

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing
on
Discrimination and Persecution Against Muslims Worldwide

June 30, 2022 - 10 a.m.
VIRTUAL

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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Islamophobia and the impending genocide of Muslims in India

Far from living up to its name as the world's largest democracy, India is now in the midst of an authoritarian crackdown on human rights and civil liberties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) openly champion Hindutva, an ideology that holds Hindus as superior to other Muslims and Christians and calls for India to be designated as



Hindu nation rather than a secular democracy.¹ In Modi's India, the government refuses to condemn the violent vigilantism of Hindu supremacist groups that actively threaten and lynch minorities; the mainstream media serves as a mouthpiece for genocidal propaganda; the judiciary cracks down on minorities while allowing Hindu supremacists who commit violent hate crimes to walk free; journalists are detained under anti-terror laws for tweeting about human rights abuses; religious conversions are criminalized; government authorities call for violence against minorities with no repercussions; and activists' homes are bulldozed as retaliation for their dissent. Most alarmingly, over 200 million Muslims are at risk of mass violence and potential genocide, a threat that is a direct result of the discriminatory policies and hate speech pushed by elected officials at the highest levels of government.

International bodies have been thorough in documenting - and in many instances condemning - India's backsliding on human rights, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,² the United States Commission on International Religious

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/20/hindu-supremacists-nationalism-tearing-india-apart-modi-bjp-rss-jnu-attacks>

² <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-dismisses-criticism-of-teesta-setalvad-s-arrest-by-un-human-rights-agency-101656497580486.html>

Freedom (USCIRF), the US State Department, Amnesty International, Genocide Watch, the Committee to Project Journalists, and Freedom House. USCIRF in particular has recommended that India be designated as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for three consecutive years.³ International Religious Freedom Act defines a CPC as a country that has engaged in or tolerated “systematic, ongoing, and egregious” violations of religious freedom.

Human Rights Watch says: “Attacks against religious minorities in India, especially Muslims, have increased especially since the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in 2014. BJP leaders and affiliated groups have long stigmatized minority communities as a threat to national security and to the Hindu way of life... this divisive political discourse has served to normalize violence against minorities, especially Muslims, in India. Prejudices embedded in the government have infiltrated independent institutions, such as the police, empowering nationalist groups to threaten, harass, and attack religious minorities with impunity.”⁴

Hate Speech and Calls for Genocide

Hate speech against Muslims has become normalized in all factors of society. In particular, hate speech by high-ranking politicians has skyrocketed by 1130% since Modi won office in 2014, according to a tracker run by NDTV, a mainstream news channel. Of these hate speeches, NDTV reported, 80% were given by the BJP leaders.⁵

The most recent example of this is the case of Nupur Sharma, who in June 2022 made offensive and blasphemous comments about Prophet Muhammad during a television broadcast while serving in her capacity as an official spokesperson for the BJP. Sharma was only suspended from the party as a punitive measure after her comments triggered international backlash. She has not been arrested for triggering unrest and protests across the country.

Other allies of Modi have openly incited hatred and violence against Muslims. Home Minister Amit Shah referred to Muslims as “termites”. In 2020, a number of BJP leaders told their Hindu supporters to “shoot the traitors of the nation,” referring to Muslims who protested the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act. That same slogan was chanted by Hindu extremist mobs who murdered more than 35 Muslims in Delhi in February 2020.⁶

Open calls for a genocide of 200 million Muslims have also become normalized. During a Hindu supremacist event in Hindu holy city of Haridwar, Uttarakhand, in December 2021, several prominent Hindu clerics directly called for the mass slaughter of Muslims, even going so far as

³ <https://www.uscifr.gov/annual-reports>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/22/testimony-john-sifton-asia-advocacy-director-human-rights-watch>

⁵ <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/bjp-tops-indias-vip-hate-pandemic-ndtv-finds-2703827&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1657032594244856&usg=AOvVaw3gntyOILr1IPAKqLYxCB8y>

⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy>

to call it a “cleanse” for India. Hindu attendees were repeatedly advised to buy weapons and be prepared to kill Muslims in order to turn India into a Hindu nation. Of these clerics, Sadhavi Annapurna Maa, general secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha political party, made perhaps the most direct call for genocide: “If you want to eliminate their population (Muslims), then kill them... Even if 100 of us are ready to kill 20 lakhs of them, then we will be victorious.”⁷

The media has circulated anti-Muslim propaganda, most notably during the Covid-19 pandemic, when Muslims were scapegoated as the prime spreaders of the virus. The Editors Guild of India has compared Indian media to Radio Rwanda, which pushed propaganda that eventually led to the Rwandan genocide, with their promotion of genocide by “deliberately creating circumstances that target vulnerable communities by spewing hatred towards them and their beliefs.”⁸

