discrimination during a worldwide pandemic relied on dehumanizing rhetoric and imagery aimed at characterizing the Muslim population as a threatening menace. This only added to the already growing othering, stigmatization, and criminalization of the Muslim community.

Dehumanizing hate speech has rarely been condemned by the Modi government, nor has tangible action been taken against it by the authorities. In the rare instance that there has been a response, it's been primarily due to external factors that could potentially impact the country's economy. For example, it took the administration nearly two weeks to respond following derogatory and insulting comments made by Nupur Sharma, the national spokesperson for the BJP, on national television. Protests from Indian Muslims were only met with silence from the government, and it was only after a number of Gulf countries voiced their objections to the comments that Modi's government took action. New Delhi characterized Sharma as a "fringe voice," despite her being the national spokesperson, and

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vowed to protect the rights of religious minorities. However, it's important to note that while the BJP government took action only after the Gulf countries threatened boycotts and economic consequences, domestically the authorities continued to repress any protests against the hate speech, as Indian Muslims were shot, with a number killed, and homes of prominent activists were bulldozed.

An analysis by NDTV found that since 2014, there's been a massive increase in hate speech, with Modi's BJP responsible for more than 80% of it. Much of this hate is amplified online, via the BJP's and the right-wing's sophisticated online ecosystem. India is home to over one billion people, and comprises the largest audience for social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp. The proliferation of anti-Muslim hate speech, calls for violence, and Islamophobic conspiracy theories is rampant on these platforms, but little action has been taken.

There are 328 million Facebook users in India along with 400 million WhatsApp (also owned by Facebook) users, making India the largest and most lucrative market for the company. In 2020, the Guardian reported that the ruling BJP is "Facebook's biggest advertising spender in India, paying out 46.1m rupees (£469,478) over the past 18 months." In an August 2020 article, the Wall Street Journal reported that current and former employees of Facebook had repeatedly warned about and reported Islamophobic content on the platform but the company failed to take action, with employees alleging that the company had a pattern of "favoritism" toward the BJP. Further, leaked documents obtained by the Associated Press, revealed that Meta (parent company of Facebook and WhatsApp) "identified India as one of the most at-risk countries for hate speech and has been aware of its platforms being used to stoke violence." The leaked [internal papers](#) revealed that the platform had "been selective in curbing hate speech, misinformation and inflammatory posts – particularly anti-Muslim content," in India.

The proliferation of hate speech and misinformation on social media platforms is also supported by the BJP's Information Technology Cell (IT Cell). A 2022 [investigation](#) by *The Wire* found that the party's IT cell had created a secret app to spread disinformation online, and was being [used by](#) "online operatives with links to India's BJP to target political opponents, muslims, and women journalists." The investigation [revealed](#) that the goal of the app, "Tek Fog," is to "hijack major social media and encrypted messaging platforms to amplify right-wing propaganda to the Indian public." Further, there's growing evidence that social media platforms are failing to tackle hate speech on their platforms.

The digital space in India has become home to a plethora of dehumanizing rhetoric and imagery. In a February 2022 [online](#) post, the BJP's Gujarat unit published a "cartoon depicting a group of Muslim men being hanged in the wake of Friday's court verdict that sentenced 38 people to death in the 2008 Ahmedabad blasts case." Additionally, social media platforms have become home to a range of right-wing anti-Muslim conspiracy theories, as exemplified by the "#CoronaJihad" hashtags. Additionally, there are claims about Muslims [spitting](#) in food, allegations used to justify the characterizations of Muslims

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as filthy or impure.

In an example of gendered Islamophobia, there were two cases of online harassment and bullying that would also fall under this category of dehumanization. The episodes of “Sulli deals” and “Bulli bai” highlight the increasing sexualization of and dangers faced by Indian Muslim women, especially those who are publically critical of the BJP government. In both instances, individuals later identified as Hindu, published the pictures and names of prominent Indian Muslims journalists, activists, students, etc. and “auctioned” them off on the website. The terms “Bulli” and “Sulli” are both derogatory terms used for Muslim women in local slang. The release of this hitlist drove fear into the hearts of the women who were targeted, many of whom are vocal about the increasing discrimination and authoritarian rule of the BJP-led government. Following the outcry, especially on social media, the authorities eventually took action and arrested the individuals responsible for the fake auctions. However, the fact that there have been two instances of this fake auction, and that many Indian Muslim women have repeatedly called attention to the vast amount of online abuse, harassment, and death threats they face, illustrates the prevalence and normalization of such an environment.

Indian media has been a means through which hate speech and dehumanizing rhetoric and imagery has been fed to the masses. In addition to social media platforms being used to fan the flames of anti-Muslim bigotry, mainstream media, including movies, has also played a significant role in indoctrinating the public. One example of

this is *The Kashmir Files*, a movie released in 2022 and produced by a pro-BJP film director Vivek Agnihotri, that seeks to highlight the plight of Kashmiri pandits. Critics, historians, and academics have expressed deep concern that the movie amplifies a skewed version of history and Islamophobic tropes, with one New Yorker piece stating, “to see it as anything other than a glorified exercise in stigmatization and fearmongering would be a mistake.” Instead of condemning the views the movie promotes, the ruling party subsidized it, actively promoted it, and urged the public to watch it. Following the release of the film, there were increased reports of anti-Muslim hate speech and harassment, with numerous calls for the extermination of the community. The movie has only deepened religious polarization in the country and fed fear and Islamophobia to the public.

BJP politicians have also contributed to hate speech, utilizing their powerful platforms to create discord and division. One of the most firebrand is the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state. Yogi Aditnityath, a Hindu monk who is a top leader in the BJP, has a history of anti-Muslim and discriminatory rhetoric, and under his tenure, Uttar Pradesh has experienced a number of measures aimed at furthering Hindu nationalist goals. These include the renaming of cities such as Allahabad (which is now Prayagarj), increased lynchings of Muslims suspected of transporting or consuming beef, and even the criminalization of interfaith marriage. He is not shy about his views and has often used divisive language to rile up his base. In 2019, he used pathologizing language by describing India’s Muslim League party as a “virus,” and stated that

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"anyone infected with the virus cannot survive." Further, in the lead up to the 2022 state elections, the Hindu monk stated the fight would be between "80 percent and 20 percent", referring to the state's demographic split on religion.



