



CITIZENS & LAWYERS INITIATIVE

ROUTES OF WRATH

**WEAPONISING
RELIGIOUS
PROCESSIONS**

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE
DURING RAM NAVAMI
AND HANUMAN JAYANTI
APRIL 2022

FOREWORD BY
JUSTICE ROHINTON NARIMAN
FORMER JUDGE, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

EDITED BY
CHANDER UDAY SINGH
SENIOR ADVOCATE

A REPORT BY
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Captions to video-grabs used on the cover page sourced from twitter (top to bottom):

1. Aurangabad (Maharashtra) a Ram Navami procession crossing a mosque. (Apr 11, 2022)
2. “Video sent by a resident from Jahangirpuri after today’s visit. How “peaceful” yatra was. See for oneself. With pistol, baseball bats, sticks and swords in their hands. Young boys accompanied with aggressive chants of Jai Sri Ram.” (Apr 17, 2022)
3. A twitter user shared this video with the caption:
“हम तो ऐसे ही रैली निकालेंगे रास्ता जो होगा उसी से जायेंगे है चाहिए मस्जिद हो चाहिए कुछ और 🙏 जय श्री राम ▶▶” (Apr 11, 2022)
4. Visuals of DJs played in front of Osmania Masjid in Raichur (Karnataka) during Ram Navami rally. (Apr 10, 2022)

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*“Those who cannot remember the past
are condemned to repeat it”*

— George Santayana

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FOREWORD

75 years after independence what is the State of our nation today? A private group of lawyers and citizens have taken the initiative to research and bring out a report which gives us an indication of the present state of affairs in the nation, in the context of various Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions that were taken out in April 2022.

The University of Gothenburg has just come out with what is titled “Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Annual Report 2023”. This detailed report speaks of democracy all over the globe, stating that it has taken into account 60 indices and 500 indicators to arrive at the results contained in the report. They have divided the world’s democracies into the following categories. Liberal democracies, which account for 13% of democracies in which there are free and fair elections; judicial and legislative constraints on executive action; protection of civil liberties; and the rule of law maintained by equality before the law. The second group of democracies are titled electoral democracies, and account for 16% of all democracies. In these democracies there are free and fair elections and freedom of speech, but not to the extent found in liberal democracies. The third group consists of what are called electoral autocracies, which consist of 44% of democracies around the globe. In this group there are multi-party elections and freedom of speech, but at a level which is insufficient to constitute a real working democracy. The fourth group is called closed autocracy, which consists of 28% of so-called democracies across the globe in which there is no multi-party election and no freedom of speech in real terms. When it comes to India, the report reveals that in the period from the year 1972 to the year 2020, save and except for the years 1975 and 1976 when there was an Emergency declared in the country, and in the years 2015 and 2020, India belonged to the second group of electoral democracies. Significantly, in recent years, India has slipped into the third group of electoral autocracies. Even more significantly, this would make the state of our nation the same, given democratic values, as that which obtained in the Emergency years. Another graph shows that there is a constant downward movement from the years 2012 to 2022 insofar as democratic values are concerned. Also, the Academic Freedom Index shows that there is a substantial decline in the freedom to think and write as one pleases during these years.

The present report by the Citizens and Lawyers Initiative corroborates these findings. It finds that in nine States of this Country, during Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in April 2022, there were widespread acts of hooliganism and violence. In just three States, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, it has found that during these processions at least 100 persons from the minority community have been injured and two people killed. The report however, does end on a positive note when it comes to the State of Telangana, where both the Police Chief and the High Court have taken the lead in ensuring that the constitutional right of the Hindu community to take out their processions is exercised in peace and harmony without disturbing members of other communities, given that we are a secular nation.

The preamble to the Constitution of India states that the people of India have solemnly resolved to constitute India as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic. At the very least these words mean that, having shaken off the British yoke, which included the divide and rule policy, India as a nation is now both secular and democratic. This in turn means that the States have to

maintain law and order in a neutral fashion without favouring any religious community. It also means that freedom of speech and expression alone leads to an orderly change of government by democratic means. Above all, the cardinal value of fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation is also highlighted in the preamble to the Constitution of India.

In this context it is also important to remember that under Article 51A of the Constitution of India it shall be the duty of every citizen of India:

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence.

Given the preamble and the Fundamental Duties chapter of the Constitution of India, I believe that it is of primary importance to sensitise the police force in all the States of India to these constitutional values and fundamental duties of the citizens. This can be done by first informing them that Muslims situated in India are Indians. For example, a Keralite Muslim is culturally akin to other Keralites and has little in common, culturally speaking, with his Muslim brothers in the States of West Bengal or the Punjab, or globally with the Muslims in Iran and Saudi Arabia. As a matter of fact, the Keralite Muslim would have much more in common, culturally speaking, with the Keralite Hindus and Christians. It is therefore important to emphasize that Indian Muslims are not a homogeneous group of people but are divided into any number of sub-groups having cultural identities identical to other Indians consisting of different religious groups. Once this basic fact is drilled into the police force in all the States, things could become much better. Also some way must be found to stop political interference with the functioning of the police in all the States. All this should ensure a new beginning on the long and hard road to achieving fraternity, which alone ensures the dignity of every individual citizen of India and, more importantly, the unity of our great nation.

— Rohinton F. Nariman
Former Judge, Supreme Court of India

March 18, 2023

1. PROLOGUE

*“The struggle of man against power
is the struggle of memory against forgetting”*

— Milan Kundera

Indian history is rife with instances of religious processions that led to communal strife, riots, inexcusable violence, arson, destruction of property and the tragic deaths of innocent residents of the riot-hit areas. There have been horrific riots and bloodletting caused by other factors too, most prominently the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 and the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, but no cause of interfaith riots has been as recurrent and widespread as the religious procession. This is as true of pre-Independence India as during the 75 years since we became a free nation.

And if one factor were to be singled out as the most important catalyst for communal riots flowing from religious processions, and equally for the prevention of such riots, it would have to be the route chosen by procession organisers.

This appears to have been recognised as early as 1860, when Thomas Macaulay’s Indian Penal Code was enacted. Section 153 prescribed a punishment of six months imprisonment for wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot, and one year if the provocation resulted in rioting. Section 188, which made it an offence to disobey an order duly promulgated by a public servant, contained an illustration, which demonstrates at least one form of disobedience that was known to British India:

“S. 188. Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.

—

Illustration

An order is promulgated by a public servant lawfully empowered to promulgate such order, directing that a religious procession shall not pass down a certain street. A knowingly disobeys the order, and thereby causes danger of riot. A has committed the offence defined in this section.”

Post-Independence, we have faced numerous communal riots in diverse parts of India, under different political regimes, and the vast majority of these have been caused by the deliberate choice of communally-sensitive routes by processionists, and the pusillanimity of the Police in dealing with such demands, or even their collusion and connivance in licencing such routes. A glance at some illustrative examples of such riots will make the point.

Sholapur, 1967

The city of Sholapur in Southwest Maharashtra presents an interesting, if grim, picture of how certain religious processions have led, not unintendedly, to communal flare-ups, riots, and deaths. As found by the “Commission of Inquiry on Communal Disturbance at Sholapur - September 17, 1967”—chaired by Justice Raghubar Dayal, former judge of the Supreme Court, the Commission included Col. B.H. Zaidi, M.P., and retired bureaucrat Shri M.M. Philip — communal outbreaks had occurred on the occasions of ‘Rath Processions’ in 1925 and 1927, in connection with ‘Ganapati Immersion Processions’ in 1927 and 1966, and 18 cases of stabbing were spurred by the shouting of objectionable slogans during a procession by the Arya Samaj Satyagraha in 1939¹. Other mass stabbings took place in August, 1947, but those stemmed from the violence of Partition and the refugee crisis².

Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad, 1970

Bhiwandi, a powerloom centre barely 37 km from Mumbai, was the tragic site of large-scale communal disturbances and riots on May 7, 1970, which resulted in the loss of 78 lives, 59 Muslim, 17 Hindu, and two undetermined. As found by the “Commission of Inquiry to Inquire Into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad in May 1970”, a one-man Inquiry by sitting Bombay High Court Judge, Justice D.P. Madon, these riots were the direct consequence of a massive Shiv Jayanti Procession comprising about 10,000 processionists armed with lathis, which insisted on a route which passed the Nizampura Jumma Mosque³. The Bhiwandi riots led instantly to copycat riots on May 8, 1970 in Jalgaon and Mahad, two cities that had nothing in common with Bhiwandi; 43 died in Jalgaon, 42 Muslim and one Hindu; fortunately, no lives were lost in Mahad.

Justice Madon found that 1963 was an important year in the communal history of Bhiwandi, for that was when the Hindus started taking out processions which did not stop playing music while passing by a mosque. He found that 1964 was the year when the Shiv Jayanti Procession began its practice of stopping in front of mosques, shouting provocative and anti-Muslim slogans, and throwing excessive ‘gulas’. Coincidentally, this was also the year when the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, predecessor to the BJP, established its Bhiwandi branch. He found that these provocations were amplified in 1965, when for the very first time a procession other than a purely Muslim one went past the Nizampur Jumma Mosque⁴. Not surprisingly, the year 1967 witnessed the very first

¹ “Commissions of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances — A Study”, by S.K. Agnihotri, for the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (Vol. III, pp. 266-292).

² Ibid (Vol. III pg. 269).

³ Ibid (Vol. III pp. 358-479, summarised at pp. 362-364).

⁴ Ibid (Vol. III pg. 377, para 14.36).

communal riots in Bhiwandi, which took place as the Shiv Jayanti Procession was passing by the Nizampura Jumma Mosque.⁵

In 1969 the multi-faith Shiv Jayanti Utsav Samiti was rendered defunct when 15 Jana Sangh members walked out, along with one Shiv Sena member and three of indeterminate political leanings, and formed the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal (R.U.M.), which set the stage for the 1970 processions. Justice Madon found that “the immediate or proximate cause of the Bhiwandi disturbances was the deliberate misbehaviour of the processionists in the Shiv Jayanti procession, which was taken out in Bhiwandi on May 7, 1970, in order to provoke the Muslims and the fact that at the instance and instigation the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal the majority of processionists, particularly the processionists from the villages, had participated in the procession carrying lathis to which Bhagwa flags and banners were tied in order to circumvent the ban under section 37(1) of the Bombay Police Act, 1951, prohibiting the carrying of weapons, so that the processionists would be armed to meet the contingency of the Muslims starting any trouble either on their own or as a result of the deliberate provoking of the Muslims by the processionists”⁶.

Jamshedpur, 1979

In 1978, the RSS/VHP insisted that the traditional Ram Navami procession should follow a new route that would pass through the congested Muslim area of Sabirnagar. Anticipating communal trouble, the authorities asked them to use a route that bypassed Sabirnagar, but the procession organisers persisted in their demand. They refused every alternate route offered, even though Sabirnagar was not the most direct, nor was it an open or convenient route, as it involved a diversion through a *kachha rasta* and private fields to use that route. When the authorities did not give in, the RSS/VHP mounted an agitation, and finally refused to hold the procession for an entire year, to build up pressure on the administration.

Ultimately, the Karpuri Thakur-led Janata Party Government (a coalition ruling at the Centre and in Bihar State, with the BJP a prominent member in both) caved in, and in 1979 the local administration was persuaded to agree to allow the Ram Navami procession on a route through Sabirnagar. A “deal” was struck, based on the promise that the main procession would continue on the normal roads and highway, while a small “sample procession” would pass through Sabirnagar, accompanied by local Muslim elders, and would then rejoin the main procession on the highway.

What actually happened was that once the “sample procession” was being escorted by Muslim elders and a small Police contingent into Sabirnagar, the 15,000-strong main procession suddenly broke away from its licenced route and followed the “sample procession” through private fields into Sabirnagar, and once they reached the Sabirnagar Masjid, they were halted by BJP MLA Dinanath Pandey, who refused to allow the procession to move, and insisted that they had a right to remain there while he made provocative and anti-Muslim speeches.

Stone-throwing inevitably ensued, followed by rioting and arson by the 15,000 processionists. This led to a conflagration all over Jamshedpur, culminating in 108 deaths, 79 Muslim, 25 Hindu,

⁵ Ibid (Vol. III pg. 366, para 103.30).

⁶ Ibid (Vol. III pg. 386, para 52.5).

and 4 unidentified. Widespread looting, destruction of property and arson accompanied the riots, and since the epicentre was Sabirnagar, the Muslims quite naturally suffered a disproportionate impact of the loss of lives and livelihoods.

A commission of enquiry headed by Justice Jitendra Narain, a retired judge of the Patna High Court, found the RSS and Dinanath Pandey primarily responsible⁷.

Kota, 1989

For a city that had not seen any riots in 1947, nor in the five decades that followed, 1989 proved the potency of targeted processions in fomenting riots. On this occasion, and in this calm oasis of Rajasthan, it was the Anant Chaturdashi procession for the immersion of Lord Ganesh that was used to light the communal fires. On September 14, 1989 the procession was deliberately taken on a route through a congested Muslim mohalla, and halted in front of the largest Mosque, enabling the processionists to shout communal slogans and hurl abuses at the Muslims. Inevitably, this resulted in counter-slogans, and the confrontation then descended into stone-throwing and ultimately assaults with deadly weapons. By the time the day was done, 16 Muslims and 4 Hindus were dead, thousands of Muslim street vendors and traders had had their businesses torched, and widespread arson had destroyed homes and shops in the Muslim area.

The cause of this man-made disaster was pithily summed up by the one-man “Commission of Inquiry on Communal Riots in Kota in 1989”, consisting of sitting Rajasthan High Court Judge Shri S.N. Bhargava (he was Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court when he submitted his Report):

“53. In all 20 persons died out of whom 16 were Muslims and 4 were Hindus. As is apparent from the evidence on record, the trouble started on account of shouting of objectionable and provocative slogans by the processionists reciprocated by the Muslim community. Taking an overall view of the evidence on record, I am of the view that it was the processionists who had started shouting objectionable and provocative slogans and it was only on account of the provocation by these objectionable slogans that the Muslim community also reciprocated the same.”⁸

The destruction of Kota’s fraternity and amity might best be summed up in a verse taught to us in school:

Atishah ragad karey jo koye,

Anal prakat chandan te hoye.

(rub hard enough, and even the coolest wood, sandalwood, will catch fire).

⁷ Commissions of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances — A Study, by S.K. Agnihotri, for the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (Vol. III, pp. 55-94).

⁸ *ibid.* (Vol. 4, pp. 89-112).

