

What's happening to Indian Muslims?

Supporters of the Indian government routinely claim that Muslims face no persecution in India - while often, in the same breath, claiming that Muslims are responsible for their own marginalization in modern Indian society.

This factsheet will break down the ways in which political forces, vigilantes, corporations, and fundamental government institutions are all weaponized against Indian Muslims, resulting in skyrocketing violence, discrimination, and even pushes towards ethnic cleansing.

But first - who are Indian Muslims?

India has one of the [largest](#) Muslim populations in the world, with 200 million people (about 14% of the overall population) comprising the nation's second-largest religious group and largest religious minority. Indian Muslims are no monolith - you'll find them in every Indian state, encompassing a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, linguistic groups, and forms of religious practice.

Aren't Islam and Muslims foreign to India?

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Islam [arrived in India](#) as early as the 7th century via Arab traders. The [Cheraman Juma Masjid](#), said to be the first mosque built on the subcontinent, was reportedly constructed in the South Indian state of Kerala in 629 C.E. - over 800 years before Muslim emperors ruled India.

Throughout Indian history, Muslims have made significant contributions to the nation's culture, political movements, and society. Well-known elements of Indian culture, including [henna](#), [biryani](#), [Hindustani](#) classical music, and [architectural marvels](#) like the Taj Mahal, the Qutb Minar, and the Red Fort are all products of Muslim influence and integration throughout the subcontinent.

Muslim freedom fighters played a [prominent role](#) in the Indian independence movement. In the late 18th century, the Muslim ruler [Tipu Sultan](#) fought several battles against the British, and the anti-colonial slogan "Inquilab Zindabad" - meaning "Long Live the Revolution" - was first raised by Muslim freedom fighter [Maulana Hasrat Mohani](#).

In modern times, Muslims have advanced India's cultural influence through entertainment, including music (composers like [A.R. Rahman](#)) and filmography (actors like [Shah Rukh Khan](#)). Meanwhile, Muslim activists have been at the forefront of movements protesting [discriminatory laws](#) and [policies](#) imposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu supremacist government.

What are the current forms of persecution faced by Muslims in India?

Muslims face increasing violence, discriminatory laws and policies, judicial discrimination, and rampant hate speech. Anti-Muslim hate speech is rampant at Hindu supremacist events and election rallies, in BJP leaders' speeches, in mainstream news media, and on social media.

In this climate of hate, violence against Muslim has drastically increased. Muslim men - including those who are mentally ill or elderly - have been beaten and lynched by Hindu mobs over road accidents, allegations of theft, and accusations of being in relationships with Hindu women. Muslims also face targeted communal violence during Hindu holidays, during which Hindu mobs attempt to trigger outbreaks of violence by holding armed religious processions in Muslim neighborhoods, blasting genocidal music while dancing in front of mosques, and attacking homes and mosques with stone pelting, vandalism, and arson.

Additionally, the Modi government has passed a number of discriminatory laws and policies that directly target Muslims' basic human rights. These include the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), a law that blocks Muslims from obtaining fast-tracked citizenship; the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which prevents minorities from following their religious laws in personal affairs; and anti-conversion laws, which criminalize interfaith relationships and conversion to Islam and Christianity.

At all levels, India's judiciary has repeatedly failed to protect the rights of Muslims by upholding discriminatory practices, entertaining Hindu supremacist abuse of the courts, or failing to adequately penalize anti-Muslim hate crimes and hate speech.

What are some examples of discriminatory laws and policies targeting Muslims in India?