FACEBOOK/DEVBHOO MI RAKSHA ABHIYAN

In December 2021, there was a religious conference (with BJP politicians in attendance) that took place in the city of Haridwar where right-wing Hindu religious leaders openly called for genocide of Muslims. Yati Narsinghanad Saraswati, the priest who organized the conference, has a history of making dehumanizing and Islamophobic statements. In a 2019 video posted to Facebook, he boldly stated "I want to exterminate all Muslims and eradicate Islam from the face of the earth." It was reported that as of December 2021, the video remained on the platform and had been viewed 32 million times. In July 2022, another video showed a Hindu priest making threatening remarks to Indian Muslims, stating they must leave India, or "he himself will kill all the Jihadis, and a billion Hindus will take the law into their hands." "Jihadis," "Islamists," and a number of other terms are often utilized by Hindu nationalists and Islamophobes as code words/shorthand/slurs for Muslims.

India's political leaders, as well as a number of right-wing Hindu religious leaders with massive followings, are consistently utilizing dehumanizing speech when talking about Muslims. Such rhetoric exploits social divisions and inflames deep-rooted religious tensions.

5. ORGANIZATION

“GENOCIDE IS ALWAYS ORGANIZED, USUALLY BY THE STATE, OFTEN USING MILITIAS TO PROVIDE DENIABILITY OF STATE RESPONSIBILITY. (AN EXAMPLE IS THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT’S SUPPORT AND ARMING OF THE JANJAWEEED IN DARFUR.) SOMETIMES ORGANIZATION IS INFORMAL (HINDU MOBS LED BY LOCAL RSS MILITANTS DURING INDIAN PARTITION) OR DECENTRALIZED (JIHADIST TERRORIST GROUPS.) SPECIAL ARMY UNITS OR MILITIAS ARE OFTEN TRAINED AND ARMED. ARMS ARE PURCHASED BY STATES AND MILITIAS, OFTEN IN VIOLATION OF UN ARMS EMBARGOS, TO FACILITATE ACTS OF GENOCIDE. STATES ORGANIZE SECRET POLICE TO SPY ON, ARREST, TORTURE, AND MURDER PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF OPPOSITION TO POLITICAL LEADERS. SPECIAL TRAINING IS GIVEN TO MURDEROUS MILITIAS AND SPECIAL ARMY KILLING UNITS.

TO COMBAT THIS STAGE, MEMBERSHIP IN GENOCIDAL MILITIAS SHOULD BE OUTLAWED. THEIR LEADERS SHOULD BE DENIED VISAS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL AND THEIR FOREIGN ASSETS FROZEN. THE UN SHOULD IMPOSE ARMS EMBARGOES ON GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN GENOCIDAL MASSACRES, AND CREATE COMMISSIONS TO INVESTIGATE VIOLATIONS, AS WAS DONE IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA, AND USE NATIONAL LEGAL SYSTEMS TO PROSECUTE THOSE WHO VIOLATE SUCH EMBARGOS.” (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))



STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

While there have been numerous violent events involving Hindu mobs targeting Muslims, their neighborhoods, places of business, and houses of worship, there is also an organized element to the ongoing persecution of Muslims: the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS). A Guardian [piece](#) describes the group as “the holding company of Hindu supremacism: of Hindutva, as it’s called.” The right-wing paramilitary volunteer organization was [founded](#) in 1925, by individuals who were inspired by Mussolini and Hitler’s fascism. Its [mission](#)

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statement says the organization is "firmly rooted in genuine nationalism" and decries an "erosion of the nation's integrity in the name of secularism" and "endless appeasement of the Muslim population." In a 2020 *Guardian* piece, Samanth Subramanian wrote that "the RSS has appointed itself as both the arbiter of theological meaning and the architect of a Hindu nation-state." Today, it has at least 4 million volunteers, who swear oaths of allegiance and take part in quasi-military drills. The RSS has over 57,000 branches or *sakhas*, including a trade union wing (Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh), women's wing (Rashtriya Sevika Samiti), student wing (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), and economic wing (Swadeshi Jagaran Manch). RSS has grown in popularity due to its ground-level organization, as it provides remote areas with schools and other services. The RSS also serves as the leader of a large body of organizations called the Sangh Parivar (RSS family), and groups that fall under this umbrella include the ruling BJP, and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, whose youth wing is the Bajrang dal, a nationalist militant organization referred to as the RSS's "foot soldiers." A number of leading BJP ministers are members of the Sangh, with the most notable being PM Modi himself, who reportedly still consults with the organization when it comes to policy matters.

Over the course of the last century, the RSS has been accused of "plotting assassinations, stoking riots against minorities and acts of terrorism." Under the BJP-led government, the RSS has reached new heights of popularity and power. Its various wings have been accused of taking part in violent campaigns, including killing Muslims suspected of transporting or consuming beef,

carrying out vigilante violence targeting interfaith couples, stoking communal riots, and assaulting students at Indian universities.

The organic growth of Hindu gangs and localized branches of the RSS can partially be attributed to feeling invincible and protected by the ruling authorities. Given those in charge align with their beliefs, members of the RSS feel emboldened to carry out their agenda of creating a Hindu-first nation, especially since the authorities have a track-record of ignoring the organization's crimes. The threat of harassment and violence from localized RSS groups has been so great that numerous reports highlight the growing exodus of Muslim families from cities, as they sell their homes or just abandon them due to fear and move from mixed neighborhoods to Muslim-majority areas.

The RSS's mission is to make India a nation for Hindus first and foremost, and this goal has been embraced by Modi's BJP. The influence and success of this project is visible in the country's "national policies affecting everything from education to commerce and food."

6. POLARIZATION

"EXTREMISTS DRIVE THE GROUPS APART. HATE GROUPS BROADCAST POLARIZING PROPAGANDA. MOTIVATIONS FOR TARGETING A GROUP ARE INDOCTRINATED THROUGH MASS MEDIA. LAWS MAY FORBID INTERMARRIAGE OR SOCIAL INTERACTION. EXTREMIST TERRORISM TARGETS MODERATES, INTIMIDATING AND SILENCING THE CENTER. MODERATES FROM THE PERPETRATORS' OWN GROUP ARE MOST ABLE TO STOP GENOCIDE, SO ARE THE FIRST TO BE ARRESTED AND KILLED. LEADERS IN TARGETED GROUPS ARE THE NEXT TO BE ARRESTED AND MURDERED. THE DOMINANT GROUP PASSES EMERGENCY LAWS OR DECREES THAT GRANTS THEM TOTAL POWER OVER THE TARGETED GROUP. THE LAWS ERODE FUNDAMENTAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES. TARGETED GROUPS ARE DISARMED TO MAKE THEM INCAPABLE OF SELF-DEFENSE, AND TO ENSURE THAT THE DOMINANT GROUP HAS TOTAL CONTROL.