Bhagalpur, 1989

This time it was a Ramshila procession on 24th October, 1989 that was diverted from the licensed route and taken through the congested Muslim area known as Tatarpur. Ramshila processions were by their very nature provocative and triumphalist, as these processions carried bricks (shila) consecrated by priests over a holy fire, ostensibly to be used for the construction of a Ram Temple which was proposed to be built after the proposed destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya (the actual demolition of Babri Masjid was not to take place until three years later in 1992).

A commission of enquiry consisting of Justice Ram Nandan Prasad, Justice Ram Chandra Prasad Sinha, and Justice S. Shamsul Hasan, retired judges of the Patna High Court, found that though tension over Ramshila processions had already been building up in Bhagalpur for at least a year prior to 1989, yet the Administration and Police had turned a blind eye to it. The Commission noted that there was no application to route the 1989 procession through Tatarpur, and that the licence issued to the procession's organisers did not mention Tatarpur (para 578)⁹. Yet the "mob consisting of thousands of miscreants" was permitted by the Police to deviate from the licenced route, enter Tatarpur, and wreak havoc against the defenseless Muslim populace.

"The Muslims of Bhagalpur and the surrounding areas were inflicted by divine wrath through marauding mobs in close alliance of the district police", recorded the Commission in para 567 of its Report, and that this "is manifest by over 900 corpses with injuries and also over 900 individuals in handcuffs and manacles"¹⁰. The Enquiry Commission found that "there were sufficient indications since more than a year before the commission of the riot. The District Administration as we have said, suffered from culpable amnesia, deliberate indifference and patent communal bias, incompetence in not anticipating the riot. Lack of impartiality in the District Administration also compounded the problem" (para 570)¹¹.

The culpable amnesia highlighted by Justices Prasad, Sinha and Hasan in their Bhagalpur Inquiry Report of 1989 has become a recurring nightmare reminiscent of the movie *Ground Hog Day*. Year after year since the Bhagalpur riots resulted in the deaths of 900 Muslims more than 33 years ago, religious processions in State after State have been granted licences or permissions to pass through the most congested and sensitive areas. When such permissions are granted at times when Hindu and Muslim festivals or religious observances coincide, the chances of clashes grow exponentially. And when, as was observed during the festivals of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti in 2022, the processions are allowed to carry exposed weapons and are accompanied by high-decibel concert-level music systems and DJs playing obnoxious and hate-spewing music in front of mosques, the provocation almost inevitably results in what was always intended by the organisers, a communal riot.

What has changed from the past, as I highlight in the following Introduction to present-day religious processions typified by those that celebrated Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti in April 2022, is the attitude of the authorities and the administration. Whereas in the first seven

⁹ Ibid (Vol. II, pp. 346-347).

¹⁰ Ibid (Vol. II, pp. 342-343).

¹¹ Commissions of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances — A Study, by S.K. Agnihotri, for the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (Vol. II, pp. 343).

decades of our nationhood, Governments and civilian administrators expressed remorse, or set up commissions of inquiry to determine the causes of riots, and often announced compensation for the victims, the past few years have seen State Governments shedding the fig leaf of plausible deniability, and proudly embracing the cause of the provocateurs. Instead of an inquiry commission we now have a phalanx of bulldozers following in the wake of processionists, ready to demolish the businesses, livelihoods and homes of anybody perceived to have obstructed the procession. The civilian administration play judge and jury, pronounce the hapless people in the path of processionists guilty of being stone-throwers, the police play hangman with the bulldozers, and the municipal authorities come in to clean up the mess by post-facto declarations of encroachments, unauthorised constructions and other neat cover-ups for the demolitions. But more about that in the next section of this Report.

– Chander Uday Singh
Editor

New Delhi,
March 10, 2023

2. INTRODUCTION

In April 2022, India witnessed communal violence breaking out in as many as nine states, along with incidents of provocation and low-grade violence in three others. In all of them, the catalyst for the violence was the same: religious processions celebrating the Hindu festivals of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti, followed by targeted attacks on Muslim-owned properties, businesses and places of worship. While this is not the first time India has seen mob violence under the garb of religious festivities, not even the first time for Ram Navami in particular, it took place on a much larger, seemingly coordinated scale than previous years. A breakdown of the rule of law was observed and documented in most of these towns and villages.

The immediate violence associated with Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions saw more than a hundred homes and shops destroyed or burned down, vehicles set ablaze in every city, and multiple places of worship damaged or vandalized. This was followed in quick order by state action in some of these cities and towns, which saw further destruction in the form of illegal demolitions of houses and shops, to punish those that the state branded as ‘rioters’ or ‘anti-social’ elements. Apart from at least 100 people being injured collectively across the concerned States, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh all reported one death each – although the death in Gujarat was found to be accidental, not killed.^{12 13} The state-sponsored violence has also caused a crisis of displacement of Muslim families in riot-hit areas, either rendered homeless by the demolitions or having been forced to flee from their homes in fear of further state harassment. The loot and arson from mobs ransacking houses and shops in the Muslim-majority neighbourhoods where the processions typically instigated violence, resulted in people suffering major, life-changing losses in terms of their savings, documents of identity and proof of residence or ownership, and their means of livelihood.

Our past is rife with examples of religious processions as precursors to communal violence. In the 1970s and 1980s there were several communal riots that were triggered by processions that doubled up as a show of majoritarian strength.¹⁴ In the 1980s in particular, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) branded these as ‘yatras’. VHP reacted to the 1981 Meenakshipuram conversions of 150 Dalit families to Islam by taking out “*ekatmata yajna yatras*” in 1983, aimed at ‘uniting’ Hindus across all castes over the twin symbols of Ganga Jal and Bharat Mata riding a tiger. By the

¹² Trivedi D. (20 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. Frontline. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220607043215/https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [09 July 2022]

¹³ PTI. (11 April 2022). One dead, 12 injured in communal clashes during Jharkhand Ram Navami procession. Firstpost. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/one-dead-12-injured-in-communal-clashes-during-jharkhand-ram-navami-procession-10542761.html> [07 July 2022]

¹⁴ Punwani, J. (2021, January 9). A history of riots in India shows how the Hindu right used religious processions to foment disorder-India News,. Firstpost. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/a-history-of-indias-riots-shows-how-the-hindu-right-used-religious-processions-to-foment-disorder-9186241.html> [12 July 2022]

time of the Ayodhya campaign, *yatras* had become routine: *Ram-Janakirathyatras*; *shilapujan yatras*, and of course, LK Advani's Ram Rath Yatra.¹⁵

Ram Navami processions, in particular, have been taken over by militant Hindutva organisations over the years, as the figure of Ram is central to the political imagination of the Sangh. A *shobha yatra*, which translates to a “shining” or “glorious” procession, was different from traditional *rath-yatras*, which are organised by temples and are generally limited to nearby areas. The *shobha yatras* are grand processions of pomp and ceremony attempting to cover entire cities, involving “cavalcades of vehicles, each carrying dozens of men, shouting slogans and frequently wielding arms”.¹⁶ In 1987, in the midst of the Babri Masjid–Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, VHP reportedly organised country-wide *shobha yatras* that were armed and raised provocative slogans.¹⁷

Despite the increasingly violent nature of such processions in recent years – Ram Navami processions led to scattered incidents of communal violence in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019 – they are portrayed by the Hindu Right and mainstream media as innocuous displays of religiosity, and blame is typically assigned to those who would challenge such displays. This perspective is institutionally embedded – even in the case of the brutal Mumbai riots of 1992-93, Shrikant Bapat, Mumbai's police chief said to the Srikrishna Commission that Advani's Rath Yatra was not the cause of the riots but it was rather the Muslims' opposition to it through unconstitutional means that generated the communal tension.¹⁸

It is important to note not only the nature of the processions and their strategies of inciting violence, but also the fact that the dates chosen for said instigation in 2022 were Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti, both of which fell within the month of Ramzan. This was used by right-wing institutions of the state and the media in states like Gujarat to further conspiracy theories projecting Muslims uniformly as the assailants – whereas they have suffered the most losses.

Methodology and Rationale

This report is written as a collective effort to document and preserve the facts of the violence, death and destruction that took place during and after the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions in April 2022. It seeks to allow the reader to understand the context, genesis and the patterns in the unfolding of communal violence in India's present state as a severely threatened democracy, particularly the dangerous forms of instigation and provocation that majoritarian festivals can provide cover for.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Kumar, Megha (16 June 2016). *Communalism and Sexual Violence in India: The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Conflict*. Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 216–217. ISBN 978-1-78672-068-9.

¹⁷ Zaidi, A. Moin, ed. (1989), *Party Politics in India, 1987, Volume 1, Issue 1*, Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, p. 341

¹⁸ Punwani, J. (2021b, January 9). A history of riots in India shows how the Hindu right used religious processions to foment disorder-India News,. Firstpost. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/a-history-of-indias-riots-shows-how-the-hindu-right-used-religious-processions-to-foment-disorder-9186241.html> [12 July 2022]

The States included in this report witnessed targeted violence against a community on the basis of ethnic or religious identity. The violence largely took place on the following clusters of days: during and after April 10th i.e. Ram Navami, and during and after April 16th, i.e. Hanuman Jayanti. One of the States, Rajasthan, saw identical tactics and outcomes as the other cases, however it took place a few days prior to Ram Navami, on April 2nd (the Hindu New Year).

This is an attempt to present and publicize the facts as they were experienced across nine states and multiple linguistic regions, which makes it a somewhat complex undertaking. The approach, therefore, has been to base this report entirely on secondary research by sorting through a wide range of information available in the public domain. It also relies on and recognises the work of fact-finding initiatives that are publicly available, as well as news reportage during and after the days of the violence. Every effort has been made to stick to credible news and information sources available in the public domain, and every statement of fact is annotated to disclose the source.

The report is organised into state-wise chapters that examine the days of violence through a common template. Certain states have had more coverage and accessible information, more or less in line with the scale of violence that took place, and thus comprise a full chapter each – although there is some variation in the extent of details available. These include Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Goa and West Bengal. A few other states saw similar attempts at instigation but with low-grade violence – or have less information available about what took place, thus creating this impression – these have been written as shorter sub- sections of a common chapter. These states include Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

The final section of the report, titled ‘Insights’, is an analytical section drawing out observed commonalities in terms of strategies and tactics of mobilisation, as well as patterns of state response and collective punishment. It is meant to highlight the precarious status of minority communities in a situation where the organs of the state align themselves against them.

– Chander Uday Singh
Editor

New Delhi,
March 10, 2023

3. GUJARAT

Gujarat is no new name when it comes to communal or anti-Muslim violence. Ever since 2002, when the state experienced the most brutal communal violence, it has been seething with Hindutva politics. Fact-finding reports like ‘Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth’, published and released annually by Buniyaad, an Ahmedabad-based civil society organisation have been monitoring and documenting communal violence that has been taking place throughout Gujarat with active support from the ruling government.¹⁹ Such compilations became a necessity after National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) stopped publication of data on communal riot cases after 2017.²⁰ One of the dangerous trends that the report has pointed towards is regarding how larger Hindutva projects and communalism is systematically percolating down to hyperlocal levels.²¹ The report mentions how sign boards declaring ‘Hindu Rashtra’ have been mushrooming in the hinterlands of Gujarat.²²

Hozefa Ujjaini, a Gujarat-based minority rights activist who was part of the fact-finding team, points towards a pattern in terms of incidents of communal violence now happening at places which were unaffected by the riots of 2002.²³ Notably, the two towns that showed up in the recent Ram Navami violence, Himmatnagar and Khambhat, make it to the list of these places, among others.^{24;25} Post-2002, these two towns are becoming hotbeds for communal violence and have been witnessing communal violence almost every other year (2012, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and now 2022)²⁶. However, this time the events of violence collided with violence of similar nature, magnitude and timing, across India. This also highlights the need to go deeper into the two districts’ trajectory towards anti-Muslim violence.

¹⁹ Katakama, A. (26 February 2021). How hate is brewed in Hindutva’s laboratory. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220619113226/https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/communalism/report-gujarat-growth-of-communal-violence-rural-urban-spread-hindutva/article33767117.ece> [05 June 2022].

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

²² Katakama, A. (26 February 2021). How hate is brewed in Hindutva’s laboratory. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220619113226/https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/communalism/report-gujarat-growth-of-communal-violence-rural-urban-spread-hindutva/article33767117.ece> [05 June 2022].

²³ Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Katakama, A. (26 February 2021). How hate is brewed in Hindutva’s laboratory. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220619113226/https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/communalism/report-gujarat-growth-of-communal-violence-rural-urban-spread-hindutva/article33767117.ece> [05 June 2022].

²⁶ Buniyad (2021). Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth. Retrieved from <https://counterviewfiles.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/peaceful-gujarat.pdf> [12 June 2022].

The state is also notorious for its ‘The Disturbed Areas Act’, that was introduced in 1991 by the then Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel²⁷. This act is a shorter name for ‘Gujarat Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provisions for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Act²⁸.’ The Act prohibits a Muslim from selling, leasing or transferring property to a Hindu, or a Hindu to a Muslim, in a ‘disturbed’ area unless it receives clearance from the district collector.²⁹ However, in the recent years the act is being repeatedly amended and tightened, directly ghettoising and marginalising Muslims even more by not allowing them to buy property in Hindu-dominated areas and vice versa, thereby creating a polarised society where both communities do not coexist.³⁰

In 2019, the Act saw an amendment which tightened its grip on exchange of properties between the two religious communities by giving more powers to the district collector, and expanded the ambit of the Act to 770 localities across Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Himmatnagar, Godhra, Kapadvanj and Bharuch, most of which are Muslim dominated.³¹ Further, in 2020, Khambhat town also got included by the Gujarat government under the Disturbed Areas Act, blaming its ‘demographic situation for repeated incidents of violence’³². This decision came right after communal violence broke out in the town.

The Indian Express reported, “The state government has now declared over 60% of the town as disturbed areas for a period of five years, from February 26, 2020, to February 25, 2025. All transfers of immovable properties situated in the disturbed areas during this time period will be null and void and no immovable property situated in these areas can be transferred expect with the previous sanction of the District Collector”.³³

In the same year, 2019, a controversial anti-terror legislation passed by the BJP-ruled State in March 2015 was given a nod by the President Ram Nath Kovind – Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill. The act includes a provision of considering intercepted telephonic conversations as legitimate evidence. The Bill had failed to get an assent from the President since 2004, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat and at that time it was named as Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (GUJCOC) Bill.

