

Institutional Practices and Anti-Muslim Violence in India after the 2014 Elections

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ABSTRACT: India's democratic order has been becoming increasingly discriminatory towards the state's minorities, especially the Muslim minority. Bigotry is facilitated in the region, with the current administration failing to prevent assaults, kidnappings and murders of Muslims, despite the Indian Constitution guaranteeing safety for all minorities. India is following the recent trend of states leaning towards of right-wing, discriminatory ideologies, which is seen in the nations Islamophobic mentality. As a highly hierarchical, divided society paired with a history of economical exploitation, it is especially prone to such agendas. What led to the creation of this extreme, Islamophobic environment in the state and how exactly did the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party contribute to it? This work aims to answer this question through case study and legal analysis of events following the 2014 parliamentary elections and the current state of the government, unjust policies and laws that actively work against Muslims as well as a few of the most recent cases of crimes against the Muslim minority.

Keywords: *India, Muslims, minorities, Islamophobia, systematic racism, violence, religious discrimination.*

INTRODUCTION

Anti-Muslim rhetoric in India has been growing throughout the state, with allowance from the current ruling party, which has

contributed to the tensions itself. On paper, the Republic of India is a democratic, quickly evolving state. In its Constitution, Indian minorities are guaranteed safety, with religious minorities having the right to their own religion. In reality, however, the situation is vastly different, with a wide gap between the Constitution and administrational actions. Muslim people are experiencing discrimination, assault and mass killings from the hands of Hindu bigots protected by the government, which, in recent years, appears to be evolving into an oppressive regime rather than a democratic order. Discrimination is institutionalized in the state, affecting everyday lives of the people. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (the BJP) takes a strong realist approach to their time in office, wanting to increase their power and support for their views, even if by violence, while the socio-economic state of India – characterized by a strong hierarchy and historical exploitation – only deepens communal divides.

The question becomes – what caused the increase in anti-Muslim rhetoric in the years since the 2014 elections and how did the BJP and their policies contribute to the crisis? The BJP has been focused on polarizing the society and remaining in power through exploiting social tensions, which leads to complete ethnical and racial division in the state. In order to analyze these issues, with inclusion of secondary sources, I will conduct a qualitative case study and legal analysis of events which most deeply effected Muslim communities in India from the 2014 parliamentary elections to September 2025, including the BJP's approach, the Covid-19 misinformation crisis which took place in India in times of the pandemic, laws that were created or popularized since the 2014 elections and crimes that took place in recent years.

Demographic and historical background

India's society is disunited, its strong socio-economic division and harsh domestic hierarchy deepened under British rule, with its consequences prevalent to this day (Meena, 2015). When a social order is subjected to such exploitation, especially when it was in the oppressors' interest to divide the society – as it was in the case of British rule in India – discrimination becomes an integral part of said society. Muslims are the current scapegoat for such tensions in India, becoming the “other” against which bigoted Hindu's unite. Looking at the demographic background of

Muslims in the region, we can see that most of the community is ethnically Indian, being descendants of early converts to Islam (Mistry, 2006). The people who converted in those times were usually members of lower castes, looking for a more equalitarian community in the highly unjust social order of India. Therefore, we can see that from the beginning, the Muslim minority came from a background of inequality and discrimination, which rose and fell throughout the years, with a definite, characteristic rise taking place in recent years. Currently, Muslims take up about 14.2% of the population, which is around 170 million people, according to a 2011 census (New Delhi, 2011). Despite being the largest minority amongst ethnical and religious groups in the region, it is still the most oppressed of all of them, being a clear target taken on by the BJP.

2014 elections and the Covid-19 crisis

The Bharatiya Janata Party won the 2014 parliamentary elections with large support across the country. Support for the party has only grown since the elections and the party currently has absolute majority in the lower house of parliament and simple majority in the upper house as well as state legislative bodies. The win of the BJP in 2014 marked the start of rapid growth in the number of anti-Muslim crimes. This wasn't a surprise, taking into account the party's views and the policies they proposed even before their victory. The BJP is a highly nationalist, far-right party with strong Hindutva views, meaning they believe that any minority, especially Muslim minorities, is a direct threat to Hindudom (Bose, 2018, Bose, 2019). The party sees any culture other than Hindu culture existing in the region as a threat to Hindu dominance in the political, social and economic spheres of the country. Therefore, the administration's goal became to exclude Muslims in social and political topics, which is seen in the reforms, laws and crimes that took place following the 2014 elections. As of 2022, the BJP has no Muslim parliamentarian after the resignation of Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi with no search for an appropriate replacement (Kuchay, 2022). Muslims currently hold only 25 out of 534 seats in parliament and none of them are BJP. Additionally, the current Indian president, Draupadi Murmu, has been a point of dispute when it comes to minority discrimination in India. Murmu became president in July 2022 and, being a minority

representative herself, coming from an indigenous tribe community, her win was internationally understood as a step towards more equality in the Indian society, which is exactly the reaction the BJP wanted to achieve (Esteves, 2022). For most of her career, Murmu was a member of the BJP, with the party backing her presidential campaign. She was used as a tool to gain more minority support for the ruling party, spreading a false image of inclusivity. All this while following in the steps of most previous Indian presidents, not bringing significant amounts of change to the state.