PREVENTION MAY MEAN SECURITY PROTECTION FOR MODERATE LEADERS OR ASSISTANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS. ASSETS OF EXTREMISTS MAY BE SEIZED, AND VISAS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DENIED TO THEM. COUPS D'ÉTAT BY EXTREMISTS SHOULD BE OPPOSED BY INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS. VIGOROUS OBJECTIONS SHOULD BE RAISED TO DISARMAMENT OF OPPOSITION GROUPS. IF NECESSARY THEY SHOULD BE ARMED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES." (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))

Classification, discrimination, and dehumanization is firmly present in India today. The narrative constructed by the ruling powers is that India is a home for Hindus and that Muslims in India are not native to the region: either they invaded or their ancestors converted from being Hindu such that today's Muslims should convert back to their "original" religion. For Hindu nationalists, Indian Muslims are a threat to the majoritarian Hindu society and are often smeared as belonging to Pakistan. This is the argument that has been used repeatedly by right-wing Hindu forces that has resulted in the increasing polarization of society.

Along with being characterized as "invaders," Indian Muslims have been constructed as "foreigners," "untrustworthy," "dirty," and "treacherous," and this characterization has given rise to countless conspiracy theories that have polarized the country. One being the '[Love Jihad](#)' [conspiracy theory](#), which has gone from online disinformation to resulting

in concrete legislation impacting inter-faith couples. The theory argues that Muslim men are engaged in a plot to lure Hindu women and forcibly convert them to Islam in order to marry them, with the ultimate aim being to overtake the Hindu population. The theory, which is immensely popular on social media platforms and has been supported by government officials, creates a fear-based environment, making Hindus believe that their community is under threat. The theory is based on Islamophobic premises, portraying Muslim men as nefarious, sexually deviant, and violent individuals preying on Hindu women, with the ultimate aim being to increase the Muslim population in the country. As a result of this theory, a number of reports have [noted](#) that interfaith couples are increasingly being targeted by [vigilante](#) groups and the authorities. In 2021, at least [two states](#) including Uttar Pradesh (India's most populous state and home to around 40 million Muslims) passed legislation banning "unlawful religious conversions" through

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marriage, lending credibility to the dangerous claims promoted by the theory. The 'Love Jihad' laws erode the fundamental civil rights and liberties of not just Indian Muslims but also Hindus who want to marry a Muslim person.

Other similar propaganda that seeks to segment society include claims that Muslim are engaging in economic jihad, thook jihad (spit Jihad), land jihad, narcotics jihad, and rice jihad. These assertions are examples of the classification and symbolization steps in the process of genocide, that also further divide society by framing one segment (Muslims) as engaging in sinister plots to overthrow the country. From this viewpoint, all Muslims are engaged in criminal behavior simply by existing and going about their day to day lives. This anti-Muslim narrative ties the word "Jihad" to a noun or verb, framing the wider community as being part of an organized, violent plot. Such efforts to polarize society are rooted in Islamophobia, as this tactic has missappropriated Islamic terminology "to create fear amongst the public, and then use the manufactured alarm to justify the institution of discriminatory policies."

Running alongside the 'Love Jihad' conspiracy theory are allegations over rising Muslim birth rates. This is India's version of the white nationalist great replacement theory, where instead of the constructed threat focusing on the demographics of minority racial groups, the focus in the south Asian country is on the birth rates of a religious group — namely Muslims. Right-wing voices and Hindu nationalists claim that Muslim birth rates are far higher than Hindu birth rates, and thus there is a plot to overthrow the majority. The aim of these claims is to raise alarm about an impending threat from a population that's already being constructed as invading and foreign. This is inflaming tensions and is being used by extremist voices to sow hatred and instability.

In the past few years, policies have been instituted to expel Muslims from Indian society, disenfranchising them socially and economically. In Karnataka, Hindu nationalist voices

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were successful in their criminalization of the hijab as colleges across the state banned the headscarf. The ensuing legal challenges dealt another blow to Muslims and human rights advocates as the courts upheld the ban. Emboldened by this course of events, BJP politicians and Hindu nationalist groups in Karnataka widened their campaign, publicly calling for the boycotting of Muslim vendors and cab drivers, and the banning of halal meat and the use of loudspeakers in mosques.

The polarizing hate-driven campaigns have caused an immeasurable amount of local upheaval and violence. In one episode, Hindu residents of a village in Uttar Pradesh assaulted a Muslim man, who recalled how the group of men attacked him and forced him to chant slogans. In an interview, the Muslim man asked, “Why were they behaving like this with me? We are from the same village. We know each other.” The incident highlights how grave the situation has become as neighbors are now turning on each other.

Indian media has played a crucial role in the polarization of the nation. In a journal article, political analyst Zainab Sikander described Indian media as a place where “Inclusiveness is shown as a weakness [and] diversity is shown as an appeasement to the minorities who dominate the majority.” One example is *Sudarshan News*, a right-wing Indian news channel that is known for manufacturing controversies, promoting Islamophobia, and inflaming communal tension. Its founder, Suresh Chavhanke, is a long time member of the RSS and BJP supporter, and was described by a 2018 piece in *The Print* as a “serial provocateur,” who “thrives on provoking Hindu, Muslim sentiments.” In 2017, he made headlines for posting a job advertisement with the news station that said Muslims can’t apply for the positions. Segments on *Sudarshan News* have been described as dispelling misinformation, making defamatory accusations against Muslims, and routinely polarizing all aspects of life such as the 2022 hysteria around the language on food packaging, which the channel’s reporter alleged was Arabic (it was Urdu) and intended to trick Hindus into consuming foods at odds with their religion’s teachings.

Another example is *Republic TV*, one of the country’s most popular and wide-watched news channels managed by another right-wing news anchor, Arnab Goswami. A 2020 *BBC* article stated that critics say viewers of the channel “are being drip-fed false information, divisive and inflammatory views, and propaganda for the Hindu nationalist BJP.” During the height of India’s first COVID-19 wave, the channel framed the pandemic as a plot by Indian Muslims to target and weaken the majority Hindu population. Goswami’s news segments characterized Indian Muslims as being responsible for the spread of the virus, tying observant Muslims to the contagion and alleging that it was a plot by the minority to target the Hindu majority. These news segments are often laced with sensationalized rhetoric and imagery, drumming up fear and creating an environment of impending danger. Goswami and other right-wing news schedules used Muslims as scapegoats to divert attention away from the BJP’s failures at handling the pandemic. These media networks injected Islamophobia into reporting on a public health crisis, inflaming tensions during a period in which unity was of the utmost importance.