²⁷ Nair, R. (23 August 2019). Is disturbed areas act polarising communities in Gujarat? *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/disturbed-areas-act-makes-purchasing-property-cumbersome-in-gujarat-polarises-communities#read-more> [05 June 2022].

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Mohanty, A. (26 February 2020). Communal violence in Gujarat: Govt to place parts of Khambhat under Disturbed Areas Act. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/communal-violence-in-gujarat-govt-to-place-parts-of-khambhat-under-disturbed-areas-act-6286911/> [05 June 2022].

³³ Express News Service. (27 February 2020). Khambhat communal violence: Over 60% of town declared ‘disturbed’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-communal-violence-60-of-town-disturbed-6288387/> [05 June 2022].

3.1. Himmatnagar

Background

Himmatnagar is the biggest *taluka* of the Sabarkantha district in North-Gujarat, roughly 90 kilometres away from Ahmedabad – with a population of 81,137, as per the 2011 census, a Hindu-dominated town, where Muslims form 21 percent of the population³⁴. This area of the district also falls in the Disturbed Areas Act 1991, as amended in 2019³⁵. According to the reports, in recent years, the Sabarkantha district has been witnessing sporadic communal violence and tension on the slightest of matters.³⁶ In 2019, in Kotda Gadi village in the district, communal violence brewed due to an alleged ‘love jihad’ case between a minor Adivasi girl and a Muslim boy.³⁷ A mob from Adivasi community attacked the Muslim locality which forced 12 Muslim families to flee from the village.³⁸ Hindu extremists instrumentalised social media to declare the romantic relationship as ‘love jihad’.³⁹ In the same year, on 22 February, stone-pelting and eventually, riots, took place between two groups in the *teen darwaza* area of Khambhat over a social media post on the Pulwama attack.⁴⁰ Two days later, a scuffle between two children belonging to different communities resulted into stone pelting and eventually communal riot.⁴¹

Similarly, social activists like Hozefa Ujjaini, recalled how in 2022, on the occasion of Holi, Muslims in Sandheli village, which is around 100 kilometres away from Himmatnagar, saw harassment, violence and anti-Muslim sloganeering.⁴²

In March 2022, Himmatnagar witnessed an event full of blatant anti-muslim hate speech and valorisation of brute force against minorities, encouraged by the members of ruling dispensation. According to various news reports, an event – *Trishul Diksha* (or trident initiation ceremony) was organised for the distribution of 5000 swords or tridents (*Trishuls*) by the Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP), Bajrang Dal North Gujarat unit in the Swaminarayan Temple at Himmatnagar⁴³. The event was facilitated by Praveen Togadiya and, his close aide and national president of the Rashtriya Bajrang Dal Manoj Kumar and, was attended by a number of

³⁴ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s Himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

³⁵ Nair, R. (23 August 2019). Is disturbed areas act polarising communities in Gujarat? *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/disturbed-areas-act-makes-purchasing-property-cumbersome-in-gujarat-polarises-communities#read-more> [05 June 2022].

³⁶ Buniyad (2021). Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth. Retrieved from <https://counterviewfiles.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/peaceful-gujarat.pdf> [12 June 2022].

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Nair, R. (25 February 2019). Fight between kids from two groups leads to disturbance in Anand. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/stone-pelting-different-communities-khambhat-anand> 05 June 2022].

⁴² Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁴³ Sabrangindia. (07 April 2022). Gujarat: Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad is stage for anti-Muslim abuse, Trident Distribution. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/gujarat-antarashtriya-hindu-parishad-stage-anti-muslim-abuse-trident-distribution> [05 June 2022].

right wingers as well as the area’s Member of Parliament Dipsinh Rathore, MLA Raju Chavda and members of VHP and Bajrang Dal^{44,45}. Along with the distribution of swords and tridents, it also involved hate speech against Muslims, particularly Muslim women by Manoj Kumar, who stated “Tell these *Katuwas* (slur used by the right wing for Muslim Men), Salma (as he called Muslim women) is waiting for her *Bajrangis* (Hindu men). Muslim men are not enough for her, she wants to remove her *burqa* and give birth to Luv-Kush”⁴⁶.

Besides making these derogatory comments, Kumar said that Togadia will perform stone-laying ceremonies in “Kashi and Mathura” in this century itself.⁴⁷ 5100 people, largely from Sabarkantha village, were administered an oath towards the allegiance and protection of Hindu religion and culture and were given tridents as a part of the Diksha, that were later taken on a rally around the town⁴⁸. Although this was just the tip of the iceberg, as the Bajrang Dal North Gujarat Coordinator Jwalit Mehta, claimed that “similar programmes albeit in smaller scales will now be organised across other towns of the region in coming weeks”⁴⁹.

Sequence of Events

In Himmatnagar, two Ram Navami processions were taken out on 10 April 2022, both were followed by anti-Muslim violence and destruction. On this day two processions of Ram Navami were scheduled, one organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and another by Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP), an organisation launched by Praveen Togadia (former head, VHP).⁵⁰

On 10 April 2022, by 12:30 p.m. first procession of around 500-600 people had started, organised by Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP), which by 1:40 pm had entered Ashraf Nagar in Chhapariya area, a Muslim-dominated area between two Hindu localities – Shakti Nagar and

⁴⁴ Sabrangindia. (07 April 2022). Gujarat: Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad is stage for anti-Muslim abuse, Trident Distribution. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/gujarat-antarashtriya-hindu-parishad-stage-anti-muslim-abuse-trident-distribution> [05 June 2022].

⁴⁵ TN National Desk. (08 April 2022). Praveen Togadia’s aide makes hate speech in Gujarat, fires derogatory slur against Muslim women. Times Now. Retrieved from <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/praveen-togadias-aide-makes-hate-speech-in-gujarat-fires-derogatory-slur-against-muslim-women-article-90722428> [06 June 2022].

⁴⁶ Sabrangindia. (07 April 2022). Gujarat: Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad is stage for anti-Muslim abuse, Trident Distribution. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/gujarat-antarashtriya-hindu-parishad-stage-anti-muslim-abuse-trident-distribution> [05 June 2022].

⁴⁷ TN National Desk. (08 April 2022). Praveen Togadia’s aide makes hate speech in Gujarat, fires derogatory slur against Muslim women. Times Now. Retrieved from <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/praveen-togadias-aide-makes-hate-speech-in-gujarat-fires-derogatory-slur-against-muslim-women-article-90722428> [06 June 2022].

⁴⁸ Sabrangindia. (07 April 2022). Gujarat: Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad is stage for anti-Muslim abuse, Trident Distribution. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/gujarat-antarashtriya-hindu-parishad-stage-anti-muslim-abuse-trident-distribution> [05 June 2022].

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Dhar, D. (11 April 2022). Gujarat: 1 dead in violence after Ram Navami processions through Muslim majority areas in 3 districts. NewsClick. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-1-Dead-Violence-Ram-Navami-Processions-Muslim-Majority-3-Districts> [05 June 2022].

Mahavir Nagar.^{51;52} The procession involved loud provocative songs, sword wielding and aggressive behaviour while marching with saffron flags.^{53;54} Eyewitnesses told *Maktoob Media*, “When the rally arrived in the neighbourhood, they stopped near the mosque and began playing loud provocative music, they were dancing with swords in their hands – Muslim women were on their terraces, the people in the rally were abusing to which the women objected, our Muslim brothers then came out of the mosque and requested the rally to move forward, the opposite side began misbehaving, turning into a violent altercation”.⁵⁵

Another local said, “They knew that at 1:30 Muslim men will be in the mosque praying, they intentionally played anti-Muslim songs and raised slogans”.⁵⁶ During this time, a Muslim man, identified as Ashfaq Khan was allegedly gesturing to three teenaged girls to go inside their house, which got misinterpreted by the people as an act of mobilising.⁵⁷ According to an eyewitness, Mahmood Usman Qadri (60), also known as Manzil Bhai, “The man was only trying to gesture the girls to go inside because the procession was going on but this was misunderstood. He was surrounded by men who were a part of the Ram Navami procession who thought he was gesturing at them. There was an argument, and they abused him. He explained, even apologised but no one listened to him. After that, things took a violent turn”.⁵⁸ Two Muslim women, in their 50s, corroborated this same sequence of events.⁵⁹ According to the locals residing in the Ashraf Nagar area, a jeep carrying 7-8 people got down and got into a tiff with the residents, “They had swords in their hands, they were abusing, they even had sticks and swords in the jeep they were travelling in, the police was also present on the scene but they didn’t object, those people got down from their jeep and were provoking the Muslims”.⁶⁰

However, when locals saw the procession with swords and saffron flags, local Muslims had already sounded an alert within the community⁶¹. This includes an eye witness, Ahmed, who lives in Ashraf Nagar resident said, “They came prepared, the police was right beside them. The way

⁵¹ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁵² Qureshi, A. (14 April 2022). Police watched hindutva mob’s violence unfold: Muslims in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/14/police-watched-hindutva-mobs-violence-unfold-muslims-in-gujarats-himmatnagar/> [05 June 2022].

⁵³ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁵⁴ Qureshi, A. (14 April 2022). Police watched hindutva mob’s violence unfold: Muslims in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/14/police-watched-hindutva-mobs-violence-unfold-muslims-in-gujarats-himmatnagar/> [05 June 2022].

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Qureshi, A. (14 April 2022). Police watched hindutva mob’s violence unfold: Muslims in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/14/police-watched-hindutva-mobs-violence-unfold-muslims-in-gujarats-himmatnagar/> [05 June 2022].

⁶¹ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

they were marching towards our area, knowing that it is Muslim majority, we got a hint of what their plans might be”.⁶²

Similar fears were narrated by Ghaffar of Mali Ki Chaparia area, who told *The Wire*, “They had a plan, they burnt Muslim shops, mosques and even set not one but many dargahs on fire. I saw a man with a saffron scarf yelling ‘Jai Shri Ram’ while he was hurling stones at the mosque I go to; he wore an orange scarf with ‘Om’ written on it”.⁶³ *The Wire* even has access to the posters that The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal circulated on social media inviting Hindus to these processions⁶⁴. The posters said, “*Jai Hindurashtra*” and “*Aao Mil kar kare Ram Rajya ka Nirmaan*” (Come let us build the kingdom of Ram) in Gujarati, with the photo of Lord Ram at the centre⁶⁵.

Notably, merely hours after the first bout of violence on the same day, a second procession was carried out by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the same area at around 4 p.m., which instigated further violence.^{66,67} The violence and arson went on for hours and areas/localities like Ashraf Nagar, Bagicha Vistar, Chaparia, Shaktinagar, Motipura Vistar, Hassan Nagar and Mali Ki Chaparia that are in/around Himmatnagar witnessed targeted destruction, looting of properties like houses, a dozen cars, tyre, grocery, and mobile shops, bike showrooms belonging to Muslims.^{68,69} These properties were doused with flammable liquids like kerosene with an intent to burn them down.⁷⁰ Two such houses were of a 36-year-old Yasmin and her neighbour who found 5 gallons of gasoline that was being used to burn down her house. Yasmin’s father Mehmud recalled, “The members of AHP were throwing stones which hurt my 17-year-old son. He had to be rushed to the hospital in Ahmedabad”...”After that, my daughter (Yasmin) locked the house and escaped from the backdoor with her two children, aged seven and nine. When the stone pelters found the house empty, they burnt the house using gasoline”.⁷¹

The targeted destruction included desecration, vandalism and burning of religious places like the Dargah of Zorawar Baba, the Dargah of Gebanshah Peer and its adjoining mosque, the Dargah of Gulab Shah Peer, the Hassan Fareed dargah and 13 dargahs near Himmatnagar’s Hathmati river⁷². Leader of Opposition in Himmatnagar municipality Imran Anjiwala claimed, “They

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Sabrang India. (11 April 2022). Communal confrontations Mar Ram Navami celebrations in five states. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/communal-confrontations-mar-ram-navami-celebrations-five-states> [06 June 2022].

⁶⁸ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁶⁹ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁷² Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

removed our religious flag from the masjid in Akbar Nagar Kasba in the Chhaparia area and put a saffron flag”.⁷³ Videos too have surfaced and were circulated on social media platforms that corroborates to these targeted attacks.⁷⁴

Roles and Response of State Actors

According to various news reports, soon when verbal altercation escalated to stone pelting, rioting and arson, the police lobbed tear gas to disperse the crowd and also imposed Section 144 in the city.⁷⁵ Three companies of the State Reserve Police (SRP) and local police forces were rushed to the spot from Ahmedabad, Aravalli, Anand and Mehsana on the orders of Ashish Bhatia, the Director General of Police, Gujarat (DGP).⁷⁶ Notably, Anand police, had to rush back to the district for another communal violence that broke out in the Khambhat town of the district.⁷⁷

However, eyewitnesses and social activists active in the area narrate certain events involving police actions preceding and during the violence/riots.

Ahmed, who lives in the Ashraf Nagar area, said that he saw a sea of saffron flags marching in their direction; “They came prepared, the police was right beside them”⁷⁸.

Further, the residents of the area told *Maktoob Media*, “They had swords in their hands, they were abusing, they even had sticks and swords in the jeep they were travelling in, the police was also present on the scene but they didn’t object, those people got down from their jeep and were provoking the Muslims”.⁷⁹

According to another report, eye-witnesses informed them that there were no arrangements by the police to control any unforeseen events or violence, whereas the police simply told that the crowd just went out of their control.⁸⁰ Moreover, two Muslim women who own shops in the area have accused police of being mute spectators when lewd comments were passed at them;

⁷³ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁷⁴ Hindutva Watch. (11 April 2022). *Twitter*. <https://twitter.com/HindutvaWatchIn/status/1513243050956374019?s=20&t=qo6vgmcyXfVhjgL7IRBDNQ> [15 June 2022].

⁷⁵ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Dhar, D. (11 April 2022). Gujarat: 1 dead in violence after Ram Navami processions through Muslim majority areas in 3 districts. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-1-Dead-Violence-Ram-Navami-Processions-Muslim-Majority-3-Districts> [05 June 2022].

⁷⁸ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

⁷⁹ Qureshi, A. (14 April 2022). Police watched hindutva mob’s violence unfold: Muslims in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/14/police-watched-hindutva-mobs-violence-unfold-muslims-in-gujarats-himmatnagar/> [05 June 2022].

⁸⁰ The Lallantop. (12 April 2022). *Youtube*. रामनवमी के बाद Gujarat के हिम्मतनगर, आणंद में फिर बवाल, क्या बोल रही पुलिस? | Gujarat violence. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGWryNVcWmI> [05 June 2022].