Hate speeches by Hindu extremists rarely have repercussions, as demonstrated by the anti-minority bias in India’s courts. When speaking on a plea for action against BJP leaders hate speech had triggered anti-Muslim violence by Hindu extremist mobs in 2020, Justice Chandra Dhari Singh of the Delhi High Court claimed that hate speeches against minorities have “no criminality” if the person giving the hate speech does so “while smiling.” Otherwise, he added, “I think 1,000 FIRs may be lodged against all politicians during [the] election.”⁹

However, this same principle is not applied to Muslims. Umar Khalid, a Muslim activist, remains imprisoned for making a speech that called upon Indians to protest the crackdown of the Modi regime. A number of journalists, including Fahad Shah, Sajad Gul, and Siddique Kappan, have been detained and charged with sedition simply for reporting on human rights abuses. Recently, Mohammad Zubair, founder of the news portal AltNews, was arrested for tweeting a clip of a 1980s Bollywood movie that a single Hindu extremist Twitter user claimed was offensive.

Mob Lynchings

Muslim men have increasingly come under the threat of being publicly beaten, kidnapped, and lynched by Hindu supremacist mobs.¹⁰ Often, these are cases of “cow vigilantism,” during which Hindu extremists seek to punish Muslims under mere suspicion of selling, transporting, or consuming beef. However, Muslims also face the threat of being lynched by Hindu mobs simply for being the easy targets. Among the most devastating incidents of mob lynching is the case of 24-year-old Tabrez Ansari, who was kidnapped by Hindu supremacists over false accusation of bike theft. Tabrez was then tied to a tree, beaten, and forced to chant “Glory to lord Ram,” while his torture was filmed by the Hindu extremists who had kidnapped him. Instead of being taken to a hospital, he was arrested, and died of his injuries two days later.

⁷ <https://thewire.in/communalism/hindutva-leaders-dharma-sansad-muslim-genocide>

⁸ <https://thewire.in/media/nupur-sharma-tv-debate-editors-guild>

⁹ <https://scroll.in/latest/1020410/hate-speech-if-remarks-are-made-with-a-smile-there-is-no-criminality-says-delhi-high-court>

¹⁰ <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/21/751541321/this-is-it-im-going-to-die-indias-minorities-are-targeted-in-lynchings>

More recent incidents of mob lynchings include the case of Mohammad Saleem (55), a vegetable seller who was hit by a van and then beaten to death by a Hindu mob with iron pipes and wooden sticks; Mohammad Khaleel Alam (35), who was kidnapped by Hindu extremists for eating beef, recorded pleading for his life by his captors, and beaten to death; and Sameer Shahpur (19), who was stabbed to death by a Hindu extremist mob while out riding his motorbike.

In many cases, the lynchings are filmed and circulated on social media, particularly through WhatsApp, leading to the celebration of the murderers by other Hindu supremacists.

Forced Statelessness

Through a number of discriminatory policies, the BJP have sought to strip Muslims of their right to citizenship. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed in 2019, provided a pathway to Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians, and who arrived in India before the end of December 2014. The law, however, does not grant such eligibility to Muslims from these Muslim-majority countries. When combined with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR), this bundle of anti-Muslim policy threatens the citizenship rights of Indian Muslims.¹¹ As a result, 200 million Muslims could be subjected to forced statelessness and a massive refugee crisis.

Hindu Extremist Rallies and Punitive Demolitions

April 2022 coincided with the month of Ramadan as well as the Hindu festival of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti. Throughout India, Hindu extremist groups associated with the BJP led armed rallies through Muslim-majority areas in “celebration” of both festivals, including in Indian capital of New Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Goa, Bihar and West Bengal states.¹² Videos taken by witnesses show Hindu extremist mobs armed with swords, guns and rods, taking out processions through Muslim areas, blasting Islamophobic songs, chanting Hindu religious slogans, arsoning and vandalizing mosques, and attacking Muslim families, homes, businesses. Many of these rallies were either carried out in the presence of police or aided by Hindu extremist officers.

Muslims who attempted to defend themselves and their homes were arrested and charged with rioting. The Hindu extremists who instigated the violence walked free. In Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Delhi, Muslims were doubly victimized as officials demolished their homes and businesses. As a result, bulldozing Muslim-owned properties became a means of silencing

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy>

¹² <https://thewire.in/communalism/watch-ram-navami-violence-is-this-modis-new-india>

Muslims who attempted to defend themselves or dissent against Hindu supremacist authorities.¹³ The bulldozer is now a celebrated symbol of the Hindu supremacist movement and the BJP.

