



**Indian American
Muslim Council**

**365 DAYS OF
HATE IN
MODI'S INDIA**

**2024 REPORT
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) is a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization established in 2002, with chapters across the United States. A 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit, IAMC is the largest advocacy and human rights organization representing the Indian Muslim diaspora.

The core mission of Indian American Muslim Council is as follows:

To defend the fundamental and civil rights of all;

To preserve the pluralistic and democratic ethos enshrined in the constitutions of the United States and the Republic of India;

To facilitate increased interfaith and inter-community understanding in the United States, with the goal of safeguarding American society and institutions from hateful ideologies responsible for violence in India;

To increase awareness about India in order to improve cultural and trade relations between the United States and the Republic of India.

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Foreword

Since assuming power in 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ruling political party - the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - have sought to realize a dangerous vision of India: one in which Hindus reign supreme and religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, are second class citizens. Modi and the BJP espouse Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism, a distinctive, authoritarian, supremacist ideology first espoused in the 20th century by admirers of Hitler and Mussolini.

The BJP is the political offshoot of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary organization modeled on 20th-century European fascist parties in Germany and Italy.¹ The RSS is the progenitor of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) and argues that Hindu Indians are superior to non-Hindus, that India must purify itself of Christian and Muslim influence, and that Christians and Muslims should not enjoy the same rights as the majority. The overwhelming volume of hate crimes in today's India stems from Hindu nationalist organizations, including the RSS and its affiliates.

The BJP continues to maintain close ties with its parent organization, the RSS, and a broad umbrella of subsidiary Hindu nationalist paramilitaries - which includes the particularly violent Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. It continues to rely on them to incite violence in contested regions during election seasons, a strategy that reliably yields votes.² BJP officials, on numerous occasions in 2023 and years past, have directly encouraged and participated in mass violence against Muslims. Guided by Hindutva, Modi and the BJP have overhauled India's laws, media, courts, and police to make life for religious minorities more dangerous, constricted, and economically precarious.

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) was founded in 2002 in the aftermath of a massive anti-Muslim pogrom presided over by Narendra Modi³ to raise awareness about declining human rights conditions in India. In our more than two decades in existence, we have grown to be the largest and most established Indian diaspora organization representing Indian Muslims, hosting regular congressional briefings, publishing extensively in the American press, and informing local, state, and federal legislation with our network.

This annual report, "365 Days of Hate in Modi's India," aims to provide legislators with the tools they need to make informed policy decisions based on knowledge of real, on-the-ground conditions in India rather than through the BJP-filtered narratives that continue to influence US discourse. The 2023 report also devotes particular focus to the Modi administration's especially brazen efforts at undermining India's constitutionally enshrined democratic norms.

1 <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/hindutva-fascism-is-threatening-the-worlds-largest-democracy/>

2 <https://policytensor.com/2013/11/21/the-great-indian-riot-machine/>

3 <https://time.com/4004261/sanjiv-bhatt-police-officer-narendra-modi-gujarat-riots-2002/>

In 2023, the Indian government suspended more than 140 politicians from parliament, including India's leading opposition figure, Rahul Gandhi. The Modi regime also continued to relentlessly persecute independent media and launched two assassination campaigns targeting overseas critics living in North America.

With these actions, the Indian government has taken decisive and disturbing steps in the direction of authoritarianism. It is clearer than ever why India deserves its downgraded status from "Free" to "Partly Free"⁴ from the internationally respected democracy watchdog Freedom House. The same should be said for V Dem's downgrading of India from Democracy to Electoral Autocracy.⁵

With interfaith marriage and conversion to Islam and Christianity criminalized in some BJP-ruled states, much of India now effectively has two sets of laws: one for the majority faith of Hindus and another for minorities. In law and in brutal practice, minorities live in a different world than the majority.

Thousands of Muslims and Christians saw their homes and places of worship bulldozed in BJP-ruled states. It is no exaggeration to say that for India's Muslims and Christians, the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion has already been destroyed.

Despite these well-publicized incidents, as well as the ongoing participation of BJP leaders in rallies urging genocidal violence against Muslims, Prime Minister Modi was greeted warmly by U.S. leaders in Washington during his state visit in June. Treated to elaborate banquets, hand-picked press coverage, and lavish praise from leading American diplomats, the U.S.' highest officials issued no public criticism of Modi's deplorable human rights record as Prime Minister.

As India's next election for prime minister looms, it will be particularly crucial to challenge false triumphalist narratives of his regime's time in office. India's internal security, human rights, and economic conditions have all drastically deteriorated under the Modi regime.

As in years past, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) urged the State Department to designate India a 'Country of Particular Concern' (CPC, its highest warning) in 2023. The pervasiveness of hate speech coming from the ruling party and the participation of its allies in India's daily hate crimes, often on a massive scale, has informed USCIRF's decision, which corroborates statements issued by Amnesty International,⁶ Human Rights Watch,⁷ Genocide Watch,⁸ and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,⁹ all of which have warned of impending genocide and/or mass atrocities in India. Nonetheless, the State Department has unfortunately not added India to the list of CPCs.

4 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india>

5 https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/human_rights/i-policy/what-democratic-backsliding-means-for-india-021023.pdf

6 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

7 <https://www.hrw.org/asia/india>

8 <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/country-report-india>

9 <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/rising-mass-atrocity-risks-in-india>

As a democratic nation upholding the principles of freedom and equality, the United States must guarantee that its strategic alliance with India involves a mutual dedication to human rights and religious freedom. Ongoing dialogue between India and the United States provides Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the State Department ample opportunities to advance human rights conditions in India.

To help inform this dialogue, the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) has released its annual report, “365 Days of Hate: 2023 in Modi’s India,” which provides timely analysis of BJP policies and their relationship to human rights conditions in India, and meticulous documentation of the state-led persecution, hate crimes, religious apartheid policies, and economic discrimination that have come to dominate everyday life in Modi’s India.

Sincerely,
Rasheed Ahmed, IAMC Executive Director

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Executive Summary

IAMC's annual report summarizes comprehensive contemporary research into the nexus between state policy and looming genocidal violence in India, with the aim of helping policymakers make informed foreign policy decisions regarding human rights in India. While there are many religious minorities in India, only Indian Muslims and Christians have been labeled as foreign by the BJP-run government, and only these two faiths are subjected to constant state-sanctioned violence, meriting the special focus dedicated to them here.

The report also explores the Modi regime's attacks on Indian democratic norms, the state of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the mass violence and discrimination Adivasis (indigenous Indians) and Dalits (caste-oppressed Indians) faced throughout 2023.

Chapter 1, Sabotaging Indian Democracy, describes the efforts of the Modi regime to undermine Indian democracy. In December 2023, the Modi regime expelled no fewer than 141 opposition politicians from the Indian parliament,¹⁰ including the single most important opposition figure in India, Rahul Gandhi.

Gandhi had been disqualified from parliament for two years under the ludicrous pretext of defamation, a charge for which he was convicted for making a joke about Modi's last name. In November, Modi also expelled opposition MP

Mahua Moitra after she had criticized his policies.¹¹ New laws expanding the Indian government's censorship capabilities, the Indian supreme court's decision to uphold the revocation of the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, and the extensive persecution of independent media signaled further encroaches on Indians' constitutionally enshrined freedoms.

The Indian government has escalated its attacks on critics at home and abroad, invoking draconian anti-terror laws domestically to arrest dissident activists and journalists and resorting to social media censorship, harassment, propaganda campaigns, and lawsuits to target critics abroad.

The UK-based BBC was also heavily targeted in 2023. In January and February of 2023, following the release of a sharply critical BBC documentary examining Modi's history of anti-minority violence, numerous students and activists were arrested for screening the BBC film. The documentary was banned and censored from all social media, and Indian BBC offices were raided by BJP authorities. The homes of journalists who work for the fiercely critical independent journalism outlet NewsClick were also targeted by intimidatory raids.¹²

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Police claim to have forged direct cooperation agreements¹³ with major social

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/19/indian-government-accused-attack-democracy-mps-suspended-modi-bjp>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/22/mahua-moitra-indian-parliament-expulsion>

¹² <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/03/media/india-newsclick-journalist-arrests-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹³ <http://theobserverpost.com/whatsapp-x-instagram-and-other-platforms-provide-free-access-to-jk-police-for-tracking-anti-national-elements-officials>

media platforms to track individuals they claim engage in “anti-national” activities, and in 2023, arrested Irfan Mehraj, founding editor of Wande Magazine, who is currently held under false terrorism charges.¹⁴

In Canada, the Indian government has been publicly sanctioned for directing an assassination plot that claimed the life of Canadian Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Then, in the United States, an Indian official paid an undercover U.S. agent to assassinate American citizen Gutrwardpant Singh, after which the Indian official was promptly arrested.¹⁵ As revealed in a recent Washington Post report, both IAMC and its partner Hindus for Human Rights have been the object of an extensive disinformation campaign led by an Indian intelligence official with ties to the ruling party. The officials’ fabricated claims about our organizations have even been distributed in the halls of Congress.¹⁶ Both of our social media accounts have been fully censored in India.

The Modi regime’s hallmark legislations, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), continue to pose existential threats to India’s Muslims, who, under these laws, can be stripped of their rights and rendered stateless with impunity. With political experts suspecting an authoritarian overhaul of the Indian constitution should Modi win the next election,¹⁷

this report argues that it is imperative to act quickly to reverse the descent of India into an outright dictatorship.

Chapter 2, Hate as Official Policy, documents the extensive involvement of high-ranking members of Modi’s political party in encouraging, orchestrating, and even directly participating in violence against Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. One example of this occurred in September 2023, when one BJP leader, Purshottam Saini, joined a mob that abducted and later beat to death a 22-year-old Muslim man.¹⁸

India’s BJP-dominated courts also revoked the suspension of BJP legislator T Raja Singh in 2023, permitting him to re-run for election even as he continued to call for killings of Muslims and the destruction of mosques in a series of hate speeches.¹⁹ BJP leader and Member of Parliament Kirodi Lal Meena delivered a hate speech referring to Muslims as demons and calling on Hindus to prepare for a war against them.²⁰

Countless other BJP politicians, including second-in-command Home Minister Amit Shah,²¹ continued espousing ludicrous anti-Muslim conspiracy theories — including “love jihad,” “land jihad,” and “fertilizer jihad” — which have motivated violent attacks on Muslims on countless occasions.²² According to a report in Bloomberg from earlier in 2023, the majority of hate speech in India is now

¹⁴ <http://justiceforall.org/free-kashmir/irfan-mehraj>

¹⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/29/nyregion/sikh-assassination-plot-charges-india.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/10/india-the-disinfo-lab-discredit-critics/>

¹⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/defaultinterstitial.cms>

¹⁸ <http://maktoobmedia.com/latest-news/muslim-youth-succumbed-to-injuries-due-to-hate-crime-in-rajasthan>

¹⁹ <https://thewire.in/communalism/bjp-mla-raja-singh-burqa-women>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1709807005282525279?s=20>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1725024145031717281>

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/21/they-cut-him-into-pieces-indias-love-jihad-conspiracy-theory-turns-lethal>

linked to Prime Minister Modi's political party.²³

Modi's BJP continues to maintain close relationships with a broad array of violent paramilitaries which kill Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities hundreds of times per year, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. In addition to enjoying the patronage of the BJP, all these organizations have sister chapters in the United States, including the particularly violent Vishwa Hindu Parishad.²⁴

BJP authorities also continued to bulldoze the homes and religious sites of Muslims and Christians en masse to dispossess and intimidate them. In BJP-ruled Haryana, state authorities bulldozed more than 1,200 Muslim-owned structures following sectarian clashes instigated by Hindu nationalist paramilitary groups.²⁵

BJP officials also demolished churches throughout Manipur²⁶ under the false pretense of them being illegal constructions. In February, in Jammu and Kashmir, numerous homes were demolished without giving their occupants prior notice.

In BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, authorities arrested Muslims and Christians in significant numbers under laws that ban religious conversions. Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh BJP state secretary Prabal Pratap Singh Judev carried out a mass conver-

sion campaign, simultaneously converting 1,100 Christians who were supposedly "victims of conversion" to Hinduism in a single ceremony.²⁷ The cumulative effect of these policies is to literally criminalize the practice of minority faiths and institutionalize the faith of the majority.