“participants of the procession made lewd remarks at the women in front of police personnel”.⁸¹ According to *The Quint*, one of these two women, told them that “SP Vaghela was there when the men made such comments”.⁸²

Leader of Opposition in Himmatnagar municipality, Imran Anjiwala, alleged that the procession chanted “Jai Shri Ram” as the saffron flag was being placed atop the mosque, claiming that it was “evident from the police inaction whose side they were on”; “They removed our religious flag from the masjid in Akbar Nagar Kasba in the Chhaparia area and put a saffron flag”.⁸³

Notably, when the violence started, videos have surfaced on social media where policemen could be seen doing nothing to stop the rioters from pelting stones and engaging in arson.⁸⁴ This also includes videos in which SP Vaghela could be seen in anti-riot gear attempting nothing to manage the situation while some police personnel pelted stones at people⁸⁵. In fact, SP Vaghela reached the spot only at 04 p.m., i.e., after second bout of violence started⁸⁶. *The Quint* reached out to SP Vaghela regarding this, to which he replied, “no comments”⁸⁷. Moreover, one of the witnesses claimed that police personnel “pelted stones at members of the Muslim community”.⁸⁸

Additionally, when the situation got under control and the damage was already done, witnesses and victims shared their experience with the police. House of 36-year-old Yasmin and her father Mehmud was burnt down in the riot and they found 5 gallons of gasoline that was used to burn down their house.⁸⁹ The police simply took the gasoline with them and did nothing. Mehmud recalls that they burnt their house using gasoline.⁹⁰ To this Yasmin added that the “Police came and took the gasoline. They did not do anything else”.⁹¹

Caretakers of Dargahs that were vandalised – Gebanshah Peer Dargah and Zoravar Shah Dargah described feelings of hopelessness with the state machinery. Usman Bapu, 67-year-old, who takes care of the Gebanshah Peer Dargah was not expecting any police protection for the dargah.⁹² Similarly, Ayub Bhai, 84-year-old, who has been taking care of the Zoravar Shah Dargah since it was burnt in 2002 communal violence, also has lost faith in the authorities, saying, “The

⁸¹ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Tarushi Aswani on. (2022, April 12). Twitter. https://twitter.com/tarushi_aswani/status/1513855142898008064?s=20&t=yl7FXBqyf_5qm3qeXnDTpg [12 July 2022]

⁸⁵ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Iyer, A. (06 May 2022). CCTVs recorded violence against mosques during Navratri. but are the police watching the footage? *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023257/cctvs-recorded-violence-against-mosques-during-navratri-but-are-the-police-watching-it> [05 June 2022].

dargah was to have protection after the riots of 2002,” ...”Despite that, it was attacked again. Now again some police officials sit there but it does not mean anything”.⁹³

According to the Leader of Opposition in Himmatnagar municipality Imran Anjiwala, the mosque and dargah management committee went to the police to register their complaints, “They went with written complaints, naming and recognising people,” he said. “Despite that, the police registered a complaint against unknown people”.⁹⁴

This claim has been refused by Abhay Chudasama, inspector general of Gandhinagar range, who said, “Their complaints would have been taken by the police as part of the investigation as well”.⁹⁵ The police claims that the FIR has been registered independently by the Gujarat Police on the same day with mention of offences like, rioting, criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly and wounding religious feelings⁹⁶. Here, SP Vaghela added that under this FIR arrests of at least 12-15 people have been made and that more “anti-social elements” were being picked up every other day⁹⁷.

However, social activists have raised questions on the role of police in letting the violence happen and hold them accountable for it, especially the second bout of violence at 04 pm. In conversation with *The Quint*, Govind Parmar (an advocate who has worked with the victims of Naroda Patiya after the 2002 Gujarat riots and now is working with Muslims to gather evidence of events 10 April 2022) stated that a big and noteworthy oversight on the part of police administration was allowing the VHP with their rally (second procession of the day) at 04 pm on April 10.⁹⁸ This oversight of allowing a second rally during/immediately after the violence has led to more damage than due to the first rally. Dr Sarfaraz Shaikh, a local of the area claimed that the VHP Chief Rajubhai Malvia was present at the site, and that “More damage was done in the evening violence, there was stone pelting, dargahs were damaged, houses”.⁹⁹ Activists have been demanding a public release of the names of officials who granted VHP and Bajrang Dal cadres permission to carry out a series of processions with swords, provoking local Muslims and disturb public order.¹⁰⁰

Demolition Drive

A fortnight after the violence broke out, on 26 April 2022, a demolition drive was carried out by the authorities on the pretext that the land is being encroached by certain people illegally, who are covering the land required for the TP road project, which is a 15-metre-long project that has

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

⁹⁹ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

¹⁰⁰ Aswani, T. (12 April 2022). ‘Organised violence’: How mosques, Dargahs, Muslim houses were vandalised in Gujarat on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/gujarat-himmatnagar-ram-navami-violence-muslims> [05 June 2022].

been going on for the last four years.¹⁰¹ According to the chief municipal officer, Navneet Patel, ‘anti-encroachment drive’ is being carried out to acquire the remaining 3-metre-area, out of the total 15-metre area (12 metre areas has already been acquired).¹⁰² For this, a two-storeyed building that housed four shops, a makeshift home of an elderly couple, and a few kiosks were demolished.¹⁰³

According to the SP, Vaghela, “The municipality has started carrying out demolition in Chhapariya locality, which is close to where the communal clash had erupted on Ram Navami”.¹⁰⁴ This was followed by, “On Tuesday, police bandobast was arranged after the civic body informed us of the anti-encroachment drive. It has nothing to do with the riot accused”.¹⁰⁵ The same was echoed by Navneet Patel chief municipal officer of Himmatnagar in Sabarkantha district, stating, “About three metres of the 15-metre road was encroached on by the building owners who had extended the illegal construction. We had sent notices in 2020. It was a routine anti-encroachment drive and had nothing to do with the incidents that occurred on April 10. We will continue to take similar action in other areas as well”.¹⁰⁶

However, the Muslims whose shops and properties were razed by the bulldozer, disagree with the state authorities and doubt their intent. One of them is a forty-year-old Jamaluddin Sayyed, a tailor who set up his tailoring shop in the Ashraf Nagar area in early 2000s.¹⁰⁷ He told the Quint, “I had two shops in the building and was paying Rs 2,000 rent. On 25 April, we got a notice that the shop is encroaching and will be demolished the next day. Just like that, bulldozers came in and razed it. I lost everything. Under the guise of an anti-encroachment drive, they are trying to intimidate Muslims after the Ram Navami violence”.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, a civic body employee has assured him six months back that his shops would not face any demolition. But soon after the violence in the area, his shop was demolished. “Two weeks after the communal violence here, they told me my property is encroaching the land. Suddenly, the TP Road project is the most urgent matter”.¹⁰⁹ This pattern where first the riots break out, where Muslims are disproportionately affected, and later they are the one to find themselves in the middle of a sudden demolition drive is actively becoming a punitive measure targeting the already marginalised Muslims across India, including the state capital.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Maktoob Staff. (26 April 2022). Gujarat: Govt removing Muslim properties weeks after Ram Navami violence. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/26/gujarat-govt-removing-muslim-properties-weeks-after-ram-navami-violence/> [05 June 2022].

¹⁰⁵ The Wire Staff. (27 April 2022). Gujarat: Fortnight after communal clash, demolition drive carried out in himmatnagar. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/gujarat-days-after-communal-clash-demolition-drive-carried-out-in-himmatnagar> [05 June 2022].

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Singh, A. (04 May 2022). Days after Ram Navami violence, demolition, a quiet Eid in Gujarat’s himmatnagar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-himmatnagar-police-action-eid-communal-attack#read-more> [05 June 2022].

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Madan, S., & Malik, R. (15 May 2022). How punitive demolition drives deepen the precarity of Muslim women.

3.2. Khambhat

Background

Khambhat is a coastal town in the Anand district of Central Gujarat, according to Census 2011, with a total population of 99,164 out of which Muslim population stand at 23.78 percent.¹¹¹ According to fact-finding as well as news reports, the town has emerged as a hotspot for communal tension ever since 2002.¹¹² Almost every other year the town has been witnessing communal violence. This has been documented in fact-finding reports such as ‘Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth’, published and released annually by Buniyaad, an Ahmedabad-based civil society organisation.¹¹³

February 2012 saw large-scale riots between the Muslim and Chunara communities, that emerged from a dispute over construction of shops on the land under the Waqf Board at Akabarpur. Stones, acid bulbs, and petrol bombs were used to attacks, leading to charring of six houses.¹¹⁴ In November 2016, in Pith Bazar area, colliding of vehicles of Muslim tempo driver and a bike ridden by a person from Ravad community turned into riots.¹¹⁵ Other areas of Khambhat like Rana Chakla, Madai, Vansdavad too got embroiled into riots.¹¹⁶ February 2019 witnessed communal clashes twice. On 22 February 2019, a clash broke out between two groups in Khambhat’s Teen Darwaaza area over a social media post related to Pulwama attack over compensation to be given to the martyrs of the terror attack in Pulwama that took place in the same month.¹¹⁷ Two days later, on 24 February 2019, a scuffle between two children belonging to different communities resulted in stone pelting that eventually spiralled into communal riots.¹¹⁸

A year later, in February 2020, a Hindu dominated area by the name Bhavsarwad was looted, after which the Hindu Jagran Manch (Anand-based right-wing outfit) organised a rally raising provocative slogans and even urged Hindus to bar Muslims from the area.¹¹⁹ Those who raised provocative slogans included representatives from BJP, in power at both Centre and State – Sanjay Patel (BJP leader from Khambhat and a former MLA) and Pinakin Brahmhatt (city unit

Behen Box. Retrieved from <https://behanbox.com/2022/05/12/how-punitive-demolition-drives-deepen-the-precarity-of-muslim-women/> [06 June 2022].

¹¹¹ Census India. Retrieved from <https://www.censusindia.co.in/towns/khambhat-population-anand-gujarat-802567#:~:text=Religion%2Dwise%20Population%20%2D%20Khambhat&text=Also%20the%20total%20Muslim%20population,23.87%25%20of%20the%20total%20population> [30 May 2022].

¹¹² Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

¹¹³ Buniyad (2021). Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth. Retrieved from <https://counterviewfiles.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/peaceful-gujarat.pdf> [12 June 2022].

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Buniyad (2021). Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth. Retrieved from <https://counterviewfiles.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/peaceful-gujarat.pdf> [12 June 2022].

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

head of the BJP).¹²⁰ A few days later, riots broke out that left around 13 people injured and 30 plus shops, 10 houses and several vehicles charred and vandalised.¹²¹

On 24 February 2020, another communal riot flared up in Khambhat, in which 80 Muslim houses burned to ashes.¹²² Gandhian civil rights activists of the organisation Gujarat Lok Samiti (GLS), Neeta Mahadev and Mudita Vidrohi, conducted a fact-finding report of the area and revealed that, according to them, this particular riot was a culmination of three communal riots that broke out in that year alone. They said, “This time the violence took a more severe form. On January 24, a month ago, there were incidents of burning houses belonging to Muslims. Several days before the violence took place on February 24, minor incidents such as stone pelting on the homes of Muslim families took place, following which many different groups appear to have been mobilized to shape and incite riots”.¹²³

According to the activists, the riots led to large-scale damage and loss of lives – “Hundreds of rioters gathered and started violence in Akbarpura and other Muslim areas in Khambhat. Many people were injured. Many left home to save their lives. Some people locked their doors, but the rioters broke them open, causing widespread havoc. Houses were looted, set fire and demolished. A tomb was also broken and burned”.¹²⁴

The local police, Director General of Police (DGP) and the CM Vijay Rupani were informed by the Muslim Representatives demanding protection and police security on 11 February 2020 via letters, to which no action was taken.¹²⁵ The action was also not taken while riots were at its peak, the activists claim, stating that “On February 24, a large number of vehicles, machines and work materials being used in various businesses were burned down. Gas cylinders were exploded to set houses on fire. No policemen came to contain the violence. Three cops, who were present, stood there quietly, refusing to act”.¹²⁶ It was following these riots that over 60% of this town got included under the Disturbed Areas Act by the Gujarat government blaming its ‘demographic situation for repeated incidents of violence ‘for a period of five years, from February 26, 2020, to February 25, 2025’¹²⁷. The notification read, “The government of Gujarat having regard to the intensity and duration of riots and mob in respect to the areas of Khambhat town, is of the opinion that public order in the said areas was disturbed for a substantial period by reason of riots and violence of mob”.¹²⁸

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

¹²² Counterview. (03 March 2020). Cops stood by AS 80 Khambhat houses gutted in ‘anti-Muslim’ riots: Gandhian activists. *Counterview.net*. Retrieved from <https://www.counterview.net/2020/03/cops-stood-by-as-80-khambhat-houses.html> [15 June 2022].

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Mohanty, A. (26 February 2020). Communal violence in Gujarat: Govt to place parts of Khambhat under Disturbed Areas Act. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/communal-violence-in-gujarat-govt-to-place-parts-of-khambhat-under-disturbed-areas-act-6286911/> [05 June 2022].

¹²⁸ Express News Service. (27 February 2020). Khambhat communal violence: Over 60% of town declared ‘disturbed’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-communal-violence-60-of-town-disturbed-6288387/> [05 June 2022].

However, this issue was raised by Ahmedabad Congress MLAs. One of them was Imran Khedawala who raised the issues as a ‘matter of urgent public importance’. Khedawala claimed that in the riots of 23 February 2020, 60 houses, a mosque and six shops were set on fire and also that Khambhat has witnessed three communal riots all in a span of 11 months¹²⁹. Another Congress MLA, Gyasuddin Shaikh, urged for compensation for riot-affected people¹³⁰. Notably, the MLAs claimed to have alerted the local police as well as the CM about this, “Imran and I had alerted local police as well as the Gujarat CM about this in January. It is happening because of a lack of communication between police and the public. There must be a law to curb the menace of hate speeches,” MLA Shaikh said.¹³¹

There have been observations of the mushrooming of Hindu extremist outfits in the area who are gradually seeping ‘communal attitude’ amongst people.¹³² One such outfit mentioned by Advocate Shamshad Pathan from Alp Sankhyak Adhikar Manch is ‘Sriram Sena’, which was formed a few years ago i.e., around 2016.¹³³ Hozefa Ujjaini, a minority rights activist, makes similar claims, stating, “There has been a surge of local Hindu supremacist outfits in small towns across the state. Almost in every incident of communal tension that has happened post 2002, the role of a newly-formed local right-wing outfit has been found. For instance, an outfit named Shri Ram Sena, formed about three or four years old and based in Khambhat, is constantly engaged in spreading hate speech and a distorted version of history on social media”.¹³⁴

Sequence of Events

On 10 April 2022, a Ram Navami rally was passing through the mosque situated in the Shakkarnagar area, which is a Muslim-dominated area of Khambhat, with loud music that was objected to by the local residents, which soon escalated into open violence.^{135;136} There have been videos that were shot right before the violence, that corroborate how a crowd of several thousand, most of them being young men, came to halt at the dargah and were dancing in frenzy to techno beats of music blaring from the loudspeakers.¹³⁷ Several slogans were raised, one of them being – “*Daadhiwaala bhi bolega Jai Shree Ram, topiwaala bhi bolega Jai Shree Ram*” (Those with beards and skull caps will also say *Jai Shree Ram*)”.¹³⁸ Mahrufa, a student at a local nursing college,

¹²⁹ Press Trust India. (03 March 2020). Gujarat goes the up way: Police to check if rioters can be made to pay for damages, says minister. *News18*. Retrieved from <https://www.news18.com/news/india/gujarat-goes-the-up-way-police-to-check-if-rioters-can-be-made-to-pay-for-damages-says-minister-2523961.html> [07 June 2022].