On top of a highly bigoted, corrupt government that from the beginning expressed anti-Muslim opinions, the Covid-19 crisis brought even more oppression, with crimes skyrocketing in 2020 and 2021. During the recent pandemic, rumors started to come out about Muslims spreading the coronavirus throughout the country on purpose (Ali, 2023). Even though these accusations weren't backed by any facts, nor research, the rumors were never negated by the government, leading to more speculations and tensions. In the Indian society, especially Hindu communities, it was widely believed that Muslims brought the coronavirus, and such beliefs were weaponized by the far right as well as Hindu bigots, becoming a useful tool for sharing their views. In result, Muslims were refused from health clinics, vegetable vendors were banned from selling their produce, while reports of Muslims being assaulted and killed rose throughout the country. That pattern of discrimination continued into future years. We can see the consequences of this misinformation and the anti-Muslim stances that followed in the policies popularized during the years of BJP rule, such as anti-cow slaughter' laws and anti-conversion laws, which will be exemplified in policy analyses.

Analysis of policies created and popularized under BJP rule

Not only is community-based discrimination (as exemplified by the Covid-19 crisis) prominent in India, but it became institutionalized in the state through anti-Muslim legislation. There exists a large amount of inherent rights for minorities written down in the Constitution of India, created to protect said minorities, regarding the equality of all coming before the law (The Constitution of India, 1950, Art. 14), prohibition of discrimination based on religion, race or gender (The Constitution of India, 1950, Art. 15) and freedom of religion (The Constitution of India, 1950, Art. 25) amongst

many others. Despite this, we can easily read about the discriminatory laws and practices under the current administration, clearly targeting Muslim Indian minorities in the state, while the Indian Constitution states that all minorities should have freedom of religion and expression. As part of this work, a brief analysis of the laws and policies was conducted in order to best exemplify the BJP's Islamophobic tendencies and its contribution to Muslim oppression.

Starting from the National Register of Citizens, published in 2018. The document was a concern on an international scale, ever since its draft was created (Ahmad, Zulkifflle, 2022). The registry excluded over 4 million people. All of them were minorities, with the majority being Muslim communities. The register deprived those people of their nationality and rendered them stateless, showing a lack of consideration for these minorities from the governing party.

A very important issue are also extrajudicial killings in India. During killings executed by province police, without previously providing the right evidence and without any executive orders, Muslim people are killed disproportionately (Patra, 2023). In recent years, several reports surfaced of Muslim people being abducted, beaten, tortured or murdered, seemingly without reason, while the officials responsible for the crimes are rarely punished for their acts. If they are, it is not a fair punishment, showing a disregard for Muslim lives. Muslims also take up the largest portion of Indian prisons, most of the people being defendants under trial, often without legitimate evidence from the prosecutors.

A large amount of Islamophobic crimes in the region are based on accusations connected with anti-cow slaughter' laws (Ahmad, Zulkifflle, 2022). They exist in 21 states in India, a direct manifestation of Hindu dominance in policymaking. In some states, even transportation of cows is forbidden, with life imprisonment sentences being the punishment for cow murder. More often than not, accusations of violating anti-cow slaughter' laws are enough for a Muslim to be beaten to death by a mob of Hindu's, as will be shown in one of the cases analyzed in this work. Oftentimes there is no evidence behind accusations of cow slaughter, nor does a proper trial takes place, however there are a lot of cases of Hindu bigots beating Muslims to death in which perpetrators don't seem to care about any form of evidence.

Lastly, anti-conversion laws in India (Ahmad, Zulkiffle, 2022). Created under the guise of protecting all people from being forced to change religions through blackmail or force, in actuality they are used to prevent people from switching from Hinduism to other religions, especially Islam. Along with these laws came harassment of interfaith couples. Currently, 12 states abide anti-conversion laws, with the BJP pushing this rhetoric. Under these laws and the harassment and discrimination that comes with them, there is barely any way for Muslim families to live their life safely in India, which is clearly seen in crime reports, both domestic and international.

Case analysis of recent Islamophobic crimes in the region

While studying these laws, it becomes clear that the BJP's Hindutva views manifest themselves within their actions in the government. These examples show that Muslim societies in India are seen as marginal, with no concern for bettering their situation from the ruling party. By studying these cases, we can observe how the BJP is strengthening the position of Hindu domination and its own power in the state. The confirmation of these practices and patterns is found in crime reports and statistics related to Muslim oppression. These cases are examples of a wider issue spread over the state, with more such cases becoming public every month. Included were 4 cases from July to September 2025, the most recent accessible cases, for analysis, and a way to place the consequences following the causes talked about in this work. The cases analyzed come from the "Overview of human rights abuses and violations against India's religious minorities from 1 July to 30 September 2025" by South Asia Justice Campaign in 2025 and through analyzing these cases, we can better understand the social conditions in which Muslims live in India.