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Discriminatory and polarizing rhetoric has also become a mainstay feature of the BJP. As the report has outlined in previous sections, BJP politicians have incorporated divisive and harmful language into their speeches, as anti-Muslim bigotry is invoked to energize the party's Hindu nationalist base. In 2022, one incident of polarizing rhetoric resulted in international consequences for India. During a televised debate, the BJP's national spokesperson, Nupur Sharma, made derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad, resulting in a nationwide uproar. Just as in previous incidents, the party remained silent on the matter despite vocal protests from Indian Muslims — that is until the clip went viral online. As a result, a number of Arab countries in the Gulf issued statements condemning Sharma's remarks, and there were calls for a boycott of Indian goods from residents of those countries. Nearly two weeks after the comments, the BJP, pressured by the growing international criticism, moved into action and removed Sharma from her post, describing her as a "fringe element" despite her title being the national spokesperson for the ruling party. On the global sphere, India appeared to be taking action against such divisive and hateful remarks, however, when it came to Indians in the country protesting against Sharma's remarks, the authorities responded with heavy-handed repression, primarily in the form of bulldozing the homes and businesses of Indian Muslims. The incident demonstrated that polarizing rhetoric has gone from being a tactic to a mainstay feature of the BJP's rule in India.

7. PREPARATION

"PLANS ARE MADE FOR GENOCIDAL KILLINGS. NATIONAL OR PERPETRATOR GROUP LEADERS PLAN THE "FINAL SOLUTION" TO THE JEWISH, ARMENIAN, TUTSI OR OTHER TARGETED GROUP "QUESTION." THEY OFTEN USE EUPHEMISMS TO CLOAK THEIR INTENTIONS, SUCH AS REFERRING TO THEIR GOALS AS "ETHNIC CLEANSING," "PURIFICATION," OR "COUNTER-TERRORISM." THEY BUILD ARMIES, BUY WEAPONS AND TRAIN THEIR TROOPS AND MILITIAS. THEY INDOCTRINATE THE POPULACE WITH FEAR OF THE VICTIM GROUP. LEADERS OFTEN CLAIM THAT "IF WE DON'T KILL THEM, THEY WILL KILL US," DISGUISED GENOCIDE AS SELF-DEFENSE. ACTS OF GENOCIDE ARE DISGUISED AS COUNTER-INSURGENCY IF THERE IS AN ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT OR CIVIL WAR. THERE IS A SUDDEN INCREASE IN INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC AND HATE PROPAGANDA WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF CREATING FEAR OF THE OTHER GROUP. POLITICAL PROCESSES SUCH AS PEACE ACCORDS THAT THREATEN THE TOTAL DOMINANCE OF THE GENOCIDAL GROUP OR UPCOMING ELECTIONS THAT MAY COST THEM THEIR GRIP ON TOTAL POWER MAY ACTUALLY TRIGGER GENOCIDE.

PREVENTION OF PREPARATION MAY INCLUDE ARMS EMBARGOES AND COMMISSIONS TO ENFORCE THEM. IT SHOULD INCLUDE PROSECUTION OF INCITEMENT AND CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT GENOCIDE, BOTH CRIMES UNDER ARTICLE 3 OF THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION." (SOURCE: GENOCIDE WATCH)

The report has already outlined numerous events, policies, and instances of rhetoric that can be categorized under the preparation stage. However, perhaps the clearest example of inflammatory rhetoric and hate propaganda aimed at indoctrinating the populace was the December 2021 Haridwar religious conference, during which Muslims were described as a threat to the Hindu majority and calls for mass violence justified under the claim of self-defense. At the three-day event attended by BJP politicians and far-right Hindu religious leaders aligned with the party, speakers called for mass murder, bellowing "all Hindus must pick up weapons and conduct a cleanliness drive," and "If a hundred of us become soldiers and kill two million of them [Muslims], we will be victorious." The event was organized by Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, a far-right priest with ties to the BJP, who has a history of advocating for violence against Muslims and making derogatory comments about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad.

During the conference, a BJP politician and member of the legislative assembly of Uttar Pradesh, Anand Swaroop, stated he would not "allow Muslims and Christians to celebrate their festivals in Uttarakhand since it belongs only to Hindus." Other speakers repeatedly urged the audience and all Hindus to purchase weapons to defend the religion. Swami Prabodhanand Giri,* president of the right-wing Hindu Raksha Sena organization, called on every Hindu to pick up arms and start a "cleanliness drive" like what occurred in Myanmar, referencing the military's brutal genocide of Rohingya Muslims in 2016-2017. He warned "either you prepare to die now, or get ready to kill, there's no other way." Another speaker at the conference included Suresh Chavhanke, the far-right Hindu nationalist who is the editor-in-chief of Sudarshan News. In a video from the December event, Chavhanke, who is a member of the RSS, is shown administering an oath to turn India into a Hindu-first country: "We make a resolution until our last

*In June, 2021 Swami Prabodhanand Giri had also made genocidal statements, where in a video alongside Narsinghanand, he said "we will need to clean it of jihadis. There should be treatment, management for jihadis on this earth. A few days ago someone said that in Islam, rapists are born, jihadis are born - I have been saying this for some time, there is a jihadi and a terrorist in each Islamic home." In these speeches, "Jihadi" is often used as a placeholder/shorthand for all Muslims.

PREPARATION

breath: We will make India a Hindu nation, and keep it a Hindu-only nation,” he said. “We will fight and die if required, we will kill as well.”

Nearly a month after the event, Indian authorities took action and arrested the organizer, Narsinghanand Saraswati for hate speech against Muslims, and eventually charged him for promoting “enmity between different groups on grounds of religion.” However, a couple weeks later, the far-right priest was granted bail, and despite one of the conditions of this being that he not deliver any speech which can disrupt social harmony, on April 1st, Narsinghanand again made inflammatory comments about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad during a press conference.

In addition to these very public call to arms, the plethora of conspiracy theories including the one of ‘Love Jihad’ should also be viewed as part of the preparation step, as they “indoctrinate the populace with fear of the victim group.” The growing polarization should be viewed as a step in the preparation. BJP has honored its divisive commitments from revoking article 357 to building a temple at the site of the Babri masjid. Coupled with these actions, the party has continuously amplified its divisive rhetoric, and demonization of Muslims is being preached at local, state, and national levels. In January 2022, Stanton remarked on this situation in India and stated that this is a warning sign for a genocide in India.