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Ibid

¹³² Buniyad (2021). Peaceful Gujarat: An Illusion or Truth. Retrieved from <https://counterviewfiles.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/peaceful-gujarat.pdf> [12 June 2022].

¹³³ Ibid

¹³⁴ Dhar, D. (22 January 2021). Gujarat: Fact-finding report says riots have shifted to rural areas. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-Fact-Finding-Report-Riots-Have-Shifted-Rural-Areas> [05 June 2022].

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Ahmedabad Mirror. (11 April 2022). Ram Navami procession targeted in 3 districts, one person loses life. *Ahmedabad Mirror*. Retrieved from <https://ahmedabadmirror.com/ram-navami-procession-targeted-in-3-districts-one-person-loses-life/81828132.html> [07 July 2022].

¹³⁷ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes-demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat> [07 June 2022].

¹³⁸ Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

who has stopped going for classes out of fear from the violence, witnessed a Hindu mob approaching the area where the dargah is situated with a DJ and dancing outside it, while chanting Jai Shree Ram slogans, and refusing to budge.¹³⁹ She said, “I saw with my own eyes that the mob filled up water jugs and matkas (pots) with stones”¹⁴⁰.

On the other hand, Anand district’s SP, Ajit Rajian said, “As far as we know, the issue was regarding the high volume of the music during the procession. From a war of words, it escalated into violence. Police carried out lathicharge to disperse the crowd”.¹⁴¹

During the cross stone-pelting, a 65-year-old man was killed, who on 11 April 2022 was claimed by the VHP as a Hindu man, who took out a procession amid heavy police presence.^{142;143} Locals claim that such processions are a fairly new addition to the festivities in the state of Gujarat. And, it has been started approximately 7 years ago by Jaiveer Joshi and his father Jairaj Joshi who head a local Hindutva outfit – Ram Sena.¹⁴⁴

This aligns with ongoing pan-India attempts to ‘homogenise Hinduism’, by spreading a Neo-Hinduism based on Hindus being urged to ‘worship a single deity and practise the same rituals’ pan nation irrespective of cultural or historical differences.¹⁴⁵

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in the last two years, this year the Sena decided to organise the rally at a large level and carried out heavy publicity of it in the entire Khambhat area.¹⁴⁶ Usually till 2019, not more than 500-600 people used to attend this rally, but this time more than 2,000 people attended it.¹⁴⁷ One of the members of the Ram Sena gloated about it saying, “Hindus from all over Khambhat”¹⁴⁸. According to Dinesh Patel, Shakarpur’s sarpanch, a BJP member, a close aide of the Joshis and, one of the key organising members of the Ram Navami rally claimed about the number of attendees being not less than 6,000-7,000, stating, “Men, women, children, everyone was there”.¹⁴⁹

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ahmedabad Mirror. (11 April 2022). Ram Navami procession targetted in 3 districts, one person loses life. *Ahmedabad Mirror*. Retrieved from <https://ahmedabadmirror.com/ram-navami-procession-targetted-in-3-districts-one-person-loses-life/81828132.html> [07 July 2022].

¹⁴² Dhar, D. (11 April 2022). Gujarat: 1 dead in violence after Ram Navami processions through Muslim majority areas in 3 districts. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Gujarat-1-Dead-Violence-Ram-Navami-Processions-Muslim-Majority-3-Districts> [05 June 2022].

¹⁴³ Langa, M. (11 April 2022). Communal clashes in Gujarat: 1 killed, another injured during Ram Navami processions. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/one-killed-another-injured-in-communal-clashes-in-gujarat/article65310605.ece> [07 June 2022].

¹⁴⁴ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes-demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat> [07 June 2022].

¹⁴⁵ Trivedi, D. (17 May 2022). The changing contours of Hinduism. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/communalism/the-changing-contours-of-hinduism/article38490949.ece> [07 June 2022].

¹⁴⁶ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes-demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat> [07 June 2022].

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

During an interview with *Scroll.in* Jairaj Joshi, was caught provoking violence against Muslims several times, “They have started this fight, we will end this”.¹⁵⁰

Roles and Response of State Actors

The district police have gone to great lengths to frame the violence as a conspiracy by the Muslim community, against celebrations of Hindu festivals.

Following the violence in the Shakarpur area of Khambhat, two FIRs were filed by the police based on the complaints.¹⁵¹ The first FIR has been filed with eight sections of the Indian Penal Code 1860 or ‘IPC’, including 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 (punishment for rioting), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 302 (punishment for murder) and mentions around 62 Muslims along with 150 unnamed persons.¹⁵² This was filed by Dinesh Patel (Shakarpur’s sarpanch, a BJP member and, one of the key organising members of the Ram Navami rally), who named 61 people along with a mob of 100 in his complaint.¹⁵³ He named two *maulvis* (Muslim clerics) who allegedly provoked the mob – Hussainsha alias Maulvi Hasamsha Diwan and, Mustakim alias Maulvi Yunus Vohra.¹⁵⁴ Based on this FIR, on 13 April 2022, three clerics were promptly arrested, namely – Mustakim Maulvi, Razak Ayub and Hussain Hashemsha Diwan.¹⁵⁵ Two others that were arrested along with these three are brothers of Mustakim Maulavi – Mateen and Mohsin.¹⁵⁶

In a media address, Superintendent of police (SP) Ajit Rajiyan of Anand district squarely placed the blame on the Muslim community. “As part of a pre-planned conspiracy, stones were hurled during the Ram Navami procession in Khambhat. The motive of the accused was that once the Ram Navami procession was stoned and threatened, no such religious procession would take place in the future. The accused had started planning for the procession after news broke that the Ram Navami procession was about to start and the entire conspiracy was hatched in the last three days after the procession got police permission”.¹⁵⁷

Police claim these five to be the ‘key conspirators’ who ‘planned a plot to incite riots by pelting stones’ on the Ram Navami procession.¹⁵⁸ They interrogated the accused and scrutinised their

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

¹⁵³ Desh Gujarat. (12 April 2022). Khambhat Ram Navami violence: Two named in fir for provoking mob. *Desh Gujarat*. Retrieved July 8, 2022, from <https://www.deshgujarat.com/2022/04/12/khambhat-ram-navami-violence-two-named-in-fir-for-provoking-mob/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ News Desk. (13 April 2022). Khambhat Violence: 3 maulvis among 5 accused of plotting riot during Ram Navami rally, police say. *News18*. Retrieved from <https://www.news18.com/news/india/khambhat-violence-conspiracy-3-maulvis-among-5-accused-of-plotting-clash-during-ram-navami-procession-4978039.html> [07 June 2022].

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ The New Indian Express. (13 April 2022). Ram Navami violence in Khambhat was a pre-planned conspiracy, say Gujarat police. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/13/ram-navami-violence-in-khambhat-was-a-pre-planned-conspiracy-say-gujarat-police-2441651.html> [07 June 2022].

¹⁵⁸ News Desk. (13 April 2022). Khambhat Violence: 3 maulvis among 5 accused of plotting riot during Ram Navami rally, police say. *News18*. Retrieved from <https://www.news18.com/news/india/khambhat-violence->

mobile phone data including deleted chats and call recordings, to establish the claim that they were involved in hatching “a pre-planned conspiracy to establish the dominance of Muslim community in the area” as part of a “need-to-know-based module/sleeper module”.¹⁵⁹ Further, the police claimed, “They planned to attack the procession and spread violence with the aim to teach the members of Hindu community a lesson to not take out any such procession in the future”.¹⁶⁰ Anand district SP Ajit Rajiyan claimed an angle of alleged foreign funding for carrying out the conspiracy as well, “These people were in touch with people from outside the district and abroad for the funds to carry out the conspiracy. The responsibility of raising funds was handed over to Matin. An investigation is currently underway into who helped from outside the state and the country for the funds”.¹⁶¹

While investigating this first FIR they have arrested more than 30 people in connection with the riots that broke out, all of them being Muslims, including a 21-year-old Tehbaz.¹⁶²

The second FIR has been filed with four non-bailable sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 (punishment for rioting), 337 (causing hurt by endangering life or personal safety), 504 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace) and, names five Hindu organisers of the Ram Navami Procession.¹⁶³ Iftikhar Yamani is an advocate based out in Khambhat city who said that Jamiat-e-Ulema Hind wrote to director general of police (DGP) Ashish Bhatiya compelling him to add the sections – 436 IPC (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy), sections 153-A (promoting enmity between groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth etc) and 295-A of the IPC (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings) to the FIR.¹⁶⁴ However, none of them have been added to the said FIR.

They have also asked the police to check CCTV footage and take action against rioters who destroyed and looted properties.¹⁶⁵ Along with this, Yamani is also leading an RTI inquiring into the terms and conditions of the permission given by the police for procession as organised by the ‘Ram Sena’, and possible violations.¹⁶⁶

conspiracy-3-maulvis-among-5-accused-of-plotting-clash-during-ram-navami-procession-4978039.html [07 June 2022].

¹⁵⁹ Press Trust India. (13 April 2022). Gujarat: Violence in Khambhat was planned to ‘achieve dominance’ of one community, say police. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/gujarat-violence-in-khambhat-was-planned-to-achieve-dominance-of-one-community-say-police/915206/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ Sharma, A. (15 April 2022). Gujarat: Foreign funding angle in Khambhat Ram Navami violence being probed: Sources. *The Republic World*. Retrieved from <https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/law-and-order/gujarat-foreign-funding-angle-in-khambhat-ram-navami-violence-being-probed-sources-articleshow.html> [07 June 2022].

¹⁶² Maktoob Staff. (12 May 2022). Ram Navami violence in Gujarat: Muslims move HC seeking transfer of probe to CID. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/12/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-muslims-move-hc-seeking-transfer-of-probe-to-cid/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁶³ Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

¹⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

However, the progress on this particular FIR, filed by Razak Ayub Malek, naming four identified persons and a mob of around a thousand, is questionable, indicating heavy prejudice of the state and its machinery.¹⁶⁷

This was duly observed and pointed out by four Muslims whose houses and cabin shops were burnt and looted and dargah was desecrated in the communal violence – Vasimbhai Vora (35), Imtiyazbhai Vora (41), Shakirhussein Shaikh (35) and Ismailbhai Vora (64).¹⁶⁸ They have moved the Gujarat High Court seeking a transfer of the case to state CID as Gujarat police’s investigation reflects anti-Muslim bias, violative of Articles 14, 19 and 21 of Indian Constitution.¹⁶⁹ On behalf of these victims, a petition was filed by advocate Anand Yagnik in the court claiming that there have been no arrests made in the second FIR that was filed on 10 April 2022, i.e., on the day of violence itself.¹⁷⁰

The petition reads, “Every day a new arrest is being made in the first FIR whereas in the second FIR, nothing happens. The same police investigating both the FIRs deliberately, consciously, and in a mala fide manner, don’t take any action with respect to offences arising out of the second FIR. Therefore, the investigation is biased, manifestly arbitrary, grossly discriminatory”. The petition also questions the way first FIR has progressed citing biasness of the police – “All those arrests which are made belongs to one section of society namely the minority. The investigation that has been carried out has been one sided based on religious consideration and religious bias” (sic).

By 15 June 2022, 18 out of 62 Muslims named in the first FIR continue to remain in jail, but none of the Hindu men who were named in the second FIR have been arrested as of then, despite the availability of visual media.^{171;172} Citing that the “investigation is not adequately and satisfactorily being carried out” the petition also sought court’s intervention to direct the immediate arrest of accused persons and leaders of the Ram Navami procession, including the prime accused Jayveer

¹⁶⁷ Maktoob Staff. (12 May 2022). Ram Navami violence in Gujarat: Muslims move HC seeking transfer of probe to CID. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/12/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-muslims-move-hc-seeking-transfer-of-probe-to-cid/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁶⁸ Express News Service. (09 May 2022). Khambhat clashes on Ram Navami: Four Muslim residents seek transfer of probe to CID or CBI, compensation. *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-clashes-on-ram-navami-four-muslim-residents-seek-transfer-of-probe-to-cid-or-cbi-compensation-7909022/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁶⁹ Maktoob Staff. (12 May 2022). Ram Navami violence in Gujarat: Muslims move HC seeking transfer of probe to CID. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/12/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-muslims-move-hc-seeking-transfer-of-probe-to-cid/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁷⁰ Express News Service. (09 May 2022). Khambhat clashes on Ram Navami: Four Muslim residents seek transfer of probe to CID or CBI, compensation. *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-clashes-on-ram-navami-four-muslim-residents-seek-transfer-of-probe-to-cid-or-cbi-compensation-7909022/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁷¹ Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

¹⁷² Express News Service. (09 May 2022). Khambhat clashes on Ram Navami: Four Muslim residents seek transfer of probe to CID or CBI, compensation. *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-clashes-on-ram-navami-four-muslim-residents-seek-transfer-of-probe-to-cid-or-cbi-compensation-7909022/> [07 June 2022].

Joshi.^{173;174} Moreover, the petition also talks of police directly and indirectly, encouraging the riotous mob in the entire violent episode.¹⁷⁵

Families of Muslim men who have been picked up by the police either on the pretext of carrying out violence or promising to only take him in temporarily, allege brutality by state actors.¹⁷⁶ One such family is of a 21-year-old Faisal Malik, who was picked up by the police in the late-night of 10 April 2022 from their home in Reem Fareed basti in Shakarpur, promising to release him the next day. “They said we will leave him, but they didn’t,” said Muskan Faisal Malik, his 19-year-old wife.¹⁷⁷

She adds, “He was taken to Nadiad jail, which is in another district. His name wasn’t even in the FIR, we don’t know why he was arrested”.¹⁷⁸ Now, Muskan and their 2.5 years old live at the mercy of her brother-in-law and charitable organisations¹⁷⁹.