Modi's personal failure to comment on, much less contain the genocidal violence that swept India's northern state of Manipur in March of 2023 forms a vital part of his regime's broader pattern of encouraging sectarian conflict. The violence in Manipur saw some of the worst orchestrated attacks of sexual violence in recent Indian history, with minority Kuki women paraded through the streets naked amidst calls for gang rape.²⁸

Despite witnessing these land disputes devolve into fiercely anti-minority and, at times, anti-Christian warfare in his own territories, for more than three months, Modi did not comment on or even acknowledge the conflict, which has already displaced more than 70,000 people and resulted in hundreds of deaths.²⁹

Chapter 3, Corruption at the Highest Level, Economic Destruction for All, describes the Modi regime's failure to prosecute or investigate what some observers have called the "largest corporate con in history" — the Adani group's \$218 billion financial fraud. The failure appears intentional, and critics allege

²³ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-25/modi-s-party-linked-with-most-hate-speech-in-india-report-finds#xj4y7vzkg>

²⁴ <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/12/1/23978677/india-hindu-nationalism-ideology-narendra-modi-american-problem-rashed-ahmed>

²⁵ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/haryana-govts-demolition-drives-in-nuh-leave-over-1200-structures-owned-by-muslims-razed-in-just-five-days/>

²⁶ <http://thewire.in/communalism/three-churches-demolished-in-bjp-ruled-manipur-for-illegal-construction-reports>

²⁷ <http://sabrangindia.in/article/chhattisgarh-1100-christians-converted-hinduism-ghar-wapsi-ceremony-bjp-sec>

²⁸ <https://scroll.in/article/1052938/video-shows-kuki-women-being-paraded-naked-by-a-mob-manipur-police-confirm-fir-filed>

²⁹ <https://time.com/6293988/modi-silence-manipur-india/>

that it is likely a product of Modi's closeness to the Adani family, one of the greatest beneficiaries of Indian government contracts.³⁰

This section also discusses how, at a state level, BJP-led governments continue to make it harder for Muslims to do business. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, BJP governments have enforced or requested the closure of Muslim shops, going so far as to introduce a statewide ban on the sale of halal products in Uttar Pradesh.³¹

In Telangana, the second highest ranking Indian politician, Union Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah, pledged to eliminate affirmative action and job hiring quotas for Muslims should the BJP win elections.³²

For years, Indian Muslims have experienced the lowest economic attainment of any demographic, and with the BJP's nearly 40% budget cuts to the department of minority affairs in 2023, India's largest religious minority—an estimated 200 million people—can expect further deprivations in the coming year.³³

Chapter 4, Jammu and Kashmir, details the increasingly draconian methods utilized by the Modi regime to take over the Muslim-majority region, whose autonomy is guaranteed in the Indian constitution. The Supreme Court's 2023 decision to uphold the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which provided the region with semi-autonomy, has dealt a death blow to Kashmiris' demo-

cratic rights.³⁴ Currently, the region continues to be run by the administrators appointed by the central government, who routinely deploy authoritarian tactics to control the resident population.

The Modi regime's 2023 rearmament of Village Defense Councils also poses a particularly substantial threat to the lives of Kashmiris, as previous iterations of this paramilitary group were cited for extensive human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, rape, and arson. Increasing imprisonment of activists, journalists, and lawyers; increased surveillance; imposed demography change; Internet shutdowns; and persecutions of Kashmiris in and outside of the contested territory also continue to characterize the Modi regime's authoritarian dealings with the territory.

Chapters 5 and 6, on Adivasis and Dalits, respectively, discuss the ongoing threats to two of India's most historically oppressed communities. In 2023, Adivasis (indigenous Indians) continued to deal with government-sanctioned violent expropriation of ancestral lands. Pursuing a regime of short-sighted gains, the Indian government has threatened to displace the entire Rayagada Adivasi community in Odisha to make way for mining companies attempting to seize village land and extract Bauxite.

These same mining companies have reportedly bribed local BJP party officials. BJP officials are also seeking to strip Muslim and Christian Adivasis in Mani-

³⁰ <https://energy.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/news/renewable/adanis-links-with-pm-modi-have-ensured-no-action-against-business-group-cpim/103249732>

³¹ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/up-government-bans-halal-certified-food-products/>

³² <http://scroll.in/latest/1047887/amit-shah-vows-to-scrap-muslim-quota-in-telangana-if-bjp-comes-to-power>

³³ <https://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/budget-2023-funds-for-minority-schemes-slashed-allocation-reduced-38-than-last-year/article66459232.ece>

³⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-67634689>

pur of their government-guaranteed benefits and affirmative action entitlements.

Dalits and Adivasis, in particular women from both groups, continued to face degrading, dehumanizing violence as a result of their social status. 2023 saw several instances of Dalits and Adivasis being brutally assaulted and then urinated on by their attackers. Crimes against Dalits increased from 50,744 in 2021 to 57,428 in 2022 (the last year when data was avail-

able) and from 8,625 in 2021 to 10,064 in 2022 for Adivasis.

Chapter 7, Recommendations, includes a list of concrete steps, proposals, and policies that the U.S. State Department can take right now to address India's declining human rights conditions and how the Indian Union government can reverse the declines ushered in by the Modi regime.

Chapter 1: Sabotaging Indian Democracy

Expelling Legislators

A cornerstone of any functioning democracy is a strong and effective opposition. The expulsion of opposition parties and politicians has preceded descents into authoritarianism throughout history: in Weimar Germany, Russia, North Korea, and dictatorship-era Brazil, among many other nations. In 2023, the Modi regime followed in the footsteps of these current or formerly authoritarian countries by expelling more than 140 members from parliament, beginning most significantly with the expulsion of the member of parliament (MP) Rahul Gandhi.



As the former head of the Indian National Congress and a fierce critic of Narendra Modi, Gandhi led the largest opposition party in India. In March 2023, the Modi administration took the unprecedented step of expelling Gandhi from parliament in retaliation for a trivial joke the former MP made in a 2019 speech. At the

time, Gandhi had mockingly asked, “Why do all thieves have Modi as their surname?” in reference to a fugitive Indian businessman, a cricket executive banned from the Indian Premier League, and the prime minister, all of whom have the same last name.³⁵

Gandhi was initially charged with defamation and two years of imprisonment for his remarks, which would have excluded him from parliament long enough to impede him from contesting the upcoming 2024 election. But this patently political attack was widely decried, and in August 2023, the Supreme Court of India reversed the decision of the lower court, and Gandhi was reinstated in parliament.³⁶

Political analysts speculate that Gandhi’s expulsion from parliament had been motivated by a desire to silence his demand³⁷ that the Indian government investigate PM Modi’s ties to the Adani Group, an Indian business group closely affiliated with Modi. This group allegedly conducted a \$218 billion financial fraud scheme in 2023.

The nakedly anti-democratic reprisal against MP Gandhi was followed by the expulsion from parliament of Mahua Moitra, of the Trinamool Congress opposition party, in December 2023. Another outspoken critic of the Modi regime, Moitra had publicly identified “seven signs of fascism” present in the Modi’s regime, accusing the prime minister of corrupting India’s judiciary, eliminating the free press, disseminating conspiracy theories, and attacking Muslims through discriminatory legislation. Like Gandhi,

³⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/india-rahul-gandhi-supreme-court-ae85dd49eced0ba4546bbb4dbe8fe0e0>

³⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/india-rahul-gandhi-return-parliament-top-court-suspends-conviction-rcna98232>

³⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/22/mahua-moitra-indian-parliament-expulsion>

she had also publicly called for investigations into the ties between Narendra Modi and the Adani regime.

Expelled from parliament under sham pretexts stemming from a custody battle over a dog between her and her ex-husband, Moitra was found guilty in an Indian ethics court without being given a chance to defend herself. Following the ethics court decision, the BJP-dominated parliament voted to expel her from office, also in a session where she was not allowed to speak.³⁸



Finally, in mid-December, the Indian government suspended 143 opposition MPs for having hosted a protest calling for greater security in Indian parliament facilities. Their protest called attention to lax protocols in the facility after intruders had entered with gas weapons. It was the highest number of MPs ever suspended in India.

With nearly a quarter of elected legislators absent, representing nearly 140 million voters, the BJP-ruled parliament nonetheless continued to pass bills in the

absence of any opposition, a blatant violation of democracy.³⁹

Draconian Censorship Laws and Internet Shutdowns

In 2023, India passed a suite of disturbing new laws substantially expanding its censorship capabilities Sabotaging and further undermining Indian citizens' constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of press and speech. India's Telecommunications Bill of 2023, the draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill of 2023, and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 collectively empower the Indian government to remove articles and videos from independent social media, newspapers, and TV outlets at will.⁴⁰



The new telecom bill is considered particularly authoritarian, with some critics understanding it as enabling the Indian government to override WhatsApp's robust encryption software, intercept messages sent between peers, and even block and remove messages in private groups so long as they meet the vague and capacious definition of "inflaming tensions."⁴¹

³⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/22/mahua-moitra-indian-parliament-expulsion>

³⁹ <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/20/1220648793/india-parliament-legislators-suspended>

⁴⁰ <https://thewire.in/government/telecom-broadcasting-data-protection-bill-digipub>

⁴¹ <https://thewire.in/government/telecom-broadcasting-data-protection-bill-digipub>

The BJP's creation of an internal government fact-checking unit, empowered to flag and remove articles labeled as fake news, was also greeted with intense criticism from press freedom watchdogs.⁴²

In 2023, India continued to lead the world in Internet shutdowns,⁴³ routinely shutting down Internet access for tens of millions of people, particularly those living in the semi-autonomous territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the north Indian state of Manipur, the latter of which was inflamed with ethnic violence.

In Manipur, the Indian government shut down Internet services for a punishing 200 days, impeding residents already living in a state of crisis from accessing vital news, rendering hospitals unfit to serve patients, and banks incapable of serving customers. Online workers and those who must rely on the Internet to access contract work saw their incomes plummet and shut down businesses. Without the Internet, many of the worst atrocities committed against the state's sizable Kuki minority population were hidden from public view.⁴⁴

In some regions, Internet shutdowns have also prevented India's poorest residents from accessing rations and government-guaranteed jobs, which require electronic identification verification.⁴⁵

The Internet was also shut down a total of 10 times in Jammu and Kashmir, a region that has experienced 428 shutdowns over a 10-year period, more than

anywhere else in the world. The ongoing deployment of this technology has devastated Jammu and Kashmir's economy and prevented its school system from functioning for remote students.⁴⁶

Attacks on the Free Press

The Modi regime's attacks on the free press reached such extremes in 2023 that Reporters Without Borders lowered India's free press ranking below that of Afghanistan in its annual report.⁴⁷



Contributing to this demotion was the Indian government's aggressive censorship of the BBC documentary "India: The Modi Question" beginning in January of last year. The documentary re-examines Narendra Modi's crucial role in enabling and organizing a massive anti-Muslim pogrom in 2002 when more than 2,000 predominantly Muslim Indians were killed by Hindu nationalist mobs.⁴⁸ Describing the findings of a previously sealed UK government report, the documentary recounts an abundance of evidence gathered indicating how Modi,

⁴² <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-editors-decry-government-move-police-online-news-2023-04-07/>

⁴³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/25/a-tool-of-political-control-how-india-became-the-world-leader-in-Internet-black-outs>

⁴⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/25/a-tool-of-political-control-how-india-became-the-world-leader-in-Internet-black-outs>

⁴⁵ <https://thewire.in/rights/india-Internet-shutdowns-hurt-its-vulnerable-communities-digital-india>

⁴⁶ <https://www.dw.com/en/kashmir-lockdowns-hurt-students/a-56904725>

⁴⁷ <https://rsf.org/en/country/india>

⁴⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/india-gujarat-riots-2002-b2472109.html>

then serving as chief minister of Gujarat state, ordered police to stand down and “let Hindus vent their anger” against Muslims.⁴⁹

As soon as it was released in January, the Modi regime acted swiftly to suppress the film, declaring a nationwide emergency and ordering it removed from all social media sites, including YouTube and X (formerly known as Twitter).⁵⁰ State Police in several BJP-ruled territories also arrested students en-masse who attempted to screen the film.⁵¹ Indian government authorities later raided local BBC offices in an apparent effort to intimidate staff and seek retribution for the release of the critical documentary.⁵²

Invoking the BJP-created Unlawful Activities Protection Act (UAPA), Indian authorities also arrested and imprisoned Prabir Purkayastha, the 76-year-old founder of the independent media outlet NewsClick, in October of 2023. Several other NewsClick journalists were also arrested in the latest sweep, their phones and computers confiscated.⁵³

Commenting on the NewsClick raids and the use of the UAPA to target media, Amnesty International wrote:

The UAPA is repeatedly weaponized by Indian authorities to intimidate, harass journalists, human rights defenders and activists, violating their

*rights of freedom, of expression and association. Its overbroad and vague definitions of ‘terrorist acts’ and other provisions are weaponized to violate fair trial rights and other human rights with impunity... In the absence of a robust data protection law in India, the confiscation of phones and laptops of the NewsClick journalists also raises grave concerns of targeted digital surveillance by the Indian government. The grave attacks on human rights must stop.*⁵⁴

There are currently seven journalists imprisoned in India today, with a majority of those in Kashmir.⁵⁵ With the aim of silencing all dissent, the Jammu and Kashmir Police claim to have forged direct cooperation agreements⁵⁶ with major social media platforms to track individuals they claim engage in “anti-national” activities, and in 2023, arrested Irfan Mehraj, founding editor of Wande Magazine, who is currently being held under false terrorism charges.⁵⁷

Also in 2023, Aslah Kayyalakkath, the founding editor of Maktoob Media, was arrested and interrogated after he had reported a story alleging anti-Muslim bias by the Kerala Police.⁵⁸

Reporting in the Washington Post from earlier in 2023 also revealed how the Indian government polices the largest social media organizations. The Modi

49 <https://time.com/4004261/sanjiv-bhatt-police-officer-narendra-modi-gujarat-riots-2002/>

50 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2023/02/13/youtube-twitter-blocking-modi-bbc-documentary-threatens-democracy/11126933002/?gnt-cfr=1>

51 <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/defiant-indian-students-hold-more-screenings-bbc-documentary-modi-2023-01-25/>

52 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/14/bbc-offices-india-raided-tax-officials-modi-documentary-fallout>

53 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/3/india-police-raid-homes-of-newsclick-journalists-in-illegal-funding-probe>

54 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/india-arrests-and-raids-at-newsclick-signals-attack-on-media-critical-of-the-government/>

55 <https://thewire.in/media/16-indian-journalists-have-been-charged-under-uapa-7-are-currently-behind-bars>

56 <http://theobserverpost.com/whatsapp-x-instagram-and-other-platforms-provide-free-access-to-jk-police-for-tracking-anti-national-elements-officials>

57 <http://justiceforall.org/free-kashmir/irfan-mehraj>

58 <https://www.siasat.com/maktoob-media-editor-summoned-by-kerala-police-2888275/>

regime threatened X’s managing partner in India with arrest and imprisonment in 2021; forced “Twitter to hire specific individual(s) who were government agents;” and took the company to court for refusing to comply with censorship requests. “Silicon Valley firms that were at times defiant are now far more accepting of Indian government dictates to censor material, in particular criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP),” the Post reported.⁵⁹

In addition to targeting social media and independent press organizations, the Indian government continued to doggedly pursue human rights groups in 2023. Using tactics similar to those deployed against NewsClick, the Indian government revoked Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), the ability to fundraise abroad for one of its most prominent think tanks, the Centre for Policy Research. By cutting India-based NGOs from fundraising abroad, the Modi regime has shut down thousands of organizations since assuming power.⁶⁰

Erosion of Judicial Independence

In previous years, the Modi government and the BJP successfully maneuvered to assure that lower and mid-level courts passed judgements favorable to their policies, using them to acquit political allies implicated in violent crimes, fast-track policies permitting states to destroy Muslim and Christian owned-properties, and selectively appoint judges aligned with the Hindu Nationalist agenda.