The Modi government has passed a number of discriminatory laws and policies that directly target Muslims' basic human rights. These include:

- **The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**, a law that blocks Muslims from obtaining fast-tracked citizenship. Experts warn that the CAA could be used to strip millions of their citizenship.
- **The Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**, which mandates that all people follow a common law regarding matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. Critics warn that the UCC, formulated by a Hindu supremacist government, would trample upon minorities' right to follow religious laws in personal matters.
- **Anti-conversion laws**, which have been passed in several BJP-ruled states to prevent forced religious conversions. However, in practice, these laws criminalize interfaith relationships and conversion to Islam and Christianity.
- **"Bulldozer justice"**, in which civic authorities demolish Muslim-owned homes and businesses. Activists have labeled these punitive demolitions as a form of [collective punishment](#) due to the fact that they are often carried out in the aftermath of Hindu supremacist mob violence, or after Muslims peacefully protest abuses against them. Amnesty International has labeled this policy as being a violation of international human rights law.

Existing laws have also been used to discriminate against Muslims, such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), a draconian anti-terror law that allows the government to prosecute individuals as terrorists and detain them indefinitely without trial or bail. This law has been used to imprison a number of Muslim activists and journalists.

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What are some notable incidents of violence and discrimination against Muslims in recent years?

In recent years, there have been a number of notable incidents of anti-Muslim violence and discrimination. These include:

- **The 2020 Delhi Pogrom**, during which Hindu mobs [attacked and lynched](#) Muslims after a BJP leader called for anti-Muslim violence. Out of the 53 people killed, around two thirds were Muslim. Muslims were beaten to death, forced to strip to reveal their circumcisions, attacked in front of their families, and burned to death.
- **Hijab bans in schools, 2022**. In formerly BJP-ruled Karnataka, the High Court ruled that schools were allowed to ban Muslim students from wearing the hijab on school grounds, despite allowing Hindu students to wear saffron scarves. The unconstitutional and discriminatory ruling, which followed the widespread harassment of hijabi students, led hundreds of Muslim women to drop out or be expelled from school between 2022 and 2023.
- **Violence celebrating the Ram Temple consecration, 2024**. On January 22, the Modi government held the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir, a Hindu temple built on the site where a Hindu militant mob violently demolished the centuries-old Babri Mosque in 1992. During the buildup to the consecration as well as the celebrations afterward, extremist groups held processions to assault and verbally abuse Muslims. Hindu mobs also attacked Muslim graveyards, neighborhoods, and mosques in the name of celebrating the Ram Temple.
- **Release of Hindu militants convicted of rape and murder during the Gujarat pogrom**. In 2022, the Supreme Court [facilitated freedom](#) for 11 Hindu extremists who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for gang-raping a Muslim woman and murdering several members of her family, including her three-year-old daughter, during the Gujarat pogrom. A year later, a Gujarat court [acquitted](#) 67 Hindu extremists and militant leaders who were accused and convicted in the burning of 11 Muslims alive in the Naroda Gam massacre, one of the major cases of deadly Hindu mob violence during the pogrom.
- **Yearly targeted communal violence during Hindu holidays**. Hindu mobs attempt to trigger outbreaks of violence by engaging in acts of intimidation and provocation,

including by holding armed religious processions in Muslim neighborhoods, blasting genocidal music while dancing in front of mosques, and attacking homes and mosques with stone pelting, vandalism, and arson.

How does hate speech contribute to the persecution of Muslims in India?

Anti-Muslim hate speech is rampant at Hindu supremacist events and election rallies, in BJP leaders' speeches, in mainstream news media, and on social media.

As [reported](#) by India Hate Lab, a Washington D.C. based research group, Hindu supremacist hate speech takes the form of “conspiracy theories (love jihad, land jihad, economic jihad, [etc.]); calls for violence; calls to arms; calls for social or economic boycott; speeches targeting places of worship; speeches targeting Rohingya refugees living in India; speeches targeting Muslim women; speeches delivered by BJP leaders; speeches delivered by Hindu religious leaders; [and] mention of the Israel-Gaza war to demonize Indian Muslims.”