Muslim Women and Gendered Violence

In addition to sharing the threats faced by Muslim men, Muslim women face the additional danger of sexual violence and rape threats. Hindu extremist leaders have openly threatened to rape Muslim women as a way to “punish” Muslim men, including Bajrang Muni Das Udasin, who declared that he would “abduct and brazenly rape Muslim women in public.”¹⁴ Udsain has not been arrested for his hate speech.

In July 2021, a mock auction app created by Hindu extremists named Sulli Deals made headlines for “auctioning” vocal Muslim women as maids and prostitutes, as well as for sharing their pictures and their social media handles without consent. While a number of women filed police reports, no investigation was conducted until 2022, after a similar app called Bulli Bai was launched.¹⁵ Five Hindu extremists involved in creating both apps were arrested and later released on bail.

Other social media platforms have also been weaponized to circulate rape threats and violent fantasies about Muslim women. Watchdog accounts on Instagram and Twitter reported that a since-deleted Reddit thread called “Muslimah For Hindu Men” with over 15,000 users was filled with hate speech, sexist slurs, and rape fantasies by Hindu men against Muslim women.¹⁶ Hindu extremist trolls also launch coordinated attacks against Muslim women activists, academics, and journalists, including Washington Post columnist Rana Ayyub, who in February 2022 reported that she had received over over 26,000 rape and death threats over Twitter.¹⁷

Economic Boycott of Muslims

On a number of occasions, Hindu extremist leaders have called for economic boycotts of Muslims. Swami Anand Swaroop, a speaker at the Haridwar 2021 event, encouraged both an economic boycott of Muslims as well as genocide: “You decide that you will not buy anything from a Muslim. If you destroy them socially, politically and economically, they will begin converting to Hinduism from Islam... Pick up swords, guns or whatever you have. War has been declared and it will go on till we have a Hindu nation.”

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/04/india-authorities-must-stop-apparent-unlawful-demolitions-of-largely-muslim-owned-property/>

¹⁴ <https://www.siasat.com/up-amidst-cheers-hindutva-seer-threatens-to-rape-muslim-women-2304664/>

¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/2/bulli-bai-muslim-women-auction-online-india>

¹⁶ https://twitter.com/amit_tushar/status/1481546889447153665

¹⁷ <https://thewire.in/government/mumbai-police-file-fir-after-journalist-rana-ayyub-receives-online-death-rape-threats>

In BJP-ruled Karnataka state, Muslim vendors have been banned from selling their wares in so-called Hindu areas, particularly near temples.¹⁸ The organizers of a popular non-religious festival put up signs stating for the first time that non-Hindu vendors were not allowed to set up stalls. Hindu extremist vigilante groups have sought to enforce the law by attacking Muslim vendors and destroying their wares.¹⁹

Attacks on Mosques & Churches

Hindu extremist mobs have frequently targeted mosques, churches, and other spaces of worship for minorities. The New York Times reports that during the 2020 Delhi riots, a mosque was set ablaze by a Hindu mob chanting “Glory to Lord Ram.” In May 2021, officials in the BJP-controlled state of Uttar Pradesh bulldozed a mosque that had been standing since the era of British rule. In October 2021 in Tripura state, Hindu extremists arsoned a number of mosques in “retaliation” for an attack on a Hindu shrine in neighboring Bangladesh.²⁰ During the April 2022 violence, a number of mosques and Muslim shrines were vandalized and set ablaze, sometimes in the presence of police.

In Gurugram, a few miles away from India’s capital New Delhi, 80 spaces designated for Muslim prayers have been shut down by Hindu extremists in the past three years.²¹ Friday congregational prayers are routinely protested and disrupted by Hindu extremists.

Churches and other Christian spaces have also been desecrated throughout India, according to International Christian Concern. In November 2021, a newly-opened Delhi church was vandalized during its first Sunday prayer. Just a day after, extremists broke into a Christian prayer hall in the state of Karnataka.²² In December 2021, a mob of over 50 extremists pelted stones at a Christian missionary school while students were inside.²³

Hindu extremists have also increasingly raised calls to demolish or alter the history of historic mosques and Muslim monuments, including the Taj Mahal, claiming that these landmarks were built on Hindu temples. Hindu extremists called for the wall of Uttar Pradesh’s 353-year-old

¹⁸ <https://thewire.in/communalism/karnataka-ah-vishwanath-anil-benake-muslim-traders>

¹⁹ <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-goons-vandalise-watermelon-pushcarts-of-muslim-traders-2305667/>