In the book *Modi’s India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*, Christophe Jaffrelot, a leading scholar on Hindu nationalism, has shown how the Modi regime refused appointments to those who had previously challenged its policies, including the judges K.M. Joseph, Basharat Ali Khan, Mohammad Mansoor, Jayant Patel, Akil Kureshi, and Ramendra Jain. Judges who legally should have become Chief Judge in various high courts were also routinely transferred to different courts, lowering their standing, in violation of Article 222 of the Indian constitution.⁶¹

Previously a bastion of independence and a bulwark against the abuses of the lower courts, now even the Supreme Court of India has fallen under sway of the Modi regime.



In 2023, the Supreme Court decided to uphold Modi’s revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution that guaranteed semi-autonomy of Kashmir. In the Supreme Court’s words, this measure represented, “a culmination of the process of integration [of Kashmir with the

⁵⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/11/08/india-twitter-online-censorship/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/18/india-should-stop-using-abusive-foreign-funding-law>

⁶¹ <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/india-s-justice-system-is-no-longer-independent-part-ii>

rest of India] and, as such, a valid exercise of power,” a ludicrous defense of a patently un-democratic attack.⁶²

Having refused to protect the constitutional rights of native Kashmiris, the Supreme Court also failed to hear the hundreds of petitions filed by Kashmiris held in patently unconstitutional “preventative detention” during a period of mass protest. State authorities detained nearly 13,000 people in the region without a trial in order to silence dissent following the revocation of Article 370.⁶³

The Supreme Court similarly failed to try nine Muslims falsely accused of terrorism in relation to the anti-Muslim pogroms which took place in Delhi in 2020. As a result, eight men and one woman have languished in jail for three years in blatant violation of their right to life and liberty, and their right to a speedy trial. The individuals were charged under India’s draconian Unlawful Activities Protection Act for allegedly instigating the communal Delhi riot, an incident that involved the participation of thousands and overwhelmingly resulted in Muslim deaths.⁶⁴

Accusations of assigning cases to ruling-party-aligned justices have plagued the court since Modi assumed power. Though the court is procedurally required to assign certain cases to justices of greater seniority, numerous cases of extraordinary national import have been assigned to lower-ranking BJP-aligned Justice Bela M Trivedi.

Among the cases reassigned to her are the bail hearing for one of India’s most prominent student activists, Umair Khalid, who has been refused a court date for three years in violation of his constitutional rights;⁶⁵ a skill development scam of which former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and BJP-aligned politician Chandrababu Naidu stands accused.⁶⁶

The Supreme Court had also previously been complicit in developing and implementing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam that requires residents of the region to provide documentation to prove citizenship, or otherwise run the risk of denaturalization and deportation. Under the NRC, thousands of Assamese, predominantly Muslims, have already been stripped of their citizenship.⁶⁷

The courts introduced the usage of “sealed covers” to prevent the public from accessing the information justices used to inform their rulings on citizenship cases.⁶⁸ They have thereby prevented citizens from knowing what information has led to their deportation.

The Supreme Court also displays deeply worrying signs of corruption concerning the investigation of allegations launched at the Adani Group, a multi-billion-dollar fraud case that investigators have called “the largest corporate con in history.”⁶⁹ Gautam Adani, previously the world’s

62 https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/12/27/in-india-narendra-modi-s-grip-on-the-supreme-court_6378593_4.html

63 <https://theprint.in/judiciary/99-habeas-corporus-pleas-filed-in-jk-since-article-370-move-are-pending-hc-bar-tells-cji/450281/>

64 <https://article-14.com/post/delayed-justice-alleged-violations-of-constitutional-rights-in-quest-of-9-delhi-riots-accused-for-bail-65825a8f3c539>

65 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-67980484>

<https://article-14.com/post/2023-the-year-imprisoned-political-activist-umar-khalid-was-not-heard-by-the-supreme-court--65791f597e-fad>

66 <https://article-14.com/post/contrary-to-sc-s-rules-of-assignment-at-least-8-politically-sensitive-cases-moved-to-one-judge-in-4-months-65713ae124602>

67 <https://thewire.in/law/chief-justice-ranjan-gogoi-legacy>

68 <https://thewire.in/law/chief-justice-ranjan-gogoi-legacy>

69 <https://qz.com/hindenburg-says-adani-pulling-largest-corporate-con-1850028292>

third richest man and the head of the Adani Group, has maintained close personal ties to Modi for over twenty years, benefitting from them through access to enormous government contracts. Numerous politicians have urged his regime to investigate the group to decide what legal proceedings are appropriate to take with the organization.



But a recently filed affidavit alleges that two out of the six members of the Supreme Court-appointed expert committee, tasked with examining the fraud allegations against the Adani Group, have a “conflict of interest.” The Supreme Court’s appointees include one individual tied to the Adani Group in 2022, another involved in a bank fraud, and a third who also maintained a prior association with the conglomerate.⁷⁰

Lower courts, which have a much more blatantly partisan and corrupt nature in Modi’s India, also played an important role in 2023 in blocking the public from accessing vital information. Though India’s Right To Information (RTI) would

appear to offer the public a robust guarantee to timely access of important information, in practice, the Delhi High court and other high courts have blocked the public, and even other government agencies, for as long as 16 years, letting urgent information requests languish until they die.⁷¹

Transnational Repression

2023 saw an unprecedented escalation of attacks on overseas critics of the Modi regime, human rights defenders, and overseas citizens more broadly. In June of 2023, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Indian overseas agents had orchestrated the assassination of Canadian resident and Sikh separatist Hardeep Sringh Nijjar.⁷²

Then, in November, U.S. officials announced that they had detected and foiled a similar assassination plot led by Indian government officials on the life of the American citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh separatist.⁷³ In the case of Mr. Pannun, the Indian government official allegedly instructed the hitman, who was in fact an undercover U.S. agent, to refrain from killing the target while Narendra Modi was visiting the U.S.

Reporting from The Intercept in 2023 revealed the two assassination plots in the U.S. and Canada as part of a broader campaign of overseas violence conducted by the Modi regime. The Indian government’s intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, or RAW, has report-

⁷⁰ <https://article-14.com/post/why-some-supreme-court-investigators-in-the-adani-hindenburg-case-are-accused-of-conflict-of-interest-6512462143240>

⁷¹ <https://article-14.com/post/17-years-after-india-s-landmark-information-law-was-passed-india-s-courts-are-undermining-that-right-654afcbc09b5b>

⁷² <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/18/world/canada/canada-india-sikh-killing.html>

⁷³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/29/nyregion/sikh-assassination-plot-charges-india.html>



edly planned numerous assassinations targeting Sikh and Kashmiri activists living abroad.⁷⁴

A December Washington Post investigation also revealed that an India-based propaganda group with strong ties to Indian intelligence, Disinfo Lab, to be running extensive disinformation campaigns aimed at silencing and discrediting U.S. government figures, researchers, humanitarian groups and Indian American rights activists and organizations.⁷⁵

Among the myriad groups and individuals targeted by Disinfo Lab are IAMC, Hindus for Human Rights (HFHR), Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA 7th District), the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and the California-based Dalit rights group Equality Labs.

According to a former employee of the organization quoted in the WaPo report, Disinfo Lab is led by Lt. Col. Dibya Satpathy, an officer with the Research and Analysis Wing, who is reportedly connected to India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval. U.S. based Hindu nationalist organizations have disseminated Disinfo Lab's fabricated reports in

the halls of Congress and in the California legislature. Disinfo Lab reports have falsely presented IAMC as a front organization of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency, while leveling similarly outrageous allegations at U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal, who they have falsely claimed to be under the influence of "Islamist funding."

The Indian government also successfully censored the accounts of IAMC and our coalition partner Hindus for Human Rights, effectively silencing the two most prominent U.S.-based Indian human rights groups in India. Our accounts have been fully withdrawn in India despite repeated pleas with X staff to restore access to the hundreds of thousands of followers and millions of viewers who regularly engage with our organization through social media.

The suspension of IAMC and HFHR's accounts was part of a broader crackdown on U.S.-based civil society and human rights organizations, which also included the Indian government filing criminal charges against world renowned novelist Arundhati Roy.⁷⁶ This was in retaliation for a 2010 speech she delivered on the subject of Kashmiri independence. Roy was charged under several sections of Indian law related to provocative speech and the promotion of enmity between different groups.

Canadian National Security and Intelligence Advisor Jody Thomas stated that India is among the top sources of foreign interference in Canada,⁷⁷ and a report by Canadian intelligence officials raised

⁷⁴ <https://theintercept.com/2023/11/21/india-assassinations-sikh-pakistan/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/10/india-the-disinfo-lab-discredit-critics/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/11/world/asia/arundhati-roy-kashmir.html>

⁷⁷ https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/india-among-top-actors-for-foreign-interference-in-canada-national-security-adviser/article_8454f625-61b5-5022-8c16-c07bf325adeb.html

the alarm of Indian government interference into Canadian economic matters and elections in July 2019.⁷⁸

In the United States, Hindu nationalist organizations that support Modi's BJP have sought to intimidate local minority

populations with frightening displays in New Jersey, including parading anti-Muslim hate symbols at community events. One instance is the flags of paramilitary groups that regularly kill religious minorities in India.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/officials-warned-china-india-could-use-communities-in-canada-to-advance-agendas>

⁷⁹ <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/09/op-ed-indian-americans-in-nj-must-stand-against-hateful-anti-muslim-displays/>

Chapter 2: Hate as Official Policy

In 2023, the BJP-led Indian government enabled, orchestrated, and inflamed the violent persecution of Muslims and Christians in India through various means:

- The direct participation of elected BJP officials in anti-minority violence.
- The participation of RSS-affiliated paramilitary groups directly tied to the ruling party.
- The dissemination of hate-speech and conspiracy theories by leading BJP politicians.
- The government's demolition of homes and places of worship.
- The passing of discriminatory legislation.
- Deliberate inaction in the face of widespread violence targeting minorities.



Direct Participation in Violence

In 2023, BJP leaders and leaders of paramilitary organizations in the broader BJP family (or Sangh Parivar) organizations attended weaponized religious processions as part of the Ram Navami Hindu festival at the end of

March. Extremists leading these rallies targeted Muslims in at least seven Indian states during the holy festival, all BJP-ruled: Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Gujarat, Telangana, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh.

At one rally in Telangana, the recently reinstated BJP legislator T Raja Singh urged his supporters to kill Muslims, calling out, “You [Muslims] are half cut (circumcised). We will cut you fully.” In March, BJP MLA Pranav Kumar also allegedly participated in and helped organize a large Ram Navami procession in Bihar where participants chanted anti-Muslim slogans and fought Muslims in the streets.⁸⁰

In July, BJP legislator Sharanu Salagar and eight of his supporters broke into a Muslim electrician's home and accused him of slaughtering cows.⁸¹ Then, in September, a local BJP leader, Purshottam Saini, joined a mob that abducted and later beat to death a 22-year-old Muslim man, who left behind three daughters.⁸² In June, a mob including BJP leader Raman Gulati set a mosque on fire in Alwar, Rajasthan.⁸³

Attacks Led by Hindu Nationalist Paramilitaries

The list of violent incidents orchestrated by paramilitary organizations in the broader family of Hindu nationalist organizations, of which the BJP forms the political wing, is incredibly vast. The following two sections give a small preview of the frequency and brutality of attacks that occur every day in India.