Some examples of hate speech by prominent Hindu supremacists include the following quotes:

- “Gyanvapi mosque taunts us... give us permission, we will install Gauri, Ganesh and Nandi (Hindu deities) in every mosque.” [Yogi Adityanath](#), Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh
- “Shoot the traitors to the nation.” - [Kapil Mishra](#), BJP leader, referencing Muslim protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)
- “I want to inform those who speak against Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) that we will pull out their tongues if they do so. Those who look at it with disdain, we will pluck out every such eye.” - [Gajendra Singh Shekhawat](#), Union Minister and BJP leader
- “If 100 of us are ready to kill two million of them (Muslims), then we will win and make India a Hindu nation.” - [Pooja Shakun Pandey](#), Hindu supremacist leader
- “Like Myanmar, the police, politicians, the army and every Hindu in India must pick up weapons and do this cleansing [of Muslims]. There is no other option left.” - [Prabodhanand Giri](#), president of the Hindu Raksha Sena

What role does the media play in the persecution of Muslims in India?

Since coming to power, Modi has cultivated a symbiotic relationship between his government and the media. Four of India's five most-watched English language channels are managed by individuals with connections to Modi or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Modi's billionaire friend, Mukesh Ambani, owns 70 media outlets with a combined viewership of 800 million Indians. Due to this close relationship between the media and the government, news coverage from these mainstream outlets have become largely shaped by Hindu supremacist narratives and government propaganda.

The result has been an outpouring of anti-minority sentiment from the mainstream media, including through glorifying anti-Muslim violence, broadcasting hate speech, and airing disinformation. In its 2024 India report, Reporters Without Borders declared that Indian media has been in an “unofficial state of emergency” since Modi came to power.

In June 2022, the Editors' Guild of India [compared](#) the mainstream media to Radio Rwanda - a media outlet that played a major role in garnering support for the Rwandan Genocide. The Guild criticized a number of Indian channels for "deliberately creating circumstances that target vulnerable communities by spewing hatred towards them and their beliefs."

How are social media platforms complicit in the ongoing persecution of Muslims?

India is one of the main originators of online anti-Muslim content globally. According to a [2021 study](#) by the Islamic Council of Victoria, 55% of all anti-Muslim hate speech being posted by Indian social media users. US-based social media companies, particularly Meta, X, and YouTube have played a significant role in this normalization of anti-Muslim hate speech, which in turn fuels real-world discrimination and violence.

Despite the fact that violent anti-Muslim content is widely shared among far-right Indian users - including calls for Muslims to be killed, videos of mob lynchings and other attacks, dehumanizing memes, and disinformation falsely accusing Muslims of crimes - those who encourage and amplify such content rarely face consequences.

As the Washington Post reports, Facebook executives "shy away" from punishing the BJP and its supporters, resulting in what one Facebook employee called "a near constant barrage of polarizing nationalist content, misinformation, and violence and gore." In 2020, Facebook India's policy head Ankhi Das resigned after she was [exposed](#) for instructing employees not to punish BJP politicians for violating the platform's hate speech policy.

Meanwhile, Elon Musk's X has blocked content relating to protests against the government's exclusionary Citizenship Amendment Act, posts debunking Hindutva propaganda, and links to watch "India: the Modi Question," a BBC documentary that draws attention to Modi's role in the Gujarat pogrom.

YouTube has also allowed Hindu supremacists to spread hate speech through their channels. In 2023, the Washington Post [reported](#) that prominent cow vigilante Monu Manesar received a "Silver Creator" plaque from YouTube despite livestreaming and posting videos of his violent attacks against Muslims. Other Hindu supremacist channels styled after talk shows, such as PGurus and the Jaipur Dialogues, have not been penalized despite [amplifying](#) anti-Muslim hate speech and platforming hateful actors.

What are the social and economic impacts of persecution on the Muslim community in India?