Many Muslims men have fled from their houses due to fear of targeting and harassment by the state. These houses, of largely financially struggling families, are only left with their wives and children, who are waiting for their husbands/fathers to return whilst fighting to stay afloat.¹⁸⁰ One such family is of Shahid Hussain, whose wife Najma Bibi (48) is waiting to hear from him, while their two sons who are stone masons have also fled Shakarpur, leaving behind Bibi and their daughter Mahrufa Bano (21).¹⁸¹ Hussain was a local worker with the BJP’s Anand district unit, and a tuberculosis patient and was merely trying to pacify the crowd.¹⁸² The 21-year-old Mahrufa fears, “Ever since my father and brothers have fled, we have been making ends meet purely through the goodwill (charity) of others...We don’t even want to try contacting my father and brothers via the phone because it can be tapped and police will arrest us too”.¹⁸³

Of the Muslim men arrested for the violence, many of them belong to families who had their kiosks and godowns demolished by the district administration within the same month as the violence.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷³ Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

¹⁷⁴ Express News Service. (09 May 2022). Khambhat clashes on Ram Navami: Four Muslim residents seek transfer of probe to CID or CBI, compensation. *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/khambhat-clashes-on-ram-navami-four-muslim-residents-see-transfer-of-probe-to-cid-or-cbi-compensation-7909022/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁷⁵ Maktoob Staff. (12 May 2022). Ram Navami violence in Gujarat: Muslims move HC seeking transfer of probe to CID. *Maktoob Media*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/05/12/ram-navami-violence-in-gujarat-muslims-move-hc-seeking-transfer-of-probe-to-cid/> [07 June 2022].

¹⁷⁶ Raj, K., & Gurmat, S. (14 June 2022). Since Ram Navami violence, Gujarat’s Muslim women wage a silent battle, allege state bias. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/since-ram-navami-violence-gujarat-s-muslim-women-wage-a-silent-battle-allege-state-bias--62a7f004a343b> [21 June 2022].

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Ibid

¹⁸⁴ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes->

Demolition Drive

The area of Khambhat that witnessed communal clashes was subjected to demolition drive twice in the month of April 2022, the same month in which the violence took place. The first one was carried out on 15 April 2022.¹⁸⁵ Several municipal body authorities and police personnel were involved in the demolition, providing statements or rationale which often seem to be lacking citing any law or order.

District Collector MY Daxini said that along with demolishing ‘illegal’ constructions, administration was also removing bushes in the Shakarpura area, where the violence had broken out because “*miscreants had used the bushes and thick vegetation to attack the procession*”.¹⁸⁶ But no reasons or legal order were quoted for demolishing the properties, except that they were illegal.

On the other hand, Sub-divisional magistrate, Nirupa Gadhavi, too called the kiosks “unauthorised structures”, creating hurdles in ‘commuting’.¹⁸⁷ However, she refused to share details about the processes followed and laws invoked, rather introduced a new reason for the demolition – commuting.^{188;189} “We have been given directions by the DM and the SP to remove unauthorised structures that are causing hurdles in the commute of people to maintain a peaceful environment”.¹⁹⁰

Significantly, Khambhat’s Taluka development officer, AP Modi, who deals with rural revenue matters, said that the decision to demolish properties of the ‘accused’ flows from the “law and order” situation, “If I give orders for any property within a panchayat to be demolished, there are different procedures which I have to follow...But in law-and-order issues, the order of SDM [sub-divisional magistrate] and the deputy SP [superintendent of police] is final”.¹⁹¹

The Khambhat Deputy Superintendent of Police Abhishek Gupta, said the police only provided security to the team sent by the district administration that carried out the demolitions¹⁹². Moreover, he talked about receiving “many complaints” about “nuisance people who sit under the trees and in the shops harassing people”¹⁹³. One such complainant was Shakarpur’s sarpanch, Dinesh Patel who approached the local administration removing the encroachments. He was

demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat [07 June 2022].

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ Scroll Staff. (15 April 2022). Gujarat government razes properties of those accused of being involved in Ram Navami violence. *Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1021946/gujarat-government-razes-properties-of-those-accused-of-being-involved-in-ram-navami-violence> [09 June 2022].

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes-demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat> [07 June 2022].

¹⁸⁹ Scroll Staff. (15 April 2022). Gujarat government razes properties of those accused of being involved in Ram Navami violence. *Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1021946/gujarat-government-razes-properties-of-those-accused-of-being-involved-in-ram-navami-violence> [09 June 2022].

¹⁹⁰ The Quint. (15 April 2022). After MP’s khargone, shops demolished in Gujarat post Ram Navami violence. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/shops-demolished-khambhat-gujarat-post-ram-navami-communal-violence-khargone-demolition#read-more> [10 June 2022].

¹⁹¹ Saikia, A. (02 May 2022). Weeks after Ram Navami clashes, demolitions of Muslim properties continue in Gujarat’s Khambhat. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023047/weeks-after-ram-navami-clashes-demolitions-of-muslim-properties-continue-in-gujarats-khambhat> [07 June 2022].

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Ibid

rather confident that his demands would be met. “They saw what happened live, so they agreed to my point...The anti-social Muslims would sit under the trees and disturb our people”.¹⁹⁴

He further claims that he is not done yet, “They have broken the peace and they will be taught a lesson...There are many other illegal encroachments in the village, I will remove them myself as the sarpanch”.¹⁹⁵ Here it is important to note that Patel is a BJP member, one of the key organising members of the Ram Navami rally, and, also the one who has filed an FIR in the case and has been seeing substantial progress on it by the police.

In this demolition drive, several kiosks, that lined the road where the communal violence broke out, through which poor Muslims ran their small businesses, were razed down.¹⁹⁶ According to the victims of these demolitions, no prior notice was issued regarding the drive, which goes against all existing laws regarding demolitions and also eviscerates individual Fundamental Rights.¹⁹⁷

Victims of these arbitrary and punitive demolitions include 72-year-old Mohammad Abdullah Malik, who had been selling tobacco products and snacks in a kiosk for four decades.¹⁹⁸ This, after Malik’s left hand was crushed in a cloth factory, leaving him with few other avenues of employment. Malik’s 21-year-old son, Tehbaz, was arrested on April 14 for alleged offences during the Ram Navami clashes in Shakarpur village, on the outskirts of Khambhat town. On April 15, Malik’s stall was knocked down.

Apart from those already bulldozed on April 15, several smaller Muslim-owned businesses have also been issued eviction notices by the panchayat.¹⁹⁹

The second round of demolitions that was carried out by the administration was on 28 April 2022 under the aegis of Ekta Patel, Khambhat’s city survey superintendent.²⁰⁰ She said that the demolitions are being carried out under the Section 61 of the Land Revenue Code, applicable when person is found to be occupying any government land in an unauthorised way.²⁰¹ Further she said that “according to the documents” submitted by the owners the demolished structures date back 15 years.²⁰² She claimed that notices have been issued for removal of the supposed encroachments on 21 April 2022²⁰³. However, affected individuals like Sayid claimed they received such issues only a day earlier i.e., on 27 April, “There was no time to go to court, seek a stay order, or save our goods”.²⁰⁴ “I am on the streets, I have lost everything,” said 40-year-old Sayid, who estimated that he had suffered losses amounting to Rs 9 lakh.

Apart from Iftiyakh Sayid’s godown, the Khambhat administration bulldozed 16 other godowns on April 28, all of them owned by Muslims. Despite owners’ documents reflecting the structures

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Ibid

²⁰² Ibid

²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ Ibid

to be present at the site from past 15 years, the properties were not only razed after being declared illegal but, razed exactly a few weeks post-violence and all these properties belong to Muslims, but Patel denies any such bias.²⁰⁵ “We are surveying every encroachment and we will issue notices to everyone in due course of time”.²⁰⁶ However, no such notices have been served thus far, except to the ones whose properties have already been razed.²⁰⁷

Media Portrayal

As soon as the violence broke out, the news hit the media channels. The way the mainstream media channels covered the news and used certain terminology, shows the typologies of language that has been fuelling violence. Some of the headlines, tickers as well as statements by the TV studio anchors that ran throughout the coverage of the news were: “*Muslim mohalle mein kya Ram Navami ka rath nikalna galat hai?*” (Is it wrong to take the Ram Navami procession through Muslim localities).²⁰⁸

“*Muslim Mohalle mein Ram Navami manaao, patthar khaao?*” (Celebrate Ram Navami in Muslim localities, and stones get pelted?).²⁰⁹

“VHP ki dashakon puraani rally ko upadravi bardaasht nahin kar paaye (Rioters couldn’t tolerate VHP’s decade old processions).²¹⁰

The news coverage of the violence in the area began mostly from the event of stone pelting as to how the Ram Navami rally who were ‘singing devotional songs, visiting temples’ were attacked in their ‘own country’.²¹¹ “*Apna parv manaane par patthar baazi ka saamna karna pada...shobhayaatra par*” (one has to face stone pelting, on rally, for celebrating their own festival).²¹² The channel tried to set a narrative that in Gujarat things are normally carried out in a peaceful manner and that this time was some sort of conspiracy or a planned attack that has been hatched due to its timing being clashed with Ramzan.²¹³

There was little to no mention of how the violence actually transpired, instead focusing on serving a one-sided picture to their viewers, as in other states. There was no context setting nor mention of the nature of instigation including song lyrics, sloganeering, use of weapons like swords and tridents, and the nature of abuse being thrown at Muslim women. Rather, mainstream news channels tried to paint a picture where the culprits have been decided, and thus narrated to the people watching the news. Prominent news channel journalists called for

²⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ News18 India. (11 April 2022). *Youtube*. Ram Navami Violence : Muslim Mohalla से क्या Ram Navami का रथ निकालना गलत है? | Latest News Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kqWMkhoU_8 [05 June 2022].

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ IndiaTV. (11 April 2022). *Youtube*. Gujarat के Himatnagar में सांप्रदायिक झड़प के बाद माहौल तनावपूर्ण, चप्पे-चप्पे पर पुलिस की तैनाती Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNAni3PFiTI> [05 June 2022].

²¹¹ News18 India. (16 April 2022). *Youtube*. How TV news covered Ram Navami violence & Alia weds Ranbir | TV News18 Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C81jlR4xgU> [30 May 2022].

²¹² Ibid

²¹³ IndiaTV. (11 April 2022). *Youtube*. Gujarat के Himatnagar में सांप्रदायिक झड़प के बाद माहौल तनावपूर्ण, चप्पे-चप्पे पर पुलिस की तैनाती Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNAni3PFiTI> [05 June 2022].

panel discussions from both Muslim and Hindu communities asking for proofs from the Muslim representative for any anti-Muslim slogans that were raised in the rally.²¹⁴

While covering the Chhapariya area, where the violence broke out, the ground correspondent remarked, “*Chappriya ward se jab yaatra nikaali toh achaanak se bina kisi provocation ke pathraav hua*” (when the rally was passing by the Chhapariya ward, all of a sudden stone pelting started without provocation of any sort).²¹⁵

Moreover, while showing the aftermath of violence in the area and the losses that have been incurred due to the riots, the correspondent did not show or even mention the properties lost or burnt, or even Muslims religious places like Dargah that have been vandalised, rather a burnt jeep was repeatedly shown to the viewers, stating ‘this jeep was leading the rally’, to symbolise the losses borne by the members of the procession itself.

The bulldozing of the alleged ‘encroachments’ was also covered with much valorisation of the Uttar Pradesh’s Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s punitive actions against the Muslims that have become much infamous these days – signifying that the nature of the demolitions as retributive state action against a community is widely known and accepted.²¹⁶ Other times, whilst the channels that were covering the bulldozing of structures did claim that the properties of those who were involved in the violence are being razed, they did not hold the authorities accountable for these actions, rather it was accompanied by the denial of the chief municipal officer that two events are unrelated.²¹⁷ Descriptions such as “*Upadraviyon ke gair-kanooni imaaraton par bulldozer chale toh, aas-paas ke avaidh kabzon ko hataane ka kaam tez kiya*” (As the rioter’s illegal structures razed, the work of removing the illegal encroachments in the nearby was expedited), can be heard.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Newslandry. (16 April 2022). *Youtube*. How TV news covered Ram Navami violence & Alia weds Ranbir | TV Newsance 167 Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C81jLR4xgU> [30 May 2022].

²¹⁵ IndiaTV. (11 April 2022). *Youtube*. Gujarat के Himatnagar में सांप्रदायिक झड़प के बाद माहौल तनावपूर्ण, चप्पे-चप्पे पर पुलिस की तैनाती Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNAni3PFiTI> [05 June 2022].

²¹⁶ Aajtak HD. (26 April 2022) *Youtube*. Shankhnaad: गुजरात में दौड़ा योगी का ‘बुलडोजर मॉडल’ | Gujarat Violence | Ramnavami Violence | Latest. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZSBsOEj4WI> [30 May 2022].

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ Ibid

4. JHARKHAND

Background

Across Jharkhand, festivals are being weaponised in a bid to drive up religious hatred and polarise communities. Primary among them is Ram Navami, the occasion when the Hindu community celebrates the birth of Ram.²¹⁹ 68% of the state's population is Hindu and 14.5% Muslim, according to Census 2011 statistics. A 2019 report by *FactChecker* states that over the last decade, Jharkhand saw 14 hate crimes motivated by religion that led to 9 deaths – all of which were reported after the Bharatiya Janata Party won national and state elections in 2014, but before general elections in 2019, when the BJP went on to win 11 of 14 parliamentary seats in Jharkhand.²²⁰

Two of the seven hate crimes *FactChecker* investigated in its report occurred on Ram Navami; the accused in both cases had participated in Ram Navami processions. At the five other hate-crime spots, the festival played a key role in driving up a communal frenzy, police officials and local observers said. Among police circles, Ram Navami celebrations have become a 'law and order' issue, with the additional director-general of Jharkhand police calling the scale of Ram Navami celebrations in the state "unprecedented", and that they involve communally sensitive lyrics, provocative songs. The report goes on to describe the processions as armed with swords, daggers, maces and rods. The music often sparks off altercations, as in 2017 when a Ram Navami procession in Gumla town stopped directly in front of the Jama Masjid, where it was not supposed to, in order to play provocative songs – which angered the Muslim community, although the police intervened before any violence broke out. A few hours later, Hindu men returning from the procession lynched a Muslim man, Mohamed Shalik, to death just 4 km away. On the same evening, 280 km away, a similar Ram Navami procession had entered a Muslim neighbourhood, ransacked a mosque and assaulted local residents, including women.