⁸⁰ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/east-india/bihar-muslims-blame-bjp-mla-for-ruckus-during-ram-navami-procession/>

⁸¹ <http://clarionindia.net/karnataka-alleging-cow-slaughter-bjp-legislator-barges-into-muslim-home>

⁸² <http://maktoobmedia.com/latest-news/muslim-youth-succumbed-to-injuries-due-to-hate-crime-in-rajasthan>

⁸³ <http://thewire.in/communalism/rajasthan-mosque-arson-bjp>

Cow Vigilantism

One of the most notorious forms of Hindu nationalist violence is cow vigilantism, where mobs kill Muslims suspected of transporting or slaughtering cattle, which are considered sacred in Hinduism. This horrifying trend continued unabated in 2023 with incidents occurring on a near-weekly basis.



A single three-day period in March is illustrative of the broader trend of violence and the complicity of state authorities.

On March 5, in BJP-ruled Haryana, a group of cow vigilantes attacked a Muslim truck driver whom they accused of transporting cattle. He sustained serious injuries from the attack and required hospital treatment. Two days later, seven men, including three police officers, were charged with assaulting and robbing two meat suppliers while on the road.⁸⁴ The mob, including the police officers, allegedly urinated on one victim,

extorted 25,000 rupees from the two, and threatened to kill both of them and dump their bodies in drainage canals.⁸⁵

On that same day, a group of cow vigilantes beat a 47-year-old Muslim man to death in Chhapra, Bihar, claiming that their victim had been carrying beef.⁸⁶ In July, BJP legislator Sharanu Salagar and eight of his supporters broke into a Muslim electrician's home and accused him of slaughtering cows.⁸⁷

Earlier, in February, 25-year-old Nasir and 35-year-old Junaid were kidnapped and killed by cow vigilantes. The vigilantes then poured gasoline over their bodies, stuffed them into a car, and lit it on fire. Hindu nationalist leader Monu Manesar is alleged to have participated in the gruesome murder.⁸⁸

Militant offshoots of the BJP parent organization, the RSS, have also led numerous murderous cow vigilante attacks. Two of the most brutal include a February attack where a cow vigilante unit linked to the RSS-offshoot Bajrang Dal militants locked two Muslim men in a vehicle and set it on fire, and a June attack led by the same militia where 10 vigilantes beat a Muslim man to death whom they had accused of transporting cattle.⁸⁹

In April, Bengaluru cow vigilantes murdered Muslim man Idrees Pasha and two of his associates, who had legally purchased cows earlier in the day. Vigilantes beat all three men and asked them to go

⁸⁴ <http://cjp.org.in/cow-vigilantes-attack-muslim-truck-driver-in-palwal-haryana>

⁸⁵ <https://scroll.in/latest/1045763/>

⁸⁶ <http://maktoobmedia.com/india/muslim-man-beaten-to-death-by-hindu-nationalists-in-bihar>

⁸⁷ <http://clarionindia.net/karnataka-alleging-cow-slaughter-bjp-legislator-barges-into-muslim-home>

⁸⁸ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/junaid-nasir-killing-some-haryana-cops-summoned-says-rajasthan-officer-3948280>

⁸⁹ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/2401724/two-muslim-men-killed-by-cow-vigilantes-in-india>

to Pakistan. Syed Zaheer, one of the men beaten, had earlier been charged with violating state cow protection laws.⁹⁰

Later, in Nashik, cow vigilantes beat a Muslim man with steel rods and wooden planks after accusing him of transporting beef.⁹¹ A few days later, in Saran, 55-year-old Muslim man Jaharuddin was killed by cow vigilantes while police allegedly watched on.⁹² In July, Bajrang Dal leader Bittu Bajrangi was charged with attacking a Muslim family with swords and seizing cattle.⁹³ In July, cow vigilan-



tes beat a Muslim man to death in Assam who they suspected of transporting beef.⁹⁴ In August, Assam cow vigilantes beat and killed Hifjur Rahman, a Muslim man with a mental disability, who would beg from local stores.⁹⁵

In July, a mob of 500 Hindu extremists tortured and publicly humiliated two Muslim men in Orissa state, binding them with ropes, stripping them, parad-

ing them through piles of garbage, shaving their beards, and filming the torture over suspicions of them carrying cattle meat.⁹⁶

The victims, 24-year-old Irshad Ahmed and his uncle, 30-year-old Mohammad Abuzar, were transporting goat carcasses with a license when they were stopped and attacked by the mob. Abuzar said their trousers were forcibly removed, chili powder was put into their underwear, and sandals were shoved into their mouths. Ahmed reported that he was also beaten with a metal rod.

In August, following an outbreak of communal violence precipitated by the screening of cow vigilante videos from Manu Manesar and Bittu Bajrangi, Hindu extremists targeted a mosque near Delhi and murdered a 19-year-old imam.⁹⁷

In September, a mob of cow vigilantes set fire to a car that was transporting beef from Bengaluru, Karnataka. The group then humiliated the Muslim men driving the car by forcing them to parade around the area while carrying butchered animal parts on their heads.⁹⁸

Weaponization of Hindu Religious Festivals

In recent years, Hindu nationalist organizations such as the RSS, Bajrang Dal, and VHP have taken over and weaponized religious festivals, using the massive as-

⁹⁰ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/cow-vigilantes-kill-muslim-cattle-trader-in-karnataka-booked-8533292/>

⁹¹ <http://outlookindia.com/national/maharashtra-cow-vigilantes-lynch-man-to-death-for-transporting-meat-11-arrested-news-298031>

⁹² <https://munsifdaily.com/sc-issues-notice-to-centre-states-on-pil-against-alarming-rise-of-lynchings-particularly-by-cow-vigilantes/>

⁹³ <http://tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/cow-vigilante-booked-for-snatching-cattle-from-muslim-family-in-faridabad-522754>

⁹⁴ <http://siasat.com/man-lynched-on-suspicion-of-cattle-theft-in-assam-2650781>

⁹⁵ <http://maktoobmedia.com/latest-news/muslim-man-with-mental-health-conditions-lynched-in-assam>

⁹⁶ <https://theobserverpost.com/muslim-men-attacked-stripped-and-beards-shaved-in-bhubaneswar-mere-3-km-from-chief-ministers-residence/>

⁹⁷ <http://aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/1/imam-killed-after-hindu-mob-attacks-mosque-in-indias-gurugram>

⁹⁸ <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/hindutva-activists-torch-vehicle-attack-beef-transporters-near-bengaluru-several-arrested-2699264>

semblies to incite violence against Muslims communities. In the process, they have attacked and killed countless Muslims, destroying their homes, businesses, and places of worship. This year, Muslim women appear to have been targeted, with some reporting home invasions and sexual harassment.



The BJP has played a crucial role in enabling these bouts of organized violence, granting permits to Hindu extremists to parade through areas with high Muslim populations, ordering local police to not intervene in the violence. This granted free passes to police who participate in acts of violence and leveled fabricated charges at Muslims attacked during the violence. In BJP-ruled states, these processions result in deaths and destruction; in non-BJP-ruled states, police intervene, and permits are often not granted.⁹⁹

Beginning in late March 2023, Hindu extremist mobs weaponized religious processions for the Hindu festival of Ram Navami, attacking countless Muslims as in years past. In Aurangabad, a dispute between two men outside a Ram temple in the Kiradpura area of Chhatrapati

Sambhaji Nagar transformed into a bigger conflict, with people throwing stones and setting vehicles on fire.¹⁰⁰

During the Ram Navami procession in Kazipara, Howrah, multiple vehicles and shops were damaged. Similarly, in Shibpur, vehicles were set on fire during a Ram Navami procession. In Dalkhola, clashes between two groups during a procession resulted in the death of one person, injuries to several others, including five to six police officers.¹⁰¹

In July, following the release of inflammatory videos by Hindu nationalist ideologue and cow vigilante Monu Manesor, communal violence erupted in the Nuh district of Haryana during a Hindu Nationalist procession by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal. Manesor, who is wanted for murder after his killing of Muslims, incited his followers to join the procession.

Six people died in the course of the violence. According to a fact-finding report conducted in the wake of the Nuh riots of 2023, the violence “was intricately linked with the systematic and blatant targeting of the Muslims in the region with no prospect of justice from the state. The residents have been aghast and resentful about how easily Muslim youth are kidnapped or abducted and murdered with the state doing little to ensure that the culprits are brought to justice.”^{102, 103}

In the city of Biharsharif, Bihar, a Hindu procession vandalized a mosque and set

⁹⁹ <https://thewire.in/communalism/the-deadly-religious-procession>

¹⁰⁰ <https://theprint.in/india/tension-prevails-in-mumbais-malvani-after-clash-between-two-groups/1485520>

¹⁰¹ <https://indiatoday.in/india/story/bengal-dalkhola-ram-navami-procession-clashes-dead-injured-2353714-2023-03-30>

¹⁰² <https://thewire.in/communalism/haryana-violence-mewat-hate-and-provocative-videos>

¹⁰³ <https://thewire.in/communalism/nuh-riots-fact-finding-team-persecution-of-muslims>

it on fire, while also targeting other Muslim properties including a madrasa. After multiple reports of stone throwing, physical attacks, and petrol bombs, tension escalated, with a 16-year-old boy killed in the crossfire of communal fighting.¹⁰⁴ In Karnataka state's Hassan city, violence broke out when two groups clashed during a Ram Navami procession passing by a mosque. Four people were injured, and two of them were stabbed.¹⁰⁵

In Gujarat's Vadodara city, participants in Ram Navami procession threw stones and damaged property belonging to Muslims. In Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, violence erupted during a Ram Navami after a man played loud music while passing in front of a mosque. An argument broke out, resulting in stone pelting, physical assault, and destruction of Muslim-owned property.¹⁰⁶ Muslims in all six states reported incidents of Hindu nationalist mobs infiltrating mosques and planting Saffron flags inside.

Discriminatory Legislation

Throughout its rule, the BJP has passed discriminatory laws at the State and Union (analogous to Federal) levels to erode the constitutional rights of Muslims. The unconstitutional and discriminatory 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC), state level Anti-Conversion Laws, and the Karnataka Hijab Ban are all in violation of domestic and international human rights guarantees.

CAA and NRC

The 2019 CAA is the first law to add religion as a clause for citizenship in the history of independent India, providing "illegal migrants" with citizenship if they originate from Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Afghanistan and are Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, Parsi, or Christian. Notably absent from this list are Muslims, despite their making up the lion's share of refugees in the region escaping persecution in Myanmar (Rohingya), Afghanistan (Shia), and Pakistan (Ahmediya).

The CAA forms part of a larger citizenship policy pathway pursued by the BJP which critics alleged will be used to disenfranchise resident Indian Muslims by potentially reclassifying them as refugees from nearby countries, and then deporting them. The National Register of Citizens (NRC), an under-construction database intended to contain information about every citizen in India, has already been used in a similar manner in the state of Assam, where hundreds of thousands of Muslims, lifelong residents of India, have been stripped of citizenship on the grounds they lacked proper paperwork and were wrongly labeled as foreigners.¹⁰⁷

In January 2020, a group of retired bureaucrats warned of this exact threat, writing that the amendment "has the scope to be employed in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner, subject to local pressures and to meet specific political objectives, not to mention the unbridled scope for large-scale corruption."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/patna/ram-navami-violence-in-bihar-130-held-in-biharsharif-15-firs-registered-curbs-stay-8536342/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://indiatoday.in/india/story/ram-navami-procession-4-stabbed-after-2-groups-clash-mosque-in-karnatakas-hassan-hindu-muslim-Groups-2353847-2023-03-31>

¹⁰⁶ <https://indiatoday.in/india/story/ram-navami-procession-in-front-of-the-mosque-in-lucknow-vehicle-vandalised-stone-pelted-2353755-2023-03-31>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/over-30000-illegal-foreigners-deported-till-31-august-based-on-assam-accord-says-minister>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy>

With the CAA set to be implemented just ahead of the 2024 elections, scholars and activists raised the alarm repeatedly in 2023 about the potential for mass disenfranchisement of Muslims, and the potential for weaponizing citizenry to



represent Muslims as internal enemies. The strident government repression of previous anti-CAA protests—which resulted in the killing of 27 people and thousands of arrests in 2019 and 2020¹⁰⁹ - could be repeated in the lead up to its implementation.

Anti-Conversion Laws

BJP-ruled states have passed eleven so-called ‘Love-Jihad’ laws,¹¹⁰ or laws shaped by the conspiracy theory that Muslim men are marrying Hindu women in order to convert them, and eventually outnumber Hindus. These laws, such as the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion Ordinance, empower authorities to arrest practitioners of Islam or Christianity suspected of forcibly converting others, regardless of lack of evidence.

While several Hindu nationalist leaders have led mass conversions, allegedly

with coercive means, Hindus are never charged under forced conversion laws. These laws are instead used to criminalize interfaith marriages in the faiths deemed foreign by Hindu nationalists, while offering legal sanction to state or vigilante attacks on churches and mosques.

Under the laws as currently written, the burden of proof falls on the accused to prove that they are not forcing their partner to convert to a different religion, a highly problematic legal form that undermines the presumption of innocence inherent in any fair legal system.¹¹¹ Anti-conversion laws have not only resulted in the imprisoning of countless religious minorities but also emboldened Hindu nationalist mobs to attack and kill Muslims and Christians suspected of con-



verting members of other religious faiths.

In Bihar, Bajrang Dal militants assaulted a Christian couple in January of 2023, telling them “India will destroy you for messing with Ram” after accusing them, without evidence, of carrying out forced conversions.¹¹² The couple denies the accusation.