8. PERSECUTION

"VICTIMS ARE IDENTIFIED AND SEPARATED OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS IDENTITY. DEATH LISTS ARE DRAWN UP. IN STATE SPONSORED GENOCIDE, MEMBERS OF VICTIM GROUPS MAY BE FORCED TO WEAR IDENTIFYING SYMBOLS. THEIR PROPERTY IS OFTEN EXPROPRIATED. SOMETIMES THEY ARE EVEN SEGREGATED INTO GHETTOES, DEPORTED INTO CONCENTRATION CAMPS, OR CONFINED TO A FAMINE-STRUCK REGION AND STARVED. THEY ARE DELIBERATELY DEPRIVED OF RESOURCES SUCH AS WATER OR FOOD IN ORDER TO SLOWLY DESTROY THEM. PROGRAMS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO PREVENT PROCREATION THROUGH FORCED STERILIZATION OR ABORTIONS. CHILDREN ARE FORCIBLY TAKEN FROM THEIR PARENTS. THE VICTIM GROUP'S BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS BECOME SYSTEMATICALLY ABUSED THROUGH EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, TORTURE AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT. GENOCIDAL MASSACRES BEGIN. THEY ARE ACTS OF GENOCIDE BECAUSE THEY INTENTIONALLY DESTROY PART OF A GROUP. THE PERPETRATORS WATCH FOR WHETHER SUCH MASSACRES MEET ANY INTERNATIONAL REACTION. IF NOT, THEY REALIZE THAT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL AGAIN BE BYSTANDERS AND PERMIT ANOTHER GENOCIDE.

AT THIS STAGE, A GENOCIDE EMERGENCY MUST BE DECLARED. IF THE POLITICAL WILL OF THE GREAT POWERS, REGIONAL ALLIANCES, OR U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL OR THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY CAN BE MOBILIZED, ARMED INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION SHOULD BE PREPARED, OR HEAVY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE VICTIM GROUP TO PREPARE FOR ITS SELF-DEFENSE. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE ORGANIZED BY THE U.N. AND PRIVATE RELIEF GROUPS FOR THE INEVITABLE TIDE OF REFUGEES TO COME." (SOURCE: GENOCIDE WATCH)

The situation in India currently teeters at the persecution stage. The elements of segregation, victims identified by their religious identity, abuse of human rights, and growing danger of sporadic mass violence are all present. Additionally, there's an increasing obsession with Muslim birthrates and demographics, that seen within the context of the larger hostile environment, does not bode well for the future.

In the past few years under the rule of the BJP, India has experienced heightened levels of violence, with deadly mob attacks becoming the norm. There have also been events in which law enforcement themselves have been involved in the anti-Muslim violence. The state's response to the anti-CAA protests and involvement in the wide-scale repression against the demonstrators is one such incident that can clearly be identified as an act of persecution.

The authorities responded to the 2020 anti-

CAA peaceful protests and sit-ins with Islamophobic rhetoric and threatening language that amounts to incitement to violence. A Union Minister claimed the months-long women-led anti-CAA sit-in Shaheen Bagh was a "breeding ground for suicide bombers." BJP members denounced the protests as "hotbeds of Muslims extremism," with Yogi Aditnitya, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, responding to the protests stating, "If they won't understand words, they'll understand bullets." On February 23 2020, Kapil Mishra, one of Modi's ministers, gave a fiery speech shouting, "shoot the traitors to the nation!" Shortly after this call, a mob of Hindu nationalists terrorized Muslim-majority neighborhoods in northeast Delhi for five days, resulting in the deaths of over 50 individuals, the majority being Muslims. This was later identified by experts as a pogrom.

The February 2020 Delhi pogroms resulted in the worst communal violence the city had

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experienced since the 1984 Sikh massacre. The attack occurred as tensions were high across the country following the passage of the CAA. A subsequent fact-finding report from the Delhi Minorities Committee found that the violence erupted soon after “Kapil Mishra [BJP politician] made a short speech calling for forcefully removing anti-CAA protesters.” Following the speech, Mishra also posted a video giving an ultimatum to the police: if they didn’t remove the protesters, he and his men would. Hours after his speech, Hindu mobs “chanting nationalist slogans, armed with swords, sticks, metal pipes, and bottles filled with petrol, rampaged through several neighborhoods in northeast Delhi, killing Muslims and burning their homes, shops, mosques, and property.” The mobs burned Muslims alive in their homes, lynched them in the streets, and torched mosques and Muslim-owned shops. Following the rampage Muslims described how police officers stood passively by as the destruction was underway or participated in the rampage themselves.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

As a result at least 53 people were killed and hundreds more injured, most of them Muslim. Experts and journalists have described the violent episode as a pogrom similar to what occurred in Gujarat 2002 and Delhi in 1984. In the two years since the horrific episode, many Muslim families have moved out of the area, fearing another episode of the deadly violence.

It would be difficult to outline all of the incidences of anti-Muslim violence that have occurred under the BJP given the sheer number of attacks. However, the incidences often follow a similar pattern: Muslim victims are identified based off their clothing, names, or simply appearance, and harassed by a group of Hindus, who force the individual to pledge loyalty to the country and chant nationalist slogans, all the while the Muslim individual is being beaten (in many cases with weapons) by the group. In many cases, the victims are left in critical condition, with many succumbing to their injuries. Despite graphic evidence of these events, as perpetrators often record their attacks and post it to social media (demonstrating how emboldened and protected they feel by the authorities), rarely have

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these individuals been prosecuted. In many cases, Muslim victims and their families can identify the attackers and tell the police even in the face of threats, but the authorities do not take any action. As Human Rights Watch noted, “the failure to ensure justice for victims of communal violence in India has perpetuated further abuses against religious minorities and deepened distrust in India’s criminal justice system.” This cycle encourages more attacks as Hindu nationalists recognize that they can carry out violence against Muslims with impunity.

2022 witnessed a new symbol of persecution: the bulldozer. Throughout the year, Indian authorities utilized this machine to drive fear into the Muslim community by demolishing their homes and businesses. In some cases, this has been done in response to communal riots where Muslim have been involved in expressing their dissent at the rising hostility. The bulldozing is sporadic and holds the entire community collectively responsible for the actions of a few. Other times, the authorities have used it to remove structures (whether it be houses or businesses) they claim are illegal, or carried out demolition drives aimed at removing illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants. Under the guise of “anti-encroachment,” the BJP is sending a message to the wider Muslim community: you do not belong. Bulldozing has become a political act, a physical manifestation of Hindu nationalist aims to remove Muslims from the land.