²⁰ <https://theprint.in/india/tripura-mosque-attacks-ground-report-on-what-really-happened-during-those-8-days-in-october/767110/>

²¹ <https://www.newslaundry.com/2022/04/18/we-dont-want-conflict-dont-want-to-fight-the-battle-of-shrinking-namaz-space-for-gurugram-muslims>

²² <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-activists-intensify-attacks-on-indian-christian-prayer-meets/95170#>

²³ https://www.google.com/url?q=https://thewire.in/communalism/missionary-school-in-mp-vandalised-by-hindu-right-groups-principal-alleges-police-inaction&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1657040776918115&usg=AOvVaw2Ja4hL8gk_Y3Wryuy8tS-T

Gyanvapi mosque to be demolished after claiming that the mosque's ablution fountain was a representation of the Hindu deity Shiva.²⁴ Similar threats were made against Shahi Idgah mosque, which Hindu extremists have repeatedly called for the demolition of to make way for a temple.²⁵

Anti-Conversion Laws

Ten states in India have passed anti-conversion laws that seek to criminalize religious conversion from Hinduism to other faiths, driven by the Hindu nationalist "Love Jihad" conspiracy theory that Muslim men have an agenda to convert Hindu women through marriage.²⁶ Under the new law, interfaith couples - particularly Muslim men who marry Hindu women - must give a notice of two months to the district magistrate before getting married. Family members, if unhappy with the idea of a Hindu woman marrying a Muslim, have the right to press charges of forced conversion, even if the woman in question testifies that the marriage was her choice. If convicted based on such complaints, a person can be jailed for up to ten years. While the laws are claimed to be protection only against forced conversion, in reality, they make it impossible for people to convert or marry a person of a different faith without attracting Hindu supremacist backlash and legal harassment.

Hijab Ban

In December 2021, colleges in Karnataka state began banning students from wearing the hijab to class, despite the fact that the school year had already begun and no such rule had existed prior. Students who refused to comply with the bans were barred entry into their classrooms and faced harassment from the school administration as well as from their peers, resulting in protests across India from Muslims and attempts to push similar bans in other states.

Many of the students who protested publicly were threatened and accused of being part of an anti-India conspiracy by BJP politicians and Hindu supremacist group leaders. A number of minor girls and their families were doxxed by the BJP over Twitter. Students were also harassed by Hindu extremist mobs outside of school, many of which comprised of adult men shouting Hindu nationalist slogans at young women.

In March 2022, the Karnataka High Court ruled that the hijab should be banned in schools, forcing tens of thousands of young Muslim women to choose between their education and their clothing.²⁷ The Supreme Court has not treated the matter with any urgency and has yet to hear the students' appeal of the ban.

²⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/25/india-gyanvapi-mosque-varanasi-temple/>

²⁵ <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/after-babri-masjid-india-s-far-right-seeks-to-raze-several-other-mosques-47518>

²⁶ <https://theintercept.com/2021/07/03/love-jihad-law-india/>

²⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/15/india-court-upholds-karnataka-states-ban-on-hijab-in-class>

The complicity of the Media & Persecution of Journalists

India's ranking in the world Press Freedom Index in 2022 has fallen to 150 out of 180 countries. This is India's lowest ever ranking in the press freedom index.²⁸ Journalists in India are increasingly being prosecuted for writing stories critical of the government and the Hindu nationalist ideology. The mainstream media has bowed down and become a mouthpiece of the ruling dispensation. In such an atmosphere those few who speak truth to the power are at a risk of prosecution. This is most starkly visible in Kashmir where four journalists, Aasif Sultan, Fahad Shah, Sajad Gul and Manan Dar remain lodged in prison. Assif Sultan has spent more than three years in jail without bail. The State has used draconian terror laws to keep the journalists behind the bars.

The Washington Post's Global Opinion writer, Rana Ayyub is perhaps the most hated journalist in India. She continues to be abused, threatened, trolled and faces coordinated misogynist online attacks by the supporters of the ruling BJP. In 2017, Journalist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead by Hindu extremists at her residence. Over the last few years, 10 sedition cases were filed against three of Caravan magazine's senior most editorial staff, in five states. The magazine's twitter account was suspended. Four of Caravan's journalists were attacked in 2 separate incidents while reporting. This year four journalists were assaulted and narrowly escaped a bloodthirsty mob in Delhi while reporting on a Hindu Dharamsansad.

Journalist Siddiqui Kappan has been in jail for nearly two years now. He was arrested while he was on his way to Uttar Pradesh for reporting the brutal murder and rape of a Dalit woman.

²⁸ <https://scroll.in/latest/1023191/indias-rank-on-world-press-freedom-index-falls-eight-places-to-150>