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/anti-citizenship-amendment-bill-assam-protest-1627464-2019-12-11>

¹¹⁰ https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/bills_states/haryana/2022/

¹¹¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/haryana-implement-anti-conversion-law-proving-innocence-accused-8333201/>

¹¹² <http://thequint.com/news/india/will-destroy-you-for-messing-with-ram-bajrang-dal-beats-up-christian-couple>

Later, in January, Chhattisgarh BJP state secretary Prabal Pratap Singh Judev carried out a mass conversion campaign to simultaneously convert 1,100 Christians who were supposedly “victims’ conversion” to Hinduism.¹¹³ In April, Hindu nationalist groups forcibly converted approximately 250 people from Christianity to Hinduism. The event’s chief guest was senior BJP leader Prabal Pratap Singh Judev, under whose leadership about 3,000 people have been forcibly converted to Hinduism in massive ceremonies.¹¹⁴

The state of Madhya Pradesh has been a particularly extreme enforcer of anti-conversion laws. In May, Madhya Pradesh Police invoked the draconian Madhya Pradesh Freedom and Religion Act to raid a private residence and accuse the Christian inhabitants of illegal religious conversion.¹¹⁵ Later that month, BJP authorities in Madhya Pradesh shut down a Christian orphanage on allegations of religious conversion, forcing 30 orphaned babies to shelter in substandard government facilities.¹¹⁶

Madhya Pradesh Police also issued suspicious questionnaires to around 40 churches in August, asking about sources of foreign funding and religious conversions, leading many churches to decide to move exclusively to online services, from fear of Hindu nationalist backlash.¹¹⁷

In December, Madhya Pradesh Police arrested a 19-year-old Muslim man after he

and a Hindu woman attempted to elope. Under pressure from Hindu nationalist groups, police detained Khan and four of his family members while Hindu extremists set Khan’s father’s shop on fire.¹¹⁸

In July, authorities in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh arrested ten Christians for allegedly engaging in illegal religious conversion.¹¹⁹

Hijab Ban

In formerly BJP-ruled Karnataka, the state government passed a brutal and discriminatory law aimed specifically at disenfranchising Muslim women. The so-called Karnataka Hijab Ban allowed schools to legally ban the wearing of Hijabs on campuses, a decision that led many Muslim women to drop out, or even be expelled from school between 2022 and 2023.¹²⁰

The statewide ban began in 2022 after a group of female Muslim students at an Udupi college were denied entry to classes for wearing hijabs. Their decision to protest led to counter protests among



¹¹³ <http://sabrangindia.in/article/chhattisgarh-1100-christians-converted-hinduism-ghar-wapsi-ceremony-bjp-sec>

¹¹⁴ <http://sanatanprabhat.org/english/74238.html>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.ucanews.com/news/10-people-arrested-on-conversion-charges-in-india/101314>

¹¹⁶ <http://ucanews.com/news/christian-orphanage-in-india-shut-down-alleging-conversion/102100>

¹¹⁷ <http://christianpost.com/news/india-police-send-suspicious-notice-to-at-least-40-churches.html>

¹¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/HateDetectors/status/1729780882066767991?t=s38XxahV3m2ijUeAv9cINQ&s=19>

¹¹⁹ <http://telanganatoday.com/10-arrested-in-up-for-illegal-religious-conversion>

¹²⁰ <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/-our-heads-are-the-battlefields--magazine-279666>

other students who began to wear saffron scarves to school, a symbol of Hindu nationalism.¹²¹

Protests then spread throughout the state until the BJP government passed an order stating that uniforms must be worn in schools where policies are in place, with no exception made for the wearing



of hijabs.¹²² Authorities at several universities throughout the state physically barred Muslim women from entering institutions of higher-ed, despite permitting their presence in previous years.

At one Karnataka school, a group of male students threatened Muskan Khan, a Muslim student clad in a burqa. The group chanted the popular Hindu nationalist slogan “Jai Shri Ram” at her in an effort to prevent her from entering the building. Authorities had to intervene to break up the hostile crowds and permit her to enter the school. Similar incidents transpired throughout the state.

Despite complaints from advocates, the Karnataka high court upheld the hijab

ban, ruling that the hijab is not an essential religious practice in Islam. In the face of vociferous protest, the ban was upheld until late 2023, when the BJP lost state elections and the National Congress Party overturned the ban in the state.¹²³

Attacks on Historic Mosques & Monuments

The Supreme Court’s decision effectively rendered the Places of Worship Act Mosques irrelevant, a decision that has had devastating consequences on the safety of mosques nationwide, which now face an imminent threat of conversion into temples.

These campaigns are often orchestrated by representatives of the RSS, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal, and other Hindu extremist groups. One group, the Hindu Mahasabha, has published a list of at least 880 mosques, shrines, cemeteries, congregation halls, and other Muslim places of worship as targets for demolition.¹²⁴ Examples include the 350-year-old Shahi Idgah mosque in Uttar Pradesh’s Mathura city, where Hindu extremists have consistently campaigned for the demolition of the mosque, including through le-



¹²¹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/karnataka-college-students-saffron-scarves-protest-against-hijab-class-room-1896083-2022-01-05>

¹²² <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-students-block-roads-row-over-hijab-schools-mounts-2022-02-09/>

¹²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-60328864>

¹²⁴ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/politics/babri-masjid-and-the-politics-of-demolition/article66231408.ence>

gal petitions.¹²⁵ In Varanasi city, the historical Gyanvapi Mosque is the subject of multiple ongoing legal disputes pushed by Hindu far-right groups.

These groups contend that the mosque's ablution fountain is a Shivling—a symbol of Shiva—and consequently argue for the entire mosque's conversion into a temple. In 2022, a court ordered that the ablution fountain be sealed off from Muslim use. Other mosques targeted by Hindu extremists include the Jamia Masjid in Karnataka and the Shamsi Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh. Even prominent non-religious structures built during Muslim rule, including the Qutb Minar monument and the Taj Mahal, have been declared by some to be either constructed on temple ruins or concealing idols.

Several less prominent places of worship have already been demolished by BJP-led state governments or Hindu militant groups, citing grounds of “illegality” and “encroachments.” The Uttar Pradesh government, as part of road widening projects, bulldozed two historic mosques—the 16th-century Shahi Masjid and the 60-year-old Masjid Gareeb Nawaz Al Maroof—citing the “illegality” of both structures.

In the capital city of New Delhi, authorities frequently deploy bulldozers against local Muslim shrines and graves of Sufi saints with little to no warning. Videos depicting Hindu militants destroying Muslim shrines regularly emerge from Uttarakhand state.¹²⁶

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has also solicited public comment concerning the removal of Sunehri Masjid—a mosque that predates the creation of the colonial capital and has been in use since at least 1911.

Several veteran architects wrote in the mosque, with one saying, “The Sunehri Bagh Masjid is not merely a structure of bricks and mortar; it stands as a testament to our historical legacy and architectural grandeur. Its demolition would result in an irrevocable loss to the cultural fabric and collective identity of our city. It would also deprive future generations of the opportunity to learn from and appreciate the tangible history of our ancestors.”¹²⁷

Hate Speech and Conspiracy Theories

In September 2023, U.S. and Paris-based researchers released a report documenting all verified instances of anti-Muslim hate-speech at events organized by Hindu nationalist groups from the first half of the year.

According to the findings of the India Hate Lab, 255 hate speech incidents



¹²⁵ <https://m.economictimes.com/news/how-to/krishna-what-is-mathuras-shahi-idgah-mosque-case-in-which-bhagwan-krishnas-friend-is-also-a-petitioner/articleshow/106045278.cms>

¹²⁶ <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2023/12/5/the-babri-mosque-effect-the-crisis-faced-by-thousands-of-mosques-in-india>

¹²⁷ <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/sunehri-bagh-masjid-in-crosshairs-mosque-that-predates-capital-may-be-removed/cid/1989768>

occurred during the first 181 days of 2023 throughout India, almost one event per day.¹²⁸ 80% of these hate speech events (205) occurred in BJP-ruled states and union territories, while around 42% of all hate speech gatherings were organized by RSS-affiliated groups, the RSS being the BJP's parent organization, and the paramilitary wing of the ruling party.

The report also found that at 33% of all the gatherings convened, speakers explicitly called for violence against Muslims, while at 4% of all the events featured speeches explicitly targeting Muslim women. 51% of speakers disseminated anti-Muslim conspiracy theories that had previously inspired acts of violence.



The particularly pernicious “Love Jihad” conspiracy theory, which posits that Muslim men seduce Hindu women to convert them to Islam, has motivated numerous killings of Muslims and frequently endangers those who pursue interfaith marriages and even platonic friendships across faiths. Last year, for example, a Muslim man was beheaded and hacked into pieces for allegedly falling in love with a Hindu woman.¹²⁹

Against this background of violence, it is particularly disturbing to note that the second highest political official in India, Union Home Minister and BJP politician Amit Shah, disseminated the Love Jihad conspiracy theory at a rally in November, 2023.¹³⁰ It is almost impossible to imagine the uproar that would ensue from America's Vice President disseminating a similar theory—say that Jewish men are seducing Christian women in order to nefariously convert them—and yet India's second in command continues to espouse such theories with impunity.

Other instances of leading BJP officials disseminating conspiracy theories abound: in February 2023, BJP legislator T. Raja Singh—who had previously been banned from politics for hate speech, only to be reinstated in 2023 by BJP-ruled courts in Karnataka—urged his audiences to attack Muslims who engage in “love jihad” in Maharashtra.¹³¹

In May, Assam BJP Chief minister Biswa Sarma insinuated that Muslims were behind usage of fertilizer in his region, and in turn claimed that “fertilizer jihad” was responsible for heart attacks.¹³² In October, BJP legislator Kirodi Lal Meena delivered a hate speech referring to Muslims as demons and calling on Hindus to prepare for a war against them.¹³³

Throughout the year, hate speech disseminated by Hindu nationalist leaders directly precipitated violent attacks on Muslims. On March 30, Hindu far-right leader Kajal Shingla made hateful

¹²⁸ <https://indiahatelab.com/2023/09/24/half-yearly-hate-speech-report/>

¹²⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/21/they-cut-him-into-pieces-indias-love-jihad-conspiracy-theory-turns-lethal>

¹³⁰ <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1725024145031717281>

¹³¹ <https://altnews.in/teach-a-lesson-to-sons-of-afzal-says-t-raja-singh-turns-latur-shiv-jayanti-into-platform-for-incendiary-speech>

¹³² <http://scroll.in/article/1050445/why-assams-farmers-are-furious-at-himanta-biswa-sarmas-fertiliser-jihad-jibe>

¹³³ <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1709807005282525279?s=20>

remarks about Muslim women, helping ignite a riot in the western state of Gujarat.¹³⁴ On the same day, in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, a procession filled with provocative and hateful slogans resulted in violence in the town of Bihar Sharif, leaving one dead and several injured.¹³⁵

In June, rampant and repeated instances of hate speech events in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, culminated in clashes in the western state,¹³⁶ while a month-long campaign in the northern state of Uttarakhand centered on the Hindu far-right conspiracy theories of “Love Jihad,” “Vyapar Jihad,” and “Land Jihad”¹³⁷ resulted in the displacement of Muslims from several parts of the state.¹³⁸ Muslim shops and homes were marked with a black ‘X’ in an apparent attempt to intimidate the marginalized community.¹³⁹

Mass Violence in Manipur

Members of the ruling party of India spread violence both actively—organizing and calling for violence—and through inaction. Prime Minister Modi’s refusal to properly respond to or even publicly acknowledge wide-scale anti-minority violence in India’s northern state of Manipur strongly contributed to the shattering instability of the region, which has seen more than 70,000 displaced in fallout from conflict.¹⁴⁰



Fighting broke out between the two ethnic groups of minority Kuki-Zomis and majority Meiteis in May 2023, following the passage of a controversial affirmative action bill that many Kuki-Zomis feared would have jeopardized their lands. As fighting ensued, Kuki-Zomis, a largely Christian minority, suffered disproportionate casualties, and saw many of their churches and homes destroyed.

Details of the conflict and a particularly shocking sexual assault on minority Kuki women were delayed due to the BJP blocking Internet in the region, and numerous reports have alleged that State Police sided with Meiteis.¹⁴¹ Other reports of sexual violence against minority Kuki-Zomi women have surfaced as more details of the conflict emerge.¹⁴²

On May 4, in the Porompat district, a hostile mob comprising of both men and women stormed into a girls’ hostel belonging to a local nursing institute. The mob was specifically targeting women of

¹³⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/activist-booked-for-hate-speech-over-75-detained-in-una-clash-8534391/>

¹³⁵ <https://hindutvawatch.org/ram-navami-violence-how-bihar-sharif-saw-the-communal-flare-up-news-click/>

¹³⁶ <https://thewire.in/communalism/on-shahu-maharajs-anniversary-kolhapur-rally-symbolises-communal-harmony>

¹³⁷ <https://hindutvawatch.org/cross-marks-on-doors-cries-of-extermiation-how-uttarakhand-became-our-hate-speech-capital-the-wire/>

¹³⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/13/why-muslims-are-fleeing-a-small-town-in-indias-uttarakhand-state>

¹³⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/uttarakhand-puroila-barkot-muslims-crosses-b2360592.html>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/175-killed-over-1100-injured-in-four-months-of-manipur-violence-police/article67310428.ece>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/20/world/asia/india-manipur-video-woman.html>

¹⁴² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2023/11/22/rape-and-sexual-violence-in-manipur-india/?sh=2fc9a6a32f44>

the Kuki tribe, leading to a horrific assault on two Kuki students, aged 19 and 20.