The machinery has become a symbol of muscular Hindu nationalism. Analysts have noted that the demolitions are targeted as they’ve levelled homes and business in Muslim-dominated areas in Delhi, with some concluding that the BJP aims to evict

Muslims from the capital. The popularity of the bulldozer arose during the regional elections in Uttar Pradesh earlier this year, where the Chief Minister Adityanath made the machinery a visual part of his campaign, having bulldozers at his rally site “as a show of strength as well as defiance – to hit out at those who criticized his anti-minority policies.” This translated in the polls as “Adityanath’s popularity soared with the bulldozer symbolism earning him the moniker ‘Bulldozer Baba.’”

The bulldozer has become a symbol of hate politics and an avenue through which persecution of the Muslim community is being carried out. In April 2022, a few days after communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims occurred in Delhi’s Jahangirpuri, bulldozers rolled in and targeted Muslim homes and business, as well as a mosque. Residents noted that the bulldozer stopped when it got to the Hindu temple, lending evidence to the view that Muslims were being exclusively targeted by the authorities despite the clashes involving members of both religious groups. Another example of this targeted reprisal was the demolition of the home of a prominent Muslim family in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad before the BJP-led government changed the name in 2018). In June, Muslim residents of the city protested against the derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad made by the BJP national spokesperson. The protests turned violent leading to a crackdown by the authorities, including arbitrary arrests and detention of Muslims across the city. One individual who was arrested was Javed Mohamed, a member of the Welfare Party of India, who police alleged was the individual behind the protests. Mohamed is also the father of outspoken activist Afreen Fatima,

who led anti-CAA protests and is a vocal critic of the BJP-led government. After arresting Mohamed, the authorities bulldozed the family's home claiming that it was illegally built. However, Fatima publicly stated that the family has paid "all relevant taxes and have all our property documents in order," describing this targeting of her family's home as the latest incident of "bulldozer justice" in India. She describes this as a familiar pattern in which "the government links Muslims to grievous 'crimes' such as participating in protests, then blames them for violence, and destroys their homes." The destruction of individuals's livelihoods is to drive a chilling message to any individual who speaks out against the rising authoritarian practices of the state. This act of reprisal was meant to serve as a message to the wider community.

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Shortly after her family's home was bulldozed, Fatima wrote that being Muslim in today's India means to be "constantly humiliated, demeaned, and brutalized," noting that "during the eight years of Narendra Modi's government, they have taken a sledgehammer to our country's secular foundations by routinely finding ever newer ways of targeting us." The targeting of Indian Muslims is to "demonstrate that Muslims have no legal protection in a Hindu state"; that they are not not equal citizens.

A growing pattern of persecution also involves the provocation of Muslim communities by Hindu nationalist groups. This was what occurred in Jahangirpuri and Khargone in 2022 as Hindu groups marched through Muslim-majority areas, chanting inflammatory religious rallying cries, shouting provocative communal slogans, brandishing swords, and blaring songs calling for violence against Muslims outside mosques. In incidents where Muslims responded, the act was used as justification for heavy-handed state repression against the Muslim communities. Police and government actions following clashes between the two religious communities has disproportionately been levelled against the Muslim communities, whose property was bulldozed by the state, whereas no action/repercussion was taken against Hindus involved in the communal violence.

As these incidents have demonstrated, there is swift and extreme retribution taken by the state when Muslims are even just merely accused of committing a crime, and the demolishing of Muslims' properties has become the authorities go-to tactic. Emboldened by the BJP-led government, Hindu nationalists in local areas have come together to form

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gangs that have been terrorizing Muslims and lower-caste Indians, resulting in lynchings of dozens of Muslims. It is difficult to obtain concrete data on hate crimes in India, as “independent trackers were shut down in 2017 and 2019, and the government stopped collecting data in 2017.” A Human Rights Watch report found that between 2015 and 2018, 44 individuals (36 of them Muslims) had been killed by Hindu nationalists based on rumors and suspicions of transporting, consuming or even possessing beef. Further, another 2017 study found that since 2010, 86% of those killed in cow-related violence were Muslim, and 97% attacks occurred after Modi govt came to power. The analysis also found that about half the cow-related violence – 32 of 63 cases – were from states governed by the BJP.

A 2022 investigation conducted by *The Wire* monitored hate crimes and hate speech across six states in northern India. It found at least 89 instances of hate crimes and hate speech including right-wing groups, community activists and RSS-affiliated groups “vandalizing a church in Roorkee and a Muslim shrine in Neemuch, attacking a Muslim family for not leaving a Hindu-dominated locality in Indore, forcing a woman pillion rider to remove her hijab in Bhopal, assaulting a Muslim man and forcing him to touch the feet of a Hindutva leader (Madhu Sharma) on a train, and beating up a Muslim man, forcing him to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’, in Aligarh.”

The persecution has reached dangerous levels as the mere expression of Muslim identity can lead to a violent death in India. As Afreen Fatima summarized in her *TIME* piece, “We are not meant to assert our religious identity. We are called “radical”, or “jihadi”, if we do. We are not meant to be seen or heard, because for them, our very existence is a crime.”

9. EXTERMINATION

"BEGINS, AND QUICKLY BECOMES THE MASS KILLING LEGALLY CALLED "GENOCIDE." IT IS "EXTERMINATION" TO THE KILLERS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THEIR VICTIMS TO BE FULLY HUMAN. WHEN IT IS SPONSORED BY THE STATE, THE ARMED FORCES OFTEN WORK WITH MILITIAS TO DO THE KILLING. SOMETIMES THE GENOCIDE RESULTS IN REVENGE KILLINGS BY GROUPS AGAINST EACH OTHER, CREATING THE DOWNWARD WHIRLPOOL-LIKE CYCLE OF BILATERAL GENOCIDE (AS IN BURUNDI). ACTS OF GENOCIDE DEMONSTRATE HOW DEHUMANIZED THE VICTIMS HAVE BECOME. ALREADY DEAD BODIES ARE DISMEMBERED; RAPE IS USED AS A TOOL OF WAR TO GENETICALLY ALTER AND ERADICATE THE OTHER GROUP. DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PROPERTY IS EMPLOYED TO ANNIHILATE THE GROUP'S EXISTENCE FROM HISTORY. THE ERA OF "TOTAL WAR" BEGAN IN WORLD WAR II. FIREBOMBING DID NOT DIFFERENTIATE CIVILIANS FROM NON-COMBATANTS. THE CIVIL WARS THAT BROKE OUT AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR HAVE ALSO NOT DIFFERENTIATED CIVILIANS AND COMBATANTS. THEY RESULT IN WIDESPREAD WAR CRIMES. MASS RAPES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE BECOME A CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL MODERN GENOCIDES. ALL MEN OF FIGHTING AGE ARE MURDERED IN SOME GENOCIDES. IN TOTAL GENOCIDES ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE TARGETED GROUP ARE EXTERMINATED.