The all-encompassing climate of hate Muslims face has impacted everything from Muslim representation in systems of power, to education and job opportunities. Examples include:

- **Lack of Muslim representation in government.** Following a deeply anti-Muslim campaign by the BJP, the 2024 general elections resulted in [not a single Muslim](#) being

sworn in as cabinet minister for the first time in Indian history, despite representation “from across states, classes and castes,” according to the New Indian Express.

- **Discrimination in education.** At all education levels, from primary school to university, Muslim students have reported violence and harassment from fellow students, teachers, administrators, and Hindu extremist groups targeting schools. Notably, a 2023 [report](#) by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties found that in the aftermath of Karnataka state’s hijab ban, over 1,000 female Muslim students dropped out of school after being forced to choose between their clothing and their education.
- **Discrimination in housing.** While the “ghettoization” of Muslim communities has been documented in the years before Modi came to power, Muslims in urban areas have reported increased hostility from Hindu landlords and neighbors under the BJP government. As a 2021 [study](#) by the Housing Discrimination Project reports, “In Delhi and Mumbai, brokers consistently conceded that they refuse certain prospective tenants, especially Muslims. In some cases, they revealed their own biases during interviews. In numerous instances, they said they felt Muslim tenants could be a ‘liability.’”
- **Workplace discrimination.** Muslims are already among the most economically disadvantaged sectors of Indian society, a phenomenon exacerbated by Hindu supremacist discrimination. A 2022 report [released](#) by Oxfam India found that 68.3% of the Hindu-Muslim employment gap in urban areas can be attributed to anti-Muslim discrimination. That same year, [Harvard Business Review](#) reported that Muslim women face a hiring bias in entry-level positions, saying, “Experts argue that the lack of work opportunities for Muslim women in India is less a reflection of educational qualifications and more a result of systemic discrimination against religious minorities.”
- **Economic boycotts.** Hindu supremacist leaders regularly call on their supporters to boycott Muslim businesses, and frequently call on festival and event organizers to ban Muslim vendors. while BJP governments facilitate such boycotts by encouraging anti-Muslim conspiracy theories, forcing Muslims to close meat shops during Hindu celebrations, and banning Muslims from having shops or stalls near Hindu temples.
- **Mental health crisis.** A 2020 [research paper](#) published in the Journal of Health Sciences found that Indian Muslims suffered from a higher risk of anxiety compared to Hindus, a phenomenon activist Sharjeel Usmani [called](#) a “deepening of mental distress” in response to the normalization of anti-Muslim hatred and violence.

How do international organizations view the persecution of Muslims in India?

International human rights groups, non-governmental agencies, and government bodies have repeatedly denounced the persecution of Indian minorities and the impact of Hindu supremacy on democracy.

- “Nothing short of an international investigative mechanism – as has been done by the UN Security Council, Human Rights Council for countries such as Syria, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia – may be necessary [to combat violence against minorities in India].” ~ [Fernand de Varennes](#), United Nations Special Rapporteur for Minority Rights

- “[The US government should] designate India as a ‘country of particular concern,’ or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).” ~ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom](#)
- “The facts are clear: attacks against religious minorities in India, especially Muslims, have increased... BJP leaders and affiliated groups have long stigmatized minority communities as a threat to national security and to the Hindu way of life, in particular making divisive, hate-filled remarks against Muslims around state and national elections, targeting the Hindu vote.” ~ John Sifton, Asia Advocacy Director, [Human Rights Watch](#)
- “When Modi was sworn in as PM in 2019, he said his government would support all people... But this turned out to be a failed promise, which did not lead to an improvement of human rights in the country. Over the past 10 years, the Narendra Modi govt has trampled on dissent and discriminated against religious minorities. There is also not a single Muslim in his new cabinet, while laws such as the CAA, which was passed earlier effectively sanctioned religious discrimination.” ~ [Amnesty International India](#)

What can I do to support Indian Muslims?

For a list of resources, publications, and individuals to follow, check out IMAM's Reading List.

For more ways to become active in the movement, check out IMAM's Get Involved page.