Mobs dragged the two Kuki women outside the hostel onto the main road, where the mob proceeded to brutally attack



them, thrashing them in public view. Women within the mob incited further cruelty, urging the men to rape the victims and dismember their bodies. Later, the women were found unconscious on the roadside and taken to a nearby hospital. Both victims lodged separate police complaints detailing the horrifying ordeal they experienced, including the physical assault, psychological torment, and threats of sexual violence.¹⁴³

On the same day in the Kangpokpi district, residents of the B Phainom village were forced to flee their homes. A 44-year-old woman, the wife of the village chief, and her daughter were discovered shortly after by a mob who proceeded to kill two of their neighbors. They then brutally

assaulted, stripped, and groped the two women, threatening them with rape and murder if they did not comply.¹⁴⁴

Violence took on an increasingly Hindu nationalist caste as the conflict progressed, with the majority-Hindu Meitei destroying 255 Kuki-Zomi churches between May and June, while threatening Muslim Meitei for aiding Muslim Kuki-Zomis.¹⁴⁵ Manipur has undergone a gradual radicalization process since the Modi regime assumed power, with hundreds of new Hindu nationalist schools and thousands of Hindu nationalist organizers operating in the state.

On April 11, BJP authorities demolished three churches in Imphal East district, citing them as “illegal constructions” on government land. Among the demolished churches, one of which was built in 1974, were the Evangelical Baptist Convention Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church Manipur, and Catholic Holy Spirit Church. The demolitions occurred shortly after the Manipur high court vacated its 2020 order for the cessation of an eviction drive by the BJP-led state government.

Only after nearly three months of violence, did Modi address the low-level civil war in his country, confining his remarks primarily to just the one recorded incident of sexual violence.¹⁴⁶ The Indian government under his leadership has largely opposed international pressure to intervene and prevent further violence.

The Indian government also criticized a statement from the European Parliament

¹⁴³ <https://scroll.in/article/1053038/everyone-should-know-what-happened-to-us-four-kuki-women-recount-brutal-assaults-they-survived>

¹⁴⁴ <https://thehindu.com/news/national/18-year-old-woman-assaulted-gangraped-in-manipur-on-may-15/article67110455.ece>

¹⁴⁵ <https://thewire.in/communalism/siege-on-manipur-hindu-nationalists-war-for-ethnic-supremacy>

¹⁴⁶ <https://scroll.in/article/1052988/why-pm-modis-speech-on-manipur-is-worse-than-his-silence>

tying the violence to “politically motivated, divisive policies promoting Hindu majoritarianism,” calling it “unacceptable interference.”

Bulldozing of Homes, Mosques, and Churches

Since assuming power, members of the BJP, including most prominently Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, have organized state-led demolition drives, colloquially known as “Bulldozer Justice,” destroying countless Muslim homes and mosques, as well as Christian churches.



Often justified under the false pretense of occupants lacking proper title, the true purpose of state demolitions is to instill fear in religious minorities and whip up support for Hindu nationalist project of cleansing India of the religious faiths it considers foreign: Islam and Christianity. State-led demolitions affect thousands of Muslims and Christians each year, uprooting them from ancestral homes and destroying the structures at the center of religious life in their respective communities.

One of the most shattering demolition drives came in August 2023, when State Police raided overwhelmingly Muslim-owned properties in Haryana state, prompting an estimated 3,000 Muslim migrant workers to flee the city of Nuh. Following the raids, over 1,208 overwhelmingly Muslim-owned properties were subjected to arbitrary demolition. The destruction only stopped when the state’s highest court stayed future demolitions on the grounds that they could constitute ethnic cleansing.¹⁴⁷

Earlier in the year, forty-four Muslim families residing in Uttar Pradesh were asked to vacate their homes. The BJP-led administration alleged that the homes were on “encroached land” and bulldozed them, though residents allege that the police did not target the nearby settlement occupied by Hindus.¹⁴⁸

The BJP-led Gujarat government launched a demolition drive in the Kutch area of the state a few weeks later, destroying six madrasas.¹⁴⁹ Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, known as ‘Bulldozer Baba’ among his supporters for his aggressive policy of demolishing Muslim properties, campaigned in the state and lent his voice in support of the demolition drives.

In Karnataka, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a member of Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party, bragged of closing 600 madrasas in his state and announced his intention to close all of them.¹⁵⁰ In BJP-ruled Maharashtra, the local administration sealed a Mosque following claims by

¹⁴⁷ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/nuh-violence-police-raids-force-muslims-to-flee-from-meoli-village-several-camps-in-forest/>

¹⁴⁸ <http://sabrangindia.in/article/spate-demolitions-continue-44-muslim-families-asked-vacate-homes-kushinagar>

¹⁴⁹ <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/gujarat-six-madrasas-demolished-in-kutch/>

¹⁵⁰ <http://thewire.in/communalism/have-closed-600-madrasas-in-assam-intend-to-close-them-all-himanta-biswa-sarma>

Hindu nationalist groups that it was built by demolishing a Hindu structure on the same site.¹⁵¹

The administration in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand demolished numerous properties, affecting 134 Muslim families.¹⁵² BJP authorities also demolished three churches in Manipur in 2023, deeming them illegal constructions.¹⁵³ In December, BJP leader Jai Bhagwan Goyal issued an ultimatum to Muslims at an event, demanding the destruction of the historic Shahi Idgah Mosque in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura city.¹⁵⁴

Madhya Pradesh authorities also bulldozed meat shops in Ujjain district after the RSS-affiliated Chief Minister Mohan Yadav declared restrictions on the sale of meat and eggs in open spaces.¹⁵⁵

Custodial Violence/Police Corruption

Unlike in the U.S. where the police have a high degree of autonomy from the vicissitudes of electoral politics, in India, the police answer directly to the governors of each state. The actions of the police in BJP-ruled territories cannot be divorced from the politics of the ruling party, and the spate of police violence witnessed in 2023, including participation in anti-Muslim rallies, suggests a disturbing increase in the use of police to accomplish Hindu nationalist aims.

State Police allegedly led violent attacks during Ram Navami in Bihar in March 2023, where Muslim women alleged that

officers robbed their homes and threatened to rape them during a chaotic procession.

“Police abused us and gave us rape threats. We were forced to open the doors, and then they were free to get into our houses. They put ladders on the balcony and entered,” alleged one witness, echoing the testimony of others.¹⁵⁶ Earlier, in April 2023, BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh sent State Police to arrest more than 1,700 Muslims for praying on roads outside Mosques during the holy day of Eid.¹⁵⁷



Maharashtra Police arrested a 50-year-old Muslim man named Suleman Ahmed Shaikh for opposing a hate speech rally led by suspended BJP politician T. Raja Singh.¹⁵⁸ Despite issuing countless calls for violence against Muslims, in violation of India's constitutional prohibition of hate-speech, Singh has not been arrested. In April, a 21-year-old Muslim man named Wasim Sajjad was allegedly beaten to death by a police officer, after he was accused of stealing sand.¹⁵⁹ His death was just one among many in 2023.

¹⁵¹ <http://theobserverpost.com/historical-mosque-in-maharashtra-sealed-following-hindutva-groups-land-claim>

¹⁵² <https://opindia.com/2023/07/nainital-illegal-structures-enemy-properties-demolished-leftists-islamists-outrage/>

¹⁵³ <http://thewire.in/communalism/three-churches-demolished-in-bjp-ruled-manipur-for-illegal-construction-reports>

¹⁵⁴ <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1732994729019625747>

¹⁵⁵ <https://x.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1735548263632179581?s=20>

¹⁵⁶ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/ram-navami-violence-in-bihar-sharif-muslim-women-allege-police-misbehavior-loot/?fbclid=I-WAR3DiY1Tj7uuUj4EV4YWWKeLkKi2in128zNCO32WZg3yr0l8JkwekuH13drY>

¹⁵⁷ <http://maktoobmedia.com/latest-news/1700-muslims-booked-for-offering-eid-namaz-on-roads-in-kanpur>

¹⁵⁸ <http://scroll.in/latest/1046990/muslim-man-arrested-for-asking-youth-to-oppose-hate-speech-accused-t-raja-singhs-rally>

¹⁵⁹ <http://enewsroom.in/muslim-youth-jharkhand-mob-lynching-police-brutality>

In April, government authorities and police disallowed congregational prayers at Jamia Masjid in Kashmir.¹⁶⁰ In March, seven men, including three police officers, were booked for assaulting and robbing two Muslim meat suppliers while on

the road.¹⁶¹ In December, police barged into a Rajasthan mosque during morning prayers and stopped the azaan (Muslim call to prayer), invoking a new BJP-law banning the use of loudspeakers that implicitly targets mosques.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ <http://thewire.in/rights/srinagar-closure-of-historic-jamia-masjid-suggests-all-is-not-well-in-kashmir-say-politicians>

¹⁶¹ <https://scroll.in/latest/1045763/>

¹⁶² <https://x.com/HateDetectors/status/1738231672762511719?s=20>

Chapter 3: Economic Destruction

The Modi regime has pioneered a novel form of economic apartheid in India that aggressively punishes Muslims and doles out scant rewards to Hindu nationalist followers, all the while maintaining one of the most lop-sided, unequal, and corrupt economies in the world. The combination of high-level corruption with everyday economic discrimination has assured that, despite their claims to the contrary, the Modi regime has thrown India's economy into jeopardy.

By using state violence to prevent Muslims from doing business, cutting support for religious minorities to advance economically, targeting regime critics with capricious tax raids, and enabling massive corrupt corporations to commit fraud with impunity, the BJP is in fact undermining the economy of the entirety of India. Its narratives of success simply do not ring true.

Promising to add 100 million manufacturing jobs, Modi's India has actually lost 24 million industrial jobs between 2017 and 2021.¹⁶³ Agriculture now employs a higher percentage of workers than 5 years ago, leading to stunning situations like in 2019, when 12.5 million people applied for 35,000 railway jobs.¹⁶⁴ With only 100 million people to India's 1.4 billion, Vietnam now exports approximately the same value in manufactured goods as India.¹⁶⁵

Modi's distinctive brand of crony capitalism, which doles out massive government contracts to a select few political allies, has also given lavish benefits to the richest Indians while failing to generate a middle-class consumer base large enough to entice international investors.¹⁶⁶ Private investment has declined precipitously under the Modi regime, with investors also admitting that they fear retribution from Modi's tax-authority bulldogs, which his government uses to intimidate political foes.¹⁶⁷

State-enabled sexism¹⁶⁸ also severely hampers Indian economic growth, with the Modi regimes refusal to adequately fund the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee act, keeping thousands of women out of the workforce.¹⁶⁹ Under the Modi regime, only seven out of 100 urban women are employed, a significant decline that places the nation behind even Saudi Arabia in terms of female labor participation.¹⁷⁰

Economic Apartheid

Throughout 2023, BJP-ruled states used their police powers to close Muslim businesses, under false pretexts or under explicitly discriminatory laws. Among the most notable and sweeping attacks on Muslim businesses was the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh government's statewide ban on "the manufacture, sale, storage and distribution of halal-certified products with immediate effect."¹⁷¹

¹⁶³ <https://archive.is/o/08Ipb/https://ceda.ashoka.edu.in/ceda-cmie-bulletin-manufacturing-employment-halves-in-5-years/>

¹⁶⁴ <https://archive.is/4SxTx>

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.dripcapital.com/resources/blog/vietnam-vs-india-exports>

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/family-business/>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.dripcapital.com/resources/blog/vietnam-vs-india-exports>

¹⁶⁸ <https://archive.is/o/08Ipb/https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/02/20/only-7-of-urban-indian-women-have-paid-jobs>

¹⁶⁹ <https://archive.is/o/08Ipb/https://thewire.in/rights/chart-decline-expenditure-social-security-schemes-budget-2023>

¹⁷⁰ <https://archive.is/o/08Ipb/https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/02/20/only-7-of-urban-indian-women-have-paid-jobs>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/what-is-behind-the-halal-certificate-ban-in-up-explained/article67588365.ece>

The ban has dealt a devastating to Muslim-owned food manufacturers in the state, barring customers from products they relied on and raising fears among many Muslims that the government will eliminate halal butchers next.¹⁷²

The second highest ranking Indian politician, Union Minister and BJP-leader Amit Shah pledged to eliminate affirmative ac-



tion and job hiring quotas should the BJP win elections next year in Telangana.¹⁷³ Should this come to pass, it would not only be a devastating blow to caste-oppressed Indians and Muslims—who by many measures have the lowest economic attainment in India. But it would also violate India’s constitutionally guaranteed right to affirmative action programs.