In the central Jharkhand district of Ramgarh, the association between Ram Navami and hate crimes is clear – the main organisers of Ram Navami processions include Bajrang Dal members with a history of leading lynch mobs that killed Muslims.

The report also dived into a history of Ram Navami music in the state, replete with themes such as BJP's promise to build the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, berating Mughal rulers, and transforming India into a Hindu Rashtra – the subtext to all of these threaten Muslims with violence.

April 2022 saw violence in Koderma caused by both Ram Navami and Chaity Durga Puja processions, Lohardaga district's Hirhi Bhakta area also saw communal attacks during the Ram

²¹⁹ Purohit K. (04 June 2019). In Jharkhand, Ram Navami celebrations have become weaponised sites of communal tension. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/925788/in-jharkhand-ram-navami-celebrations-have-become-weaponised-sites-of-communal-tension> [07 July 2022]

²²⁰ *ibid*

Navami procession, leading to the death of one person and injury to 12 people.²²¹ A similar incident of conflict between the two communities was also reported in the Barmo area, in Bokaro district.²²²

These were not isolated incidents of communal violence and attacks on the Muslim community in particular. In Koderma, the last five years have seen several instances of communal violence. In Kolgarma village in the district, a long dispute over the construction of a mosque erupted into full scale violence on Ram Navami in 2017.²²³ More than 200 members of the procession entered the Muslim neighbourhood during *namaaz*, assaulted people, vandalised the mosque and some homes. After Muslim villagers lodged complaints regarding the violence, the Hindu community began an economic boycott.²²⁴

With a population of about 25,000, the town has mixed as well as segregated colonies. Muslims are about 24% of the town's population; most of them poor labourers, while there are some are traders as well. Muslims comprise about 15% of the population in the wider Koderma district. Scheduled Castes constitute more than 13% of the population.²²⁵

In 2018, communal discord over the same land dispute led to communal violence again.²²⁶ In the same year, Zilla Parishad president Shalini Gupta stated that even if the whole of Pakistan descended upon the place, they would not allow namaz there.²²⁷ There was also an incident of vehicles and houses being destroyed at Navadih village over a rumour of beef being served at a feast, and other smaller instances of communal violence too.

Lohardaga, one of the sites of violence on Ram Navami in April 2022, also saw an incident of communal violence in 2020. A march in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) – a discriminatory, anti-Muslim law – led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, saw stones hurled at it as it passed Amlatoli Chowk, followed by two-wheelers being set on fire, police personnel deployed in the area and curfew declared.²²⁸

²²¹ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [July 2022]

²²² Ibid

²²³ Purohit K. (04 June 2019). In Jharkhand, Ram Navami celebrations have become weaponised sites of communal tension. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/925788/in-jharkhand-ram-navami-celebrations-have-become-weaponised-sites-of-communal-tension> [07 July 2022]

²²⁴ Purohit K. (04 June 2019). In Jharkhand, Ram Navami celebrations have become weaponised sites of communal tension. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/925788/in-jharkhand-ram-navami-celebrations-have-become-weaponised-sites-of-communal-tension> [07 July 2022]

²²⁵ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

²²⁶ Purohit K. (04 June 2019). In Jharkhand, Ram Navami celebrations have become weaponised sites of communal tension. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/925788/in-jharkhand-ram-navami-celebrations-have-become-weaponised-sites-of-communal-tension> [07 July 2022]

²²⁷ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²²⁸ Web Desk, India Today. (24 January 2020). Curfew in Jharkhand's Lohardaga after pro-CAA rally turns violent. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/curfew-jharkhand-lohardaga-pro-cao>

Bokaro, which saw instigation of in 2022, also saw an outbreak of communal violence during a Ram Navami procession at Siwandih in 2016.²²⁹ Several people were reportedly injured in the 2016 violence, including some journalists and government officials. A mob also burnt three vehicles.

Two months after Ram Navami, Jharkhand saw a brutal crackdown by the police on Muslim protesters in Ranchi. At least two people were killed and over 18 sustained severe injuries by the police firing outright at the thousands of Muslims who gathered at the Ranchi Main Road near Daily Market on Friday, June 10, to protest disparaging comments of now expelled Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesperson Nupur Sharma on Prophet Mohammad.²³⁰ The deceased were identified as Mudassir Alam (14) of Islamnagar and Sahil (19) of Christia Nagar on the Mahatama Gandhi Road. Family members of both victims blame the police for their deaths, as they chose to open fire on unarmed protesters instead of using tear gas or water cannons to quell the crowd.²³¹

On Ram Navami in 2022, communal violence was reported in at least three places in Jharkhand, Lohardaga and Bokaro on April 10th, and Koderma on April 10th and 12th.^{232 233}

4.1. Lohardaga

Sequence of Events

A Ram Navami procession and fair led to communal violence at Bhokta Bagicha near Hirhi village, under the Sadar police station of Lohardaga district, at about 5pm on 10th April.²³⁴

According to a fact-finding report published on Sabrang India, some of the Muslims in Lohardaga used to comfortably participate in Ram Navami processions in the area several years ago, but

rally-violent-1639669-2020-01-24 [07 July 2022]

²²⁹IANS. (16 April 2016). Communal violence in Jharkhand during Ram Navami, situation under control, say cops. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/communal-violence-in-jharkhand-during-ram-navami-situation-under-control-say-cops-2732730.html> [07 July 2022]

²³⁰ Bhattacharya A, Khan AR, Pal S. (10 June 2022). *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/ranchi-one-suspected-to-have-died-10-injured-as-protests-over-remarks-on-prophet-turn-violent> [07 July 2022]

²³¹ Qureshi A. (11 June 2022). *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/11/govt-responsible-for-the-killings-say-families-of-mudassir-and-sahil-in-ranchi/> [07 July 2022]

²³²Chakraborty A, Ranjan A. (18 April 2022). 10 states, 15 flashpoints, the week that was in India. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/communal-violence-over-the-week-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-1938761-2022-04-18> [07 July 2022]

²³³ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²³⁴ Gupta KA. (11 April 2022). Jharkhand: 3 of 16 hurt in Lohardaga Ram Navami clash critical. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/3-of-16-hurt-in-lohardaga-ram-navami-clash-critical/articleshow/90767733.cms> [07 July 2022]

presently, Hindu nationalists have infiltrated the festival and misuse it to assert their aggression and power, particularly over the Muslim community.²³⁵

The fact-finding committee from Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, consisting of Irfan Engineer, it's director, Ashok Verma, journalist and activist, Afzal Anees, general secretary of United Milli Forum and Ziaullah from the Association for Protection of Civil Rights, visited the area to gather first-hand information. Hirhi village, where the violence started, reportedly has only one Hindu family, the Pandeys, who own 2 houses, alongside the other 320 Muslim houses and 10 adivasis houses.²³⁶

Typically, the procession comprises about a hundred people and is welcomed as it passes through Hirhi village, taking an hour's time. As the procession passes the mosque and kabrastan (Muslim burial ground) in the village, every year drumming stops out of respect. However, this year's procession comprising more than a thousand people, arrived at 2:30 pm and stayed for over three hours till 5:30 pm, standing in front of the mosque with loud music and dancing. Given that this year Ram Navami fell during Ramzan, the Muslims of the village were fasting, preparing for iftar (breaking the fast) which was around 6.10 p.m.

This year's procession has also been described as aggressive and violent, with slogans such as '*iss desh mein rehna hoga toh Jai Shri Ram kehna hoga*' (only those who proclaim the glory of Lord Ram can stay in this country); a slogan proclaiming that only Hindus can stay in the country.

The procession instigated communal disturbance which turned into stone-pelting, which escalated into an outbreak of violence. According to Mohammad Ejaz Ansari, some of the members of the procession were drunk when they arrived at Hirhi, and broke the wall of the kabrastan to throw beer bottles inside (the fact-finding committee was able to confirm the broken wall). Ejaz also said that when 2-3 Muslim boys questioned those in the procession as to why they were doing this, the latter started shouting "Jai Shri Ram" and attacked those boys. Sanaullah was injured and still in Janata hospital at the time Sabrang published this report, Jalahuddin's car, an Alto was attacked and its rear screen was broken, Mohim Ansari and Shamim Ansari's car were also damaged. According to the fact-finding report, Ejaz Ansari opined that there must have been stone throwing from both sides.

Mujahim Ansari (70), a labourer, told the fact-finding team that he was preparing to break his fast and he followed the procession as they were proceeding towards the mosque, however there was a melee and he was suddenly attacked with a sword. They aimed at his neck but he tried to block the attack with his hand and took the blow on his left palm, leaving two fingers barely hanging on and incapacitated, nine stitches on his palm, and contusions on his shoulder and neck. Admitted to Lohardagga hospital, the doctors advised him to stay there for 21 days, however due to lack of money he discharged himself and is convalescing at home – he has already had to pay Rs 5000 in medical bills.

The report states that as the procession proceeded, it left a trail of violence along the way, attacking Muslims identified from beard or cap, or otherwise known to the attackers. Two others,

²³⁵ Engineer I. (17 April 2022). Perversion of Ram Navmi procession is the latest tool of provocation & violence: Jharkand. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/perversion-ram-navmi-procession-latest-tool-provocation-violence-jharkand> [07 July 2022]

²³⁶ *ibid*

Noorul Ansari and Ayyub Ansari, were hit on their hand and neck respectively, near the kabrastan. Tanveer Ansari was hit on his head near the Hendalsa railway station, a couple of hundred metres away from the village. From the railway station, the procession proceeded towards the *mela* (fair) which is organised as a part of Ram Navami celebrations. They attacked and burnt down several Muslim shops.

From the *mela*, the report says, the procession proceeded towards Kujra village, where they reached around 5.45 p.m. Only 3 to 4 Muslim families reside in Kujra. In Kujra, they attacked Mobarak Ansari's 3 shops and residence, all within one structure. After this, the mob proceeded to attack Hashim Ansari and Mujahid Ansari's shops and homes. Both are brothers, and their shops and homes were within the same structure. Hashim Ansari had rented his shop to Sajjad Ansari, where he vended readymade garments. Mujahid Ansari had rented his shop to Qasim Ansari, a *kirana* retailer. Mujahid himself runs a bakery from his home. The shops were closed and its iron shutters down for *iftar*. The shops were completely gutted and damaged. The mob reportedly continued attacking shops and targeting homes for an hour.

The *Sabrang* report details the brutal murder of Aman Ansari. Aman (about 45 years old), handicapped with one leg, along with an escort Wasim Ansari, (about 17 to 18 years old) from Bodha village in Lattehar district were returning for *iftar* after purchasing a second-hand bike in Itki, and then purchasing their medicines in Lohardaga. However, as they were enroute to Bodha, their bike was stopped as Aman was identified as Muslim due to his beard and cap. They had nothing to do with whatever happened in Hirhi village with the Ram Navmi procession, however both of them were beaten badly. Aman, having "suffered severe sword injuries on his head, face and all over his body", died on the spot. His hands were cut in three places according to his maternal uncle Akhtar Ansari and other villagers. Aman is survived by his wife and 5 children – 4 daughters and one son, the youngest being only 10 months old. His body was untraceable for several hours and ultimately found in a drain. At the time of the fact-finding report, Wasim was in Ranchi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), fighting for his life. Aman and Wasim both worked as labourers, doing even sewerage work if that was available. Aman vended ice-creams in summer on a small mobile cart. The lives of all the children are now left in the lurch, with no help from the government so far.

Fearing a possible backlash, the state ordered a lockdown of the villagers in Bodha from April 11 morning, the day after Aman's brutal murder, until completion of his funeral on April 12.

Media reports describe the Ram Navami violence as having caused the destruction of several vehicles, at least 16 people injured, and one death. It took district officials and the police at least an hour to bring the situation under control.²³⁷ According to the fact-finding report, 34 Muslims have been arrested – it is not clear whether they all belong to Hirhi village. According to the villagers, all of them have been falsely charged as all were fasting and in their homes.

A later report mentioned that Hirhi had witnessed "rioting and brick-batting" during the Ram Navami procession between "groups belonging to two different communities".²³⁸ There are also

²³⁷ PTI. (11 April 2022). One dead, 12 injured in communal clashes during Jharkhand Ram Navami procession. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/one-dead-12-injured-in-communal-clashes-during-jharkhand-ram-navami-procession-10542761.html> [07 July 2022]

²³⁸ PTI. (14 April 2022). SIT to probe Ram Navami violence in Jharkhand. *DTNext*. Retrieved from <https://www.dtnext.in/national/2022/04/14/sit-to-probe-ram-navami-violence-in-jharkhand> [07 July 2022]

multiple mentions of arson – according to eyewitnesses and district officials, at least 10 motorcycles at the parking area of the fair and a pick-up van were set ablaze during the violence.²³⁹ ²⁴⁰ A different article also mentions two houses having been set ablaze near Bhogta Garden.²⁴¹ It was reported the next day that of the 16 injured, 3 people were in critical condition, under treatment at the Sadar hospital.²⁴²

An eyewitness stated that the injured are residents of Hendlaso, Kujra and nearby villages. A senior surgeon of Lohardaga sadar hospital, Dr Shambhu Chaudhary, who was attending the injured said, “At least 15-16 injured people were brought to the hospital. Three of them have cuts in their throats with sharp-edged weapons and their condition is critical”.²⁴³ One person later died of his injuries. Sub-divisional Officer (SDO) Arbind Kumar Lal stated in a 11th April report – “One person has succumbed to his head injury in the melee. The deceased has been identified as Mannan Ansari, 40, a resident of Chandwa. At least 12 others have also suffered mild to severe injuries”.²⁴⁴ There is a slight discrepancy regarding the name of the person who died: while the fact-finding report details the death of Aman Ansari, around 45 years old, the article by The Print mentions the name of the deceased as Mannan Ansari, 40 years old.