AT THIS STAGE, ONLY RAPID AND OVERWHELMING ARMED INTERVENTION CAN STOP GENOCIDE. REAL SAFE AREAS OR REFUGEE ESCAPE CORRIDORS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITH HEAVILY ARMED INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION. (AN UNSAFE "SAFE" AREA IS WORSE THAN NONE AT ALL.) THE U.N. STANDING HIGH READINESS BRIGADE, EU RAPID RESPONSE FORCE, OR REGIONAL FORCES — SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO ACT BY THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL IF THE GENOCIDE IS SMALL. FOR LARGER INTERVENTIONS, A MULTILATERAL FORCE AUTHORIZED BY THE U.N. SHOULD INTERVENE. IF THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL IS PARALYZED, REGIONAL ALLIANCES MUST ACT ANYWAY UNDER CHAPTER VIII OF THE U.N. CHARTER OR THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD AUTHORIZE ACTION UNDER THE UNITING FOR PEACE RESOLUTION GARES. 330 (1950), WHICH HAS BEEN USED 13 TIMES FOR SUCH ARMED INTERVENTION. SINCE 2005, THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT TRANSCENDS THE NARROW INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUAL NATION STATES. IF STRONG NATIONS WILL NOT PROVIDE TROOPS TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY, THEY SHOULD PROVIDE THE AIRLIFT, EQUIPMENT, AND FINANCIAL MEANS NECESSARY FOR REGIONAL STATES TO INTERVENE." (SOURCE: GENOCIDE WATCH)

India is not at the extermination stage, however as the report has outlined thus far, the groundwork is being laid for this stage to take place. If action is not taken, India appears to be headed towards episodes of mass killings.

Individuals with large platforms such as Hindu religious leader Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, who has direct connections to the ruling BJP, have openly called for the extermination of Muslims and BJP politicians have incited mass violence targeting Indian Muslims. The drumbeat of anti-Muslim bigotry and dehumanization has become commonplace in today's India.

Calls for violence and murder are framed as a defensive and a 'life or death' situation against what right-wing Hindu forces have constructed as the untrustworthy, menacing, and disloyal Muslim. In extreme cases of incitement to violence, there is a prevalence of dehumanizing terminology, specifically the use of 'jihadi' or 'mullahs' to describe all Muslims. Further, allegations about a bursting Muslim population that will overtake the

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Hindu majority, despite Muslims only making 14 percent of India's population and their actual birthrates declining, are used as justifications for action to be taken. This action includes calling on Hindu boys to forcibly marry, rape, and impregnate Muslim women in order to "correct" the demographic imbalances of India. Such calls for the use of rape to alter demographics and drive fear into the community clearly serves as a precursor to the extermination stage. The examples of threats of rape are growing and coupled with the discrimination, the dehumanizing terminology, and the impunity with which these right-wing forces operate, it's only a matter of time before individuals act on such calls.

The climate in India is at boiling point. This report has been able to provide an overview of the situation, elaborating on certain key points of turmoil, but anti-Muslim hostility and persecution is an everyday occurrence in India. Hindutva Watch, an independent research initiative that "monitors the reports of attacks on the members of minority and marginalized communities for their faith by the radicalized Hindus and the Hindutva militia groups in India," has collected hundreds of videos documenting the growing discrimination, polarization, and violence in India. On its twitter account, there are daily reports of anti-Muslim harassment and violence, calls for mass murder and genocide, and threats of Muslim expulsion from Hindu religious leaders and politicians.

One video posted by the organization features a BJP MP from Karnataka who threatened to "kick out" Muslims from his town, saying, "If you want to live in this country, you have to accept the religion,

constitution, and law of this land." Similar to many other videos, he called on Muslim citizens to prove their loyalty to the country and only then would the Hindu majority accept that they are "real citizens of India." Another video features Narsinghanand Saraswati stating that India should learn from China, specifically the CCP's declaration of Islam as a mental illness, which the country has used to justify the ongoing repression of Uyghur Muslims, which many countries have identified as a genocide. In another video, a Hindu religious leader describes in graphic and disturbing detail how Hindus should raise loud slogans, and do it in "such a way that it tears apart the womb of an anti-national woman bearing an anti-national baby." Other videos show Hindu nationalist mobs openly shouting for Muslims to be forcibly expelled from the country and/or killed. These apocalyptic calls are being made publicly almost daily in the country.

The destruction of cultural and religious property is already taking place. Currently, the primary efforts have been against mosques, as Hindutva groups call for their destruction, claiming that the mosques were built upon temples. Right-wing voices have been emboldened by the decisions of the state, namely the Supreme Court's ruling regarding the Babri Masjid, and now feel supported and protected by the authorities in their quest to remove anything associated with Islam and Muslims from the land.

10. DENIAL

"IS THE FINAL STAGE THAT LASTS THROUGHOUT AND ALWAYS FOLLOWS GENOCIDE. IT IS AMONG THE SUREST INDICATORS OF FURTHER GENOCIDAL MASSACRES. THE PERPETRATORS OF GENOCIDE DIG UP THE MASS GRAVES, BURN THE BODIES, TRY TO COVER UP THE EVIDENCE AND INTIMIDATE THE WITNESSES. THEY DENY THAT THEY COMMITTED ANY CRIMES, AND OFTEN BLAME WHAT HAPPENED ON THE VICTIMS. THEY BLOCK INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CRIMES, AND CONTINUE TO GOVERN UNTIL DRIVEN FROM POWER BY FORCE, WHEN THEY FLEE INTO EXILE. THERE THEY REMAIN WITH IMPUNITY, LIKE POL POT OR IDI AMIN, UNLESS THEY ARE CAPTURED AND A TRIBUNAL IS ESTABLISHED TO TRY THEM.