In January, authorities in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh removed 70 Muslim street vendors from stalls they had occupied for decades, giving their spaces instead to Hindu businesses and stalls run by the

Hindu nationalist paramilitary group the Bajrang Dal.¹⁷⁴ The action was continuous with demands made during a January event organized by the Hindu nationalist paramilitary organizations, RSS, and VHP in Rajasthan, where Hindu nationalist leaders called for the boycott of Halal products and the conversion of 30,000 mosques into temples.¹⁷⁵

In BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh city authorities sought to close Muslim-owned meat shops in July, despite vociferous protest from owners.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, In BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, State Police ordered approximately 40 primarily Muslim-owned non-vegetarian restaurants to close for two months while Hindu pilgrims passed through town.¹⁷⁷

A few days after the BJP won December elections in Raipur, BJP lawmaker Brijmohan Agarwal ordered authorities to bulldoze predominantly Muslim-owned shops after alleging they had encroached on government land.¹⁷⁸

In addition to these state-led threats, numerous paramilitary groups associated with the ruling party attacked Muslim businesses directly: in July the RSS-affiliated VHP and Bajrang Dal groups threatened Muslim shop owners in Delhi and ordered them to close on Tuesdays,¹⁷⁹ while in Uttar Pradesh, Rashtriya Bajrang Dal members violently raided Muslim-owned meat shops.¹⁸⁰ In Haryana, a VHP leader demanded a soci-

172 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/uttar-pradeshs-crackdown-on-halal-certification-seen-as-strategy-to-subjugate-muslims/article67610820.ece>

173 <http://scroll.in/latest/1047887/amit-shah-vows-to-scrap-muslim-quota-in-telangana-if-bjp-comes-to-power>

174 <https://thewire.in/communalism/uttar-pradesh-rampur-muslim-street-vendors>

175 <http://sabrangindia.in/article/yes-again-hate-filled-speech-delivered-rss-man-ishwar-lal-rajasthan>

176 <http://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1677894279467761664>

177 <http://theprint.in/ground-reports/no-written-order-but-up-police-has-shut-muslim-restaurants-in-sambhal-for-karwar-yatra/1689476>

178 <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1732275003809509584?s=20>

179 <http://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1676436152826429440>

180 <http://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1676830683434459136>

etal boycott of Muslim owned businesses this August.¹⁸¹

The Indian government's January announcement of a \$225 million budget cut to the Ministry of Minority affairs—an institution set up to correct disparities in achievement between Muslims, caste-oppressed groups, and other higher earning demographics—could spell the end for an institution that has helped millions of Indian minorities obtain education and job training they would have never otherwise been able to afford.¹⁸²

Corruption at the Highest Level

Following the release of a bombshell investigation in early 2023, India's richest man and the head of the Adani Group conglomerate has come under intense scrutiny for the fraud at the heart of his firm. Accused of using secretive offshore accounts to buy up and then inflate the price of his company's stock, Gautam Adani has also maintained close ties with Indian PM Narendra Modi for more than 20 years.¹⁸³

Many allege these connections have allowed his firm to secure lucrative government contracts, including for airports and other massive construction projects, while avoiding scrutiny or paying anything close to its fair share of taxes.¹⁸⁴

The Modi regime has aggressively targeted politicians and organizations which have publicly called for an investigation into the links between the prime minister and the conglomerate. Lead opposition figure Rahul Gandhi and opposition politician Mahua Moitra were both expelled from parliament following their public demands for an investigation into links between Modi and the Adani Group and the founder of independent news website NewsClick was arrested following his journal reporting on the issue.

According to reporting in the Guardian, the Indian financial regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India had been aware of the Adani Group's suspicious stock market activity as early as 2014. But after Modi was elected for his first term shortly after the first notice, the investigation disappeared and has not been recorded publicly since.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ <http://tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/mahapanchayat-at-tighara-village-calls-for-economic-boycott-of-minority-community-532781>

¹⁸² <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/why-the-ministry-of-minority-affairs-is-staring-at-a-major-crisis/article66338112.ece>

¹⁸³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/31/modi-linked-adani-family-secretly-invested-in-own-shares-documents-suggest-india>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/16/adanis-epic-fall-reignites-scrutiny-on-tycoons-close-ties-modi-.html>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/31/modi-linked-adani-family-secretly-invested-in-own-shares-documents-suggest-india>

Chapter 4: Kashmir

In 2023, the Indian Supreme Court made the profoundly damaging decision to uphold the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, granting autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Article 35A of the Constitution, which empowered the state's legislature to define its permanent residents and confer special privileges and rights, has also been revoked.

With the removal of both guarantees, and the Supreme Court's support of this removal, the BJP-led Indian government has fulfilled its Hindu nationalist pledge to seize control of the historically autonomous region, inflamed anti-Muslim sentiment, and undermined the constitutional rights of residents of Kashmir.

The devastating decision has divided the region into two federal territories: Ladakh and Jammu-Kashmir, both to be ruled directly by the central government without the intervention of a locally elected legislature. Unelected government officials will continue to run the majority-Muslim region, which has lost its own constitution, flag, and criminal code.¹⁸⁶

Following the revocation of Article 370, the BJP led an extensive authoritarian crackdown in the region, involving a substantial deployment of armed forces, imprisonment of political leaders, imposition of stringent curfews, and a complete shutdown of the Internet that lasted for 18 months.¹⁸⁷

In an effort to usher in demographic change in favor of the ruling party, the

Modi regime is encouraging aggressive settlement of Kashmir by non-local Hindus, in 2023 constructing 6,000 "transit camp" houses for the purpose. Since 2019, over six million people have been granted residency rights in Jammu and Kashmir, a state of only eight million, in order to usher in the sought after political changes.¹⁸⁸

Suppressing Dissent

Attacks on activists, politicians, and journalists continued in 2023 as in years past, affecting Kashmiris in Kashmir, throughout India and throughout the rest of the world. Many of the activists who were arrested or who continue to be imprisoned in the state have been prosecuted under the draconian BJP-initiated Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), expansive anti-terrorism laws that enable authorities to imprison critics more or less at will.



In March 2023, Indian Journalist Irfan Mehraj, founding editor of *Wande Magazine*, was arrested by India's National Investigation Agency and held under false terrorism charges pursuant to the UAPA.

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/india-supreme-court-upholds-decision-remove-kashmir-special-status-rcna128982>

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/11/india-supreme-court-upholds-move-to-strip-kashmir-of-special-status>

¹⁸⁸ https://assets-global.website-files.com/6031a13f23a42e1120a8c37c/650b132fe545a72547a44ac5_Kashmir_Updates_August_2023.pdf

Mehraj was charged with collaborating with the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, a human rights organization that the BJP has also labeled as a terrorist group, having arrested its founder for the second time in 2023.¹⁸⁹

India is expanding the definition of ‘terrorism’ to include all forms of not just legitimate armed resistance to colonial rule, but also non-violent expression.” Kashmiri Journalist and editor Fahad Shah left prison in November 2023 after being held for 600 days, without evidence, under the UAPA.¹⁹⁰ As of November 30, 2023, Kashmiri journalist Aasif Sultan had been illegally imprisoned for 1,949 days.¹⁹¹

Beginning in November, Indian authorities began prohibiting demonstrations in support of Palestinians in Kashmir, arresting leaders of solidarity protests. The Indian government had banned Friday prayers at the region’s biggest mosque in Srinagar, the main city in Kashmir, and placed its cleric under house arrest each Friday.¹⁹²



In 2023, the Modi regime also targeted world-renowned author Arundhati Roy, along with Kashmiri academic Sheikh Showkat Hussain. Roy is charged with crimes related to stirring up communal tensions for a speech on Kashmir she made more than a decade ago, which was only brought to police attention after a rightwing activist filed a complaint under India’s oft-abused, colonial era sedition law.¹⁹³

In a more aggressive bid at suppressing Kashmiris, the Indian government revived a government sponsored militia called the “Village Defense Group” in 2023 to counter alleged anti-India insurgents. Previously, more than 200 police cases, including charges of rape, murder and rioting, were filed against some of the tens of thousands of Village Defense Group militiamen in Jammu region, according to government data.¹⁹⁴

The Kashmir government continued to use home and property destruction to terrorize and dispossess Kashmiri residents, many of whom had not been notified beforehand of the demolition drives. Taking place in the regions Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, and Baramulla, the eviction drives affected many homeowners who possessed documents proving ownership of their properties.

The government used British company JCB bulldozers. JCB’s failure to prevent such uses is a breach of the company’s responsibilities under humanitarian law, according to Amnesty international.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ <http://justiceforall.org/free-kashmir/irfan-mehraj>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/23/kashmiri-journalist-fahad-shah-walks-out-of-jail-after-600-days>

¹⁹¹ https://assets-global.website-files.com/6031a13f23a42e1120a8c37c/658daf39b9adca7007ab2a5b_Kashmir_Updates_November_2023.pdf

¹⁹² <https://apnews.com/article/india-kashmir-protests-israel-gaza-f4b431716decb1550522db2e49630d9e>

¹⁹³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/11/world/asia/arundhati-roy-kashmir.html>

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/india-revives-civil-militia-after-hindu-killings-in-kashmir/>

¹⁹⁵ <http://amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/india-jcb-bulldozers-being-used-house-demolitions-kashmir>

In addition to state-led persecution, Hindu nationalist paramilitaries attacked Kashmiris throughout India. In May, Hindu nationalist students assaulted a Kashmiri medical student with an iron rod in Jammu, after Muslim students had opposed a planned screening of the Islamophobic Bollywood Film “The Kerala Story.”¹⁹⁶

In August, a group of Hindu nationalist students assaulted Kashmiri students in Rajasthan after chanting Hindu nationalist slogans.¹⁹⁷ In September, Punjab-based Hindu nationalist students violently assaulted Kashmiri students, including a female student whose hijab was ripped off, who were protesting a university decision to transfer their admissions to a college lacking accreditation.¹⁹⁸

Technologies of Control

In 2023, BJP leaders introduced new technologies to enable the central government to exercise tighter control of everyone in the region, including forging direct cooperation agreements with major social media platforms to track individuals that the Jammu and Kashmir Police deem to be engaging in “anti-national” activities.¹⁹⁹

The government also implemented a new eight digit digital identity system, required for Kashmiris accessing social welfare benefits, which has raised fears among many of increased government’s

control over their lives.²⁰⁰ An additional downside of the new electronic system is that it has prevented Kashmiris from accessing welfare benefits during BJP-imposed Internet shutdowns. With 420 Internet shutdowns since 2014, when Modi first became prime minister, Kashmir has experienced more Internet shutdowns than anywhere else in the world.²⁰¹

In addition to systematic, pervasive physical surveillance, Indian authorities utilize extensive digital data collection and surveillance systems in IAK, including CCTV, facial recognition systems, and spyware from NSO Group’s Pegasus. This has been condemned by human rights groups around the world.

In 2023, Jammu & Kashmir Police installed a GPS ankle tracker on Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, a lawyer and political activist arrested for his alleged involvement in pro-self-determination political activity.²⁰²

Extrajudicial Killings and Arbitrary Detention

In 2023, Jammu and Kashmir Police continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain hundreds of individuals in an attempt to suppress any and all political activity.

In Poonch, the families of three tribal men have alleged that the Indian army tortured their kin and killed them after detaining them in custody. Purported

¹⁹⁶ <http://news.careers360.com/gmc-jammu-clash-kashmir-mbbs-students-the-kerala-story-hindu-muslim>

¹⁹⁷ <http://thekashmiriyat.co.uk/kashmiri-students-attacked-in-rajasthan-at-least-six-detained>

¹⁹⁸ <http://observerpost.com/hijabs-forcibly-pulled-from-our-heads-kashmiri-students-allegedly-thrashed-at-desh-bhagat-university-campus-closed-amid-protests>

¹⁹⁹ <http://theobserverpost.com/whatsapp-x-instagram-and-other-platforms-provide-free-access-to-jk-police-for-tracking-anti-national-elements-officials>

²⁰⁰ <http://modern diplomacy.eu/2023/02/20/india-issued-new-digital-ids-in-jammu-kashmir-surveillance-concerns>

²⁰¹ <https://internetshutdowns.in/>

²⁰² <https://www.kljp.org/articles/key-developments-in-the-human-rights-situation-in-indian-administered-kashmir-november-1-november-30-2023>

video clips show soldiers torturing men by spraying them with chili powder and assaulting them. According to villagers in the town, the killings appear to have been a random reprisal against innocent men not linked to any militant activities.²⁰³

In early November, Indian authorities allegedly arbitrarily detained several hundreds of individuals across Kashmir who they alleged were “over-ground workers,” or volunteers who provide paramilitary organizations with logistics assistance and arms.²⁰⁴ While there is limited

public reporting of this new round of mass detention, private reporting has confirmed the occurrence, although the scale is unknown.

Indian authorities also routinely resort to detentions for utterly trivial charges in Kashmir. Jammu & Kashmir Police arrested seven Kashmiri students at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology for “anti-national activity” for allegedly supporting the Australian team in the 2023 Men’s Cricket World Cup final.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ <https://scroll.in/article/1061326/in-poonch-deaths-in-army-custody-leave-tribal-community-with-a-bitter-sense-of-betrayal>

²⁰⁴ https://thekashmiriyat.co.uk/families-being-punished-eternally-hundreds-rounded-up-across-kashmir-in-name-of-ogw-says-sajad-lone/#google_vignette

²⁰⁵ <https://www.kjip.org/articles/key-developments-in-the-human-rights-situation-in-indian-administered-kashmir-november-1-november-30-2023>

Chapter 5: Dalits

Though the constitution of India prohibits discrimination based on caste and untouchability, India's most oppressed castes continue to face persecution and violence from both state and non-state actors. Some adherents to a Brahminical form of Hinduism continue to believe and uphold a vision of society where the lowest castes should be confined to degrading forms of labor and dehumanizing treatment at the hand of higher castes.