On 7 July 2025, a 17-year-old Muslim boy was beaten to death by a mob in Churu city after returning home from a Muharram procession. According to witnesses, over a dozen people conducted the assault, after which the boy was taken to a hospital and declared dead upon arrival. Police identified suspects and promised swift arrests, but there have been no known reports of arrests actually having taken place. This case is a prime example of the BJP administration failing to protect a Muslim boy, while officials abused their position. It's a direct effect of the popularization of Hindutva

views and Hindu bigots committing crimes without fear of proper prosecution afterwards.

Another example of such patterns is a case from August 2025, when a different 17-year-old Muslim boy was detained in Gujarat, without a warrant and reportedly subjected to torture for 9 days. Allegedly, he was beaten daily, threatened by sexual assault, and given electric shocks. He was also denied food and water, which resulted in policemen taking the boy to a hospital, claiming he was “bitten by an insect”. Doctors found numerous life-threatening injuries, but no officials were arrested. The Supreme Court refused to deal with the investigation and compensation the boy’s family sought, illustrating not only extrajudicial proceedings of the officers, but also the lack of a just security network for Muslims in the Indian government.

Throughout 2025, BJP-led local governments have been selectively demolishing Muslim places of worship, with the demolitions concentrated in the third quarter of the year in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. A large number of mosques, seminaries and shrines have been destroyed under governmental orders, only adding to the oppression of Muslims. Destroying such places of worship and freedom for Muslims is a direct example of the BJP’s belief in Hindu domination in all spheres of the Indian society.

On 8 August 2025, a Muslim truck driver was beaten to death by Hindu pilgrims on suspicion of carrying cattle remains. The driver’s truck was stopped by a mob and, after finding animal skins inside, the man was beaten to death and his truck lit on fire, although there was no verification, nor proof the skins were cow skins. Police officers stood nearby, not reacting as the Muslim man was brutally murdered, a case in which police forces failed to protect a Muslim man. Not only does this case help analyze Islamophobia amongst the Hindu society, but it is also a result of anti-cow slaughter’ laws and the police failing to protect Muslim people.

All these examples are only a part of all the anti-Muslim crimes that took place in recent months and are further evidence of the bigotry and discrimination spread throughout the Indian Hindu society. The BJP is failing to prevent these crimes, if it’s not BJP officials mandating them themselves, which creates an unsafe environment

for Muslims. They put into perspective the current state of India's society and the BJP's goals as well as the Hindutva views in Indian societies and omissions in police actions when it comes to Muslim citizens.

Theoretical analysis

It is clear the BJP's actions and policies can be understood through a realist lens (Korab-Karpowicz, 2018). The party wants to establish its dominance and gain support through violence and extermination of the perceived "enemy", which, according to their rhetoric, are non-Hindu minorities, especially the Muslim minority. We can see this in how the administration fails to protect Muslim people, both from Hindu bigots and officials abusing their positions as well as highly unjust laws and policies. They focus on developing the military and a strong police force as well as a communal understanding amongst the Hindu population when it comes to Islamophobia, therefore gaining support and securing their position, which is universally understood in India's international connections. At the same time, crimes against minorities in the region are pushed to the margins of talked-about world issues, which in itself is a testimony to the power of the current administration. The primary goal of the party is not to better the life of all Indian citizens, but to secure its power and thrive while implementing deceiving and unjust policies. Right-wing ideologies are quickly becoming widespread among the society, especially younger generations, similarly to many other states in recent years, paying no mind to what such extreme ideologies have led to in the past.

At the same time, historical colonization, as well as exploitation of the region, which still holds up today, causes an economical and international imbalance that is reflected in the society. The capitalist structure of the domestic, as well as international economy, has led to society-based exploitation, only enforced by the hierarchical caste system in India. There's a clash between town and country, town and town, and community and community, which prevents the citizens from truly uniting (Linklater, 1990). Under exploitation, such as the type India was exposed to during British rule, and which has been continued to this day to a certain degree, there is little room for social stability. Crisis and scarcity penetrate the state's society, and right wing ideologies, such as the BJP's, flourish, creating divides and an "us

versus them” mentality, which is exemplified by earlier mentioned mob attacks on Muslims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal of this work was to show how serious the situation of Muslims in India is getting. The BJP’s win in 2014 marked the beginning of a new time with crimes against Muslims on the rise. The Covid-19 crisis and policies implemented by the BJP led to this crisis, while the crimes taking place illustrate the effects of such actions. Radical Hindutva views are at the forefront of current political orientation in India, especially areas dominated by the BJP, with Islamophobia on the rise. The BJP monopolizes power in the state through violence and contributing to the spread of divisive rhetoric in Indian communities, maintaining hierarchical Hindu domination with little concern for Muslim safety. Economic scarcity, especially amongst minorities and lower castes, only deepens the divide and further polarizes the society.

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