THE BEST RESPONSE TO DENIAL IS PUNISHMENT BY AN INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL OR NATIONAL COURTS. THERE THE EVIDENCE CAN BE HEARD, AND THE PERPETRATORS PUNISHED. TRIBUNALS LIKE THE YUGOSLAV, RWANDA OR SIERRA LEONE TRIBUNALS, THE TRIBUNAL TO TRY THE KHMER ROUGE IN CAMBODIA, OR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT MAY NOT DETER THE WORST GENOCIDAL KILLERS. BUT WITH THE POLITICAL WILL TO ARREST AND PROSECUTE THEM, SOME MAY BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. WHEN POSSIBLE, LOCAL PROCEEDINGS SHOULD PROVIDE FORUMS FOR HEARINGS OF THE EVIDENCE AGAINST PERPETRATORS WHO WERE NOT THE MAIN LEADERS AND PLANNERS OF A GENOCIDE, WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESTITUTION AND RECONCILIATION. THE RWANDAN GAÇAÇA TRIALS ARE ONE EXAMPLE. JUSTICE SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND THE MEDIA ABOUT THE FACTS OF A GENOCIDE, THE SUFFERING IT CAUSED ITS VICTIMS, THE MOTIVATIONS OF ITS PERPETRATORS, AND THE NEED FOR RESTORATION OF THE RIGHTS OF ITS VICTIMS." (SOURCE: [GENOCIDE WATCH](#))

At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that any element of the final stage is present in India.

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FELLOW MUSLIMS MOURN MUDDASIR KHAN, WHO DIED IN THE DELHI RIOTS. PHOTOGRAPH: ADNAN ABIDI/REUTERS

This report finds that the process of genocide of Muslims is underway in India. From classification of religious groups to the targeting and criminalization of Muslim identity, the threat of mass violence is imminent. Islamophobia is central to this process, which is occurring at both a top-down and bottom-up level, as Hindu nationalists across the country have been emboldened by the right-wing BJP-led government— both share the same goals of remaking India as a homeland exclusively for Hindus. Ultimately, genocides are political projects and take place because of decisions made by those in power. Along with Stanton's warning of an impending genocide in India, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide released a 2021 report ranking India as being at the second-highest risk of a new mass killing, noting that "Hindu nationalist-led government's systematic discrimination against the country's Muslim minority has intensified." This report has outlined how the current climate in India has the hallmarks and identifiers of the first 7 stages of genocide outlined by Stanton. The country is teetering at the persecution stage with indicators of stage 9 (extermination) becoming more and more visible.

India's secular republic is under threat as once seemingly fringe voices have infiltrated the mainstream, strengthened and supported by the BJP-led government, which drinks from the same ideological fountain as militant Hindu nationalists. This case study of India demonstrates that the BJP government has made Islamophobia, religious polarization, and communalism a central component of its policies. In effect, PM Modi and his government have stigmatized, systematically weakened, isolated, and criminalized the country's 200+

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million Muslims.

In the past few years, Indian Muslims have faced widespread political and social disenfranchisement along with economic and social boycotts; a situation which also resembles the makings of an apartheid state as communities that have previously harmoniously lived alongside one other are forced to self-segregate due to fears of riots, communal attacks, and mob violence. The Hindu nationalist government has marginalized Muslims through structural and institutional policies that have rendered them second-class citizens. This includes being denied the use of public space, government restrictions over their culinary diets and dress, violent campaigns against their places of worship, and countless other examples. The aim is to “expel all Muslim symbols from public spaces” in the country: it’s a process of erasure.

In India today, hostility against Muslims has become the norm. Anti-Muslim racism is rarely condemned, rather, it’s actively encouraged and has become a rallying cry for the BJP. It has been stoked to rile up the Hindu nationalist base, to create division, and to be used as an electoral strategy to divert attention away from the failures of the party.

Within India, the country’s institutions have largely fallen in line with the BJP’s rule. The judiciary has been compromised as cases of lynchings and targeting of inter-faith marriages continue, with little to no repercussions. Instead, in many of these cases, the burden of proof lies with the victims. Further, the greater share of anti-Muslim crimes never even make it to the courts as the victims are fearful of further attacks and do not trust law enforcement to carry out justice. This is because in many of the cases that have occurred, the police and authorities are involved, either knowing the perpetrators of the crimes, being publicly ideologically aligned with them, or taking part in the crime itself.

While he didn’t provide a reason for his resignation, the last Muslim lawmaker in the BJP resigned in July 2022, at a time when anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence has reached new heights in the country. Today, the ruling party has not a single Muslim representative among its 303 members of parliament. India is under two years away from a general election and Modi is eyeing his third term. Islamophobia has been the BJP’s ideological and political tool and there is a plethora of evidence to suggest that the demonization of Muslims will be an electoral strategy once again.

Under the BJP’s rule, the country has become an authoritarian state as it follows an exclusionary nationalistic ideology. It has cracked down on political dissent and civilian protests, used violent measures such as bulldozers to collectively punish communities, targeted journalists and activists who are calling attention to the growing repression, and has failed to protect marginalized and the most vulnerable communities from the tyranny of the majority. The mainstreaming of a militant Hindu nationalism under the BJP has also resulted in the poisoning of public discourse, where right-wing media outlets and social media trolls have inflamed communal divisions, demonizing minority communities

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(primarily Muslim), resulting in the growing polarization of society and targeted violence against Muslims.

Islamophobia is a political strategy used by politicians to galvanize their base, and it is also central to the right-wing's near daily rallying cries that are increasingly becoming death chants. Since PM Modi and his BJP were elected into office, division, hatred, violence, harassment, and instability have come to dominate life in India. The PM and his party have made division and exclusion a central component of their ruling doctrine, which seeks to redefine who does and does not rightfully belong on Indian soil. The Hindu nationalist ideology is that to be truly Indian is to be Hindu, and that Hindus should be given primacy in the country. This is what motivates the government to define Indian citizenship and identity through a religious lens. The hegemony of Hindus in India is aligned with the BJP's ideology and its goal to be a "Hindu Rashtra"- a country for Hindus first. The BJP's Hinduization of India tears at the country's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural social fabric and the country's success is reliant on the secular and democratic foundations of the country. In India today, Islamophobia goes hand in hand with Hindu nationalism. By their own words, Hindu nationalists' goals of making India a Hindu-only nation require the elimination, erasure, and/or forced expulsion of non-Hindus and non-Hindu markings in the country. Thus, a genocide of Muslims is a prerequisite for the success and completion of the BJP's Hindu nationalist project.