Concrete measures aimed at reducing the discrimination these views drive towards this communities—such as the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) Act of 1995 or the Prevention of Atrocities Act—have largely failed to achieve their stated aim, partially as a result of both deliberate ostracization at the level of civil society and partially as a result of deliberate attempts to inhibit progress from the BJP-ruled government.

Throughout India, BJP politicians promise to undo the affirmative action programs designed to empower both of

these minority communities. Comprising a shared 25% of India's population, Dalits still suffer from markedly lower levels of educational, professional, and economic attainment.

In 2023, Dalits continued to be subject to routine violence because of their status and political views. According to the latest data from India's National Crime Records Bureau, crimes against Dalits are up by 46.11% since 2013, increasing from 50,744 in 2021 to 57,428 in 2022. The atrocities are highest overall in two Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states.²⁰⁶

A November case is illustrative of the dehumanization to which Dalits, in particular Dalit women, are routinely subjected because of their caste. In September, a Dalit woman was brutally beaten by casteist groups and left drenched in blood in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. She suffered and remained in hospital care for weeks.

Earlier, in September, six men were arrested for assaulting, stripping, robbing and urinating on two Dalit youths. The group threatened the victims, aged 21 and 19, at knifepoint, and when the attackers found out they were Dalits, the group made the victims strip and urinated on them.²⁰⁷

In Rajasthan, a police officer raped a four-year-old Dalit girl while on election duty.²⁰⁸ Earlier in 2023, a group of men linked to the BJP-linked Hindu nationalist paramilitary group, RSS, gang-raped a Dalit girl, also in Rajasthan.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/free-to-hurt-editorial-on-ncrb-data-showing-increasing-crimes-against-advantaged-and-dalits/cid/1986509> <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/crimes-against-women-dalits-to-rise-in-uapa-cases-ncrb-data-beyond-numbers-news-337023>

²⁰⁷ <https://scroll.in/latest/1058524/tamil-nadu-six-arrested-for-assaulting-urinating-on-two-dalit-youths>

²⁰⁸ <https://theobserverpost.com/rajasthan-four-year-old-dalit-girl-raped-by-sub-inspector-on-election-duty-in-lalsot/>

²⁰⁹ <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/dalit-girl-gang-raped-in-rajasthan-accused-linked-to-rsss-student-outfit-abvp/>

Another disturbing incident of caste-based violence involved a 21-year-old Dalit man being assaulted by his employer simply for asking for his salary. When he and two other associates went to their boss's office a group of men beat them, struck them with belts, and dragged them around.

Dalsaniya was also forced to hold Patel's shoe in his mouth as an "apology."²¹⁰ India also saw a wave of suicides of Dalit university students in 2023, with 7 claiming their lives after encountering crippling discrimination among their peers.²¹¹

In Chhattisgarh state, the Hindu militant group Bajrang Dal harassed an Ambedkarite group and filed a police complaint against its members for selling books that criticized Hindutva, also known as Hindu nationalism or Hindu supremacy. The militants complained that the book

also referred to Adivasis, or Indian tribal communities, as "non-Hindus."

Ambedkarites are followers of the teachings of B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit rights leader who championed the end of caste-based oppression. Adivasi leaders have rejected the attempt by Hindu supremacists to "Hinduize" their religious practices.

Dalit communities also continue to be subject to extreme under-investment, with existing allocations amounting to only 37.79% of the targeted yearly amount. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) has commented, "There is a strong need for establishing clear mechanisms to provide protection and security to any victims of caste-based discrimination and violence. The current allocation is grossly inadequate."

²¹⁰ <https://www.siasat.com/dalit-man-seeks-salary-his-former-employer-forces-him-to-hold-her-footwear-in-mouth-2918735/>

²¹¹ https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/09/27/india-s-elite-schools-see-a-wave-of-suicides-among-dalit-students_6140378_4.html

Chapter 6: Adivasis

The ethnic forest-dwelling or tribal minorities in India,²¹² also collectively known as Adivasis, have lived in Indian forests for millennia. According to the 2011 census, the Adivasi community make up a substantial minority population in India, comprising up to 8.6% of the country's population or 104.2 million people. They have witnessed colossal injustices and land theft in the name of development and conservation.

In 2023, Adivasis continued to be sub-



ject to routine violence because of their status. According to the latest data from India's National Crime Records Bureau, crimes against Adivasis are up by 48.15%. Crimes against Adivasis increased from 8,625 in 2021 to 10,064 in 2022. The atrocities are highest overall in two Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states.²¹³

Violence against Adivasis shared the particularly degrading character of crimes

against Dalits. In July, a video of a man urinating on a tribal person in Madhya Pradesh went viral on social media, and shortly thereafter, footage of an assault of two tribal boys by a group of men in Madhya Pradesh was reported by the Indian press.²¹⁴ The man who urinated on the Adivasi individual is reportedly an aide to a local BJP councilor. Adivasis lower social status makes them frequent objects of interpersonal violence.

Earlier, in May, a Hindu supremacist group backed by the BJP-linked paramilitary group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) launched a campaign in Gujarat state to strip Christian and Muslim from indigenous tribes of government benefits.²¹⁵ With the support of the RSS, the Gujarat Janjati Suraksha Manch carried out a procession and a rally to demand that Muslim and Christian tribals be stripped of their constitutional rights.

The campaign is part of a broader trend of Hindu-nationalist politicians seeking to remove all affirmative action programs enshrined in India's constitution and intended to combat centuries of prejudice faced by both of these communities.

In September 2023, Adivasis continued to be subject to intense state and private sector violence in service of stealing their lands. The Rayagada, an Adivasi community in Odisha, face total displacement as mining companies attempt to seize village land for extracting Bauxite. Already living in extreme poverty, with little access to education and healthcare, the

²¹² <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/scs-sts-form-25--of-population-says-census-2011-data/1109988/>

²¹³ <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/free-to-hurt-editorial-on-ncrb-data-showing-increasing-crimes-against-adivasis-and-dalits/cid/1986509> <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/crimes-against-women-dalits-to-rise-in-uapa-cases-ncrb-data-beyond-numbers-news-337023>

²¹⁴ <https://www.boomlive.in/explainers/crimes-against-scheduled-tribes-on-the-rise-in-india-but-its-more-than-a-law-and-order-problem-22516>

²¹⁵ <https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/ahmedabad-rss-backed-outfit-launches-campaign-to-remove-christian-tribals-from-st-quota>

Rayagada have vigorously protested the land-theft.

In retaliation, they have been subjected to a campaign of violence, intimidation, arbitrary arrest, judicial torture and harassment by police and officials working for the company tasked with setting up the mine. As in other cases of opposition, the BJP has labeled the Rayagada community as “terrorists” in an attempt to delegitimize and prosecute their defense. The mining company reportedly donated millions of dollars to the local BJP affiliate to help secure rights to mine in the area.²¹⁶

The Rayagada land seizure is part of an ambitious land seizure project, which the BJP-ruled government advanced in 2023 with the passage of the historic, and misleadingly named, Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill. Passed without due process through a hand-picked BJP legislative committee, the bill will enable the BJP to more easily seize land for purposes of developing tourist attractions, palm tree monoculture crops, mining, and cultivating demographic areas favorable to BJP policies.²¹⁷

The amendments will reportedly permit the BJP to seize control over 40% of the Adivasi-inhabited Aravalli range and 95% of the Niyamgiri Hill range, where groups protested the establishment of mining and industrial activities.²¹⁸

The bill aims to remove checks and balances from local politicians who might oppose expropriations, in particular around the 15,000 kilometers of international border in the Himalayan region, the north-eastern states, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Western Ghats, where paramilitary forces will have legal sanction to clear areas affected by so-called “left-wing extremism.” In Manipur, the BJP government has already proceeded with plans to evict the Kuki-Zomi groups from their ancestral lands by claiming that they had illegally migrated from Myanmar and cultivated poppy that encroached on forest preserves.²¹⁹

Commenting on the displacement of Adivasis in Manipur, Gwasinlo Thomg, a Rengma Naga from Sendenyu village in Kohima, said, “Any attempt to disturb them will endanger the very existence of these community forest lands. The government should consult the stakeholders and civil societies. How can we let a committee with members from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, or Madhya Pradesh decide what they do with our forests?”²²⁰

In addition to direct attacks on Adivasi communities, there is the broader problem of systematic underfunding of Adivasi programs. Though allocated budget funds are widely considered insufficient to meet Adivasi needs, the little that is allocated largely goes unspent. A devastating 60% of the latest budgetary allocation reportedly went unspent last year.²²¹

²¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/nov/10/indian-villagers-fear-torture-fight-bauxite-mine-ativasis>
²¹⁷ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/forest-bill-and-monoculture-threaten-indigenous-rights-in-north-east-india/article66879929.ece>

²¹⁸ <https://thewire.in/politics/failed-promises-and-tokenism-why-modis-renewed-tribal-push-doesnt-exude-confidence>
²¹⁹ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/forest-bill-and-monoculture-threaten-indigenous-rights-in-north-east-india/article66879929.ece>

²²⁰ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/forest-bill-and-monoculture-threaten-indigenous-rights-in-north-east-india/article66879929.ece>

²²¹ <https://thewire.in/politics/failed-promises-and-tokenism-why-modis-renewed-tribal-push-doesnt-exude-confidence>

Recommendations

For the U.S. Government

- The U.S. Department of State should accept the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommendation to designate India as a Country for Particular Concern (CPC) for its egregious violations of human rights and religious freedoms.
- The President of the U.S. has the power to place sanctions on individuals who have committed, directly aided, ordered, or are complicit in gross human rights violations through the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. These sanctions include barring entry to the U.S. or blocking any transactions relating to property or interests held in the U.S.
- These sanctions could also be applicable to those responsible for—or complicit in—the ongoing persecution of religious minorities, including politicians and elected officials from India’s ruling political party, the BJP. It also includes those at the federal level and in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand, along with the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS). Also the Indian security agencies, including the Indian military for their decades-long persecution of religious minorities and dissenters, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, the northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh, and the eastern states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Odisha.
- The U.S. government should use its diplomatic channels to express concern over the issue of religious persecution in India and publicly condemn any acts of violence or discrimination against religious minorities.
- The U.S. State Department must include human rights and religious freedoms as an integral part of the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue.
- The government must also make defense relations and the sale of U.S. weaponry and systems conditional on an improvement of human rights conditions in India.
- The government must use its trade and economic leverage to encourage the Indian government to take action to protect the rights of religious minorities. This can include linking trade agreements and economic aid to improvements when it comes to human rights.
- It must also provide support to civil society organizations in India that are working to promote religious tolerance and protect the rights of religious minorities. This can include providing funding and resources to these organizations, as well as partnering with them to promote their work.
- The government must support international human rights monitor-

ing in India to ensure that the issue of religious persecution is being monitored and addressed. This can include supporting the work of the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other international organizations working to promote human rights in India.

- The U.S. government must improve the security and freedom from persecution of U.S.-based human rights organizations currently threatened by the Indian government's campaign of transnational repression and Hindu nationalist violence.

For India's Union and State Governments

- As state parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention, the Union government is obligated to take the repeated calls for genocide and mass violence against Muslims and Christians throughout India seriously, condemn the genocidal sentiments, and hold those who made the speeches accountable.

- As signatories of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, the Union government has a responsibility to ensure that police effectively investigate, prosecute, and prevent instances of harassment and violence committed against religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians.

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

- The Union government must reformulate the existing guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for police and other forces coming under the ambit of the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding their conduct in dealing with protesters.

- The Union government must form an emergency response team to track and register complaints against the excesses committed by the police and other security forces during the protests led by members of minority communities.

- The Union government must repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and stop using the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to disenfranchise Muslims.

- The Union government must pass a national anti-lynching bill to protect religious minorities from Hindu militias and cow vigilante groups.

- The Union government must stop using the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act to target human rights NGOs from being able to operate in India.
- The Union government must stop using draconian laws, including the UAPA, PSA, and NSA, to arbitrarily arrest and detain activists, journalists, and dissenters.
- The Union government must devise means to bridge the gaps in the existing legislation that result in the persistence of sexual violence against women from the Adivasi and Dalit communities.
- The Union government must reinstate Kashmir's special status and stop its attempts to alter the region's demography by changing the electoral register.
- The Union governments must uphold every citizen's right to a safe home and immediately stop bulldozing Muslim homes, livelihoods and places of worship in the name of anti-encroachment.
- The Union government must give NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International full access to court hearings, jails, and detention centers to ensure complete transparency and allow NGOs to report accurate information on the human rights situation in the region.
- The Union government must stop using Internet blackouts to censor the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They must ensure that citizens are able to access the Internet.
- The Union government and state governments must stop weaponizing education. BJP-ruled state governments must ensure education is secular. The Union government must reinstate scholarships for religious minorities to ensure they are able to continue accessing education.
- The BJP-ruled state governments should repeal their beef ban laws which are used as a pretext by the Hindu militias and cow vigilante groups to commit atrocities against Muslims over allegations of selling, transporting, slaughtering, or consuming beef.
- The BJP-ruled state governments should ensure that all citizens have the right to freedom of religion, as guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. They should repeal the anti-conversion laws, which have been used to disproportionately target Muslims and Christians and justify harassment and violence.