The fact-finding report also makes clear that Hirhi-Kujra villages in Lohardaga district was not the only place where Hindu nationalists used the Ram Navami processions to display extreme provocation and aggression – it is merely one of the places where they got the aggressive outcome they desired. In other words, similar extremist elements might have infiltrated into many other Ram Navami processions, displayed the aggression, tried to provoke a reaction from some Muslim individual/s and not succeeded. The interviews that the fact-finding committee conducted also reflected that their aggression and violence was also a message to the police and the state that the Hindu nationalists would not obey any laws that put any restrictions and limitations on them, whereas, simultaneously they deem themselves capable of compelling the state to impose severe limitations and restrictions on the freedom of religion of Muslims and Christians. These interviews included meeting with Dainik Bhaskar reporter Samid Ansari, also working with Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, and other villagers in Kairo, enroute to Hirhi.

In Kairo, not only did was there a Ram Navami procession in front of the mosque from 7 pm to 7:52 pm chanting provocative slogans such as ‘*iss desh mein rehna hoga toh jai Shri Ram kehna hoga*’

²³⁹ Gupta KA. (11 April 2022). Jharkhand: 3 of 16 hurt in Lohardaga Ram Navami clash critical. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/3-of-16-hurt-in-lohardaga-ram-navami-clash-critical/articleshow/90767733.cms> [07 July 2022]

²⁴⁰ PTI. (11 April 2022). One dead, 12 injured in communal clashes during Jharkhand Ram Navami procession. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/one-dead-12-injured-in-communal-clashes-during-jharkhand-ram-navami-procession-10542761.html> [07 July 2022]

²⁴¹ TimesofIndia.com. (11 April 2022). Communal clashes during Ram Navami procession reported in Gujarat. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/communal-clashes-during-ram-navami-procession-reported-in-gujarat-mp-jharkhand/articleshow/90774607.cms> [07 July 2022]

²⁴² Gupta KA. (11 April 2022). Jharkhand: 3 of 16 hurt in Lohardaga Ram Navami clash critical. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/3-of-16-hurt-in-lohardaga-ram-navami-clash-critical/articleshow/90767733.cms> [07 July 2022]

²⁴³ PTI. (11 April 2022). One dead, 12 injured in communal clashes during Jharkhand Ram Navami procession. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/one-dead-12-injured-in-communal-clashes-during-jharkhand-ram-navami-procession-10542761.html> [07 July 2022]

²⁴⁴ PTI. (11 April 2022). Clashes in Jharkhand’s Lohardaga during Ram Navami leave 1 dead, 12 injured; 8 people arrested. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/clashes-in-jharkhands-lohardaga-during-ram-navami-leave-1-dead-12-injured-8-people-arrested/912309/> [07 July 2022]

alongside loud drums and dancing, but there was also a Bharat Milap rally the next day, where the same thing was repeated. The tradition of organising a Bharat Milap rally the day after Ram Navami was reportedly stopped in 1984–85 because of its “communal narrative, polarization and politicisation”. However, 12 years ago the rally was permitted once again. The Muslim community in the area managed to maintain peace and did not get provoked, however, it is clear that such attempts and aggressive displays of hatred are far from being stopped in the state.

Losses incurred

Mobarak Ansari, who wasn't at home when the attack on his home and shops began, suffered the loss of three shops – including two vegetable stores and one run as a garage by his brother. The shops were completely gutted. Only his fasting wife and children were at home, and the residence has strong iron gates. Bricks were thrown and “attack was mounted with other equipment” – one iron crown on the door broke but the gates sturdily protected the family within. Mobarak's Hindu neighbour across the street informed him of the attack and he rushed back from his shopping, however he was attacked on his way home with a sword. He escaped with a minor injury on his crown as he ducked the attack and his motorbike's seat was torn with a sword. His carrots and tomatoes worth Rs. 4 lakhs were damaged, and the spare parts in the garage worth 3.5 lakhs were damaged. He could not quantify the damage to his RCC structures. Mobarak lodged an FIR with the police, naming a Sanjay Verma and his son Rahul from Kurse Badka Toli village, and Prakash and Prasad Sahu from Hendalso village as the accused.

While the attack was going on the Muslim-owned shops, Mujahid Ansari claimed he hid his children in one room that they thought was safe, but the smoke from burning shops adjacent choked the children and he shifted them to the roof. However, tones and missiles were thrown on to the roof and the entire family rushed down, injuring his wife as she tumbled from the stairs, into another room. In that room too, smoke from the shop belonging to his brother was choking the children. As the crowd broke into his home, they looted jewellery worth 3 lakhs and cash of Rs. 1.45 lakhs, both kept as his two daughters were going to be married after Eid.

Role and Response of State Actors

After violence broke out in Lohardaga, in a bid to “prevent rumour mongering”, internet services were suspended and prohibitory orders under section 144 CrPC clamped on the entire district, Sub-divisional Officer (SDO) Arbind Kumar Lal stated.²⁴⁵ District administration officials reportedly camped out at Hirhi village with a heavy contingent of police to oversee the situation and maintain order.²⁴⁶

The police did not manage to prevent the severe damage inflicted on Muslim people, their homes and shops during the procession's descent into bloodthirsty mob violence across multiple villages in Lohardaga. Where they did reach, they were barely in time – according to Hashim

²⁴⁵ PTI. (11 April 2022). *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/one-dead-12-injured-in-communal-clashes-during-jharkhand-ram-navami-procession-10542761.html> [07 July 2022]

²⁴⁶ Gupta KA. (11 April 2022). *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/3-of-16-hurt-in-lohardaga-ram-navami-clash-critical/articleshow/90767733.cms> [07 July 2022]

Ansari, if the police had come even 5 more minutes later than they did, the mob would have been successful in breaking into their homes and harming their lives.²⁴⁷

The fact-finding report outlines several conditions that the Ram Navami processions were meant to follow, that they breached. These include the procession being openly armed with swords and weapons, having more than a thousand members (they were supposed to have up to a hundred), the fact that the procession stayed for three hours in Hirhi itself (breaking with mutually-agreed upon past systems).²⁴⁸ The report also asks the following questions: Was the procession recorded on video by the police, as is the rule? If the violations of the conditions were noticed, were they reported to the police officers above? If not, which police officer was negligent in his duties? What action has been or will be taken against the delinquent officer concerned?²⁴⁹ The evidence put forth in the report also calls attention to the fact that, if the instigation is to be blamed on mischievous and politically driven elements, i.e., an aberration and not by design, how is it that the procession was given the opportunity to do as they wished for over three to four hours?

To that effect, the fact-finders met with the SP of Lohardaga, R. Ram Kumar, whom they described as “dismissive” to their questions, giving generalised vague answers, including outright refusing to answer. He only stated that the District Commissioner and himself were on the spot as soon as they heard about the violence, that a Special Investigation Team has been constituted and the cases are under investigation, and that 18 cases had been filed.²⁵⁰

Three days after communal clashes erupted during the Ram Navami processions, the district administration on Wednesday claimed that the violence was not a sudden development but rather backed by some “outside forces”.²⁵¹ According to district officials including sub-divisional officer (SDO) Arbind Kumar Lal, their preliminary investigation revealed that the incident was “not merely a clash between two communities”, but probably was provoked by the “sleeper cells backed by terrorist organisations”. The Lohardaga Deputy Commissioner added that it would be improper to say anything at this point of time as the investigations were still on. Internet services remained cut-off in the riot-hit areas.²⁵²

On the same day, it was reported that a special investigation team (SIT) will conduct a probe into the outbreak of violence on Ram Navami in Lohardaga district – with Sub-Divisional Police Officer (Lohardaga), B N Singh heading the SIT.²⁵³ According to the Superintendent of Police, altogether 14 FIRs have been registered and eight persons arrested so far in connection with the

²⁴⁷ Engineer I. (17 April 2022). Perversion of Ram Navmi procession is the latest tool of provocation & violence: Jharkhand. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/perversion-ram-navmi-procession-latest-tool-provocation-violence-jharkhand> [07 July 2022]

²⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ Express News Service. (14 April 2022). Ram Navami violence: Jharkhand officials probe ‘sleeper cells’ behind communal clashes. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/14/ram-navami-violence-jharkhand-officials-probe-sleeper-cells-behind-communal-clashes-2441782.html> [07 July 2022]

²⁵² Ibid

²⁵³ PTI. (14 April 2022). SIT to probe Ram Navami violence in Jharkhand. *DTNext*. Retrieved from <https://www.dtnext.in/national/2022/04/14/sit-to-probe-ram-navami-violence-in-jharkhand> [07 July 2022]

communal violence, and that police patrolling was still being conducted round the clock to prevent further violence.²⁵⁴

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das has taken a hard-line stance on the violence instigated on Ram Navami in Lohardaga, condemning it as an incident of targeting the majority community (Hindus), and that it was the second incident targeting the majority community in Lohardaga in the last two years.²⁵⁵ Demanding strict action against the culprits – ostensibly the minority community in the area i.e. Muslims – he added that “Apart from this, the majority community is also being targeted in other areas of the state, including Ranchi. But the Hemant Soren government is bowing before the communal forces”.²⁵⁶

In fact, the state’s CM visited Tapovan temple in Nivaranpur on April 10th, to perform his own Ram Navami rituals and offer prayers, praising the devotees on the streets as signifying that “Lord Ram has settled in the chests of people”.²⁵⁷

4.2. Koderma

Sequence of Events

On April 10, a Ram Navami procession led by Nagar Khada-Akhada reached the Muslim majority neighbourhood of Jalwabad at around 4:30 pm, when prayers were on at the mosque, according to a local journalist who was a witness to the incident.²⁵⁸ Some of the people at the mosque requested the leaders of the procession to turn down the music, and eventually two people from the crowd climbed onto the DJ van and tried to reduce the volume, following which the atmosphere became increasingly charged, with both sides reportedly raising religious slogans. Although the police managed to pacify the crowd and the procession continued as per its charted route, the eyewitness says “two or three stones were also hurled” during the heated exchange.

Sabrang India’s fact-finding report details the ways in which 2022’s Ram Navami procession differed from previous years’ iterations. The number of participants went up from the usual 100 to around 400 with most of them being outsiders; instead of the usual muting of the DJ music and musical instruments when the procession passed the mosque, this time they stopped directly in front of the mosque and turned up the loudspeaker; they stopped there at precisely the same

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Kumar S. (11 April 2022). Jharkhand: 4 injured as clashes erupt after attack on Shobha Yatra in Lohardaga. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/jharkhand-4-injured-clashes-erupt-attack-on-shobha-yatra-lohardaga-1935851-2022-04-11> [07 July 2022]

²⁵⁶ Ibid

²⁵⁷ Ekhlauque M. (10 April 2022). *Dainik Jagran*. Retrieved from <https://www.jagran.com/jharkhand/ranchi-ram-navami-2022-cm-hemant-soren-felicitated-ram-navami-procession-worshipped-at-tapovan-temple-congratulated-the-jharkhand-people-22616469.html> [07 July 2022]

²⁵⁸ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

time as namaz instead of passing through before 4:30 like they have done before.²⁵⁹ Two Muslim youth climbed on the DJ van, however, Sajid Hussain, a respected community leader immediately pulled them back and even slapped them to ensure there was peace. Hussain also informed Sabrang that a stone was thrown but it hit no one and just fell on the ground unnoticed by the procession. The report mentions Sanjay Paswan and Sunny Sahu as members of the procession who were being particularly aggressive – Paswan is also a history-sheeter with a criminal record. In the night of April 10th, two Hindu youths were arrested, but leaders of the Hindu community managed to get them released. However, after the release of those arrested, rumours had spread within both communities of a mob having gathered near mosque or temple and an impending attack being worked out.

The next day, on April 11th, as a reaction to the incident, shops owned by Muslims were attacked and damaged at Koderma’s main market at around 10:30 am.²⁶⁰ A mob of more than 50 youth, some from out of town, carrying rods and led by Sanjay Paswan attacked the shops.²⁶¹ During the ransacking, a few Muslim shopkeepers were also physically assaulted by the mob.²⁶² This was followed by both Hindus and Muslims filing complaints, the district police mobilising patrol parties, and increased security within the town.

One of the six Muslims whose shops were damaged, Imteaaj or Imtiyaz Alam, said, “After the incident, all shops owned by Muslims were closed. We opened the shops after four days on April 16. There are around 50-60 shops owned by community members. At around 10:30 am on April 11, several youths converged and started mouthing anti-Muslim slogans and provoked others to loot the shops owned by Muslims. They first started looting the shop in front of us. We immediately started shifting out our objects but our shop was invaded. I was beaten up in the process. They looted around six shops.”²⁶³

Those whose shops were vandalised registered their complaint at the Koderma police station, additionally with written complaints to the sub divisional officer (SDO) and district collector (DC) of the area. “I have a shop of utensils and have suffered losses worth Rs 40,000. On the second day while giving our complaint to the SDO and DC we emphasised about our financial losses and were told that they would look into the matter; but till now we have got no relief and compensation,” Imteaaj or Imtiyaz added.²⁶⁴ Another report mentions that he also sells wipers, which were taken away after he was beaten with the wiper handles. Among the other shop owners and people attacked were Rais Ahmed, a motorcycle mechanic was beaten up and his shop attacked; Javed Babu, who sells bags and was beaten with rods on his back and spine and

²⁵⁹ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

²⁶⁰ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²⁶¹ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

²⁶² Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²⁶³ *Ibid*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*

was hospitalized – the mob also used the rods to break his showcases – Amir, whose shoe shop showcases were broken causing damage of upto 30,000; Aiyar Alam was beaten up and the goods in his furniture shop SKP Furniture worth Rupees 50,000 to 60,000 destroyed.²⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the Muslim community remained peaceful in fear of further disturbance to peace in the area, however, they were still arrested and implicated in cases lodged.²⁶⁶

The fact-finding team corroborated the stories of attacks on Muslim owned shops with videos that they were shown by the shop keepers, of Hindu youth assembling on the road, and photographs, of all their goods thrown on the streets and the damage to their shops.²⁶⁷

Things deteriorated further on April 12th. Traditionally, a day after Ram Navami, and after worshipping Goddess Durga for nine days, on eleventh day, the idol is submerged (called *visarjan*) in the river. In Koderma this event is run under the leadership of two brothers – Krishna and Vijay Sahi who also collect donations for the whole event from the public. According to Sabrang’s fact-finding report, this year’s *visarjan* on April 12 saw a lot of youth joining the procession, raucously celebrating and chanting slogans abusing Muslims, using derogatory terms and “some of the worst Hindi expletives”, and insulting Muslim women.²⁶⁸

The report mentions a video of this inflammatory procession as having gone viral online, also shown (although muted) by Ravish Kumar during his NDTV Primetime show after which the state had to take cognisance. An FIR was registered under section 66 of the Information Technology Act and 28 youth arrested.²⁶⁹

A different report, by News9, describes an incendiary procession at the same place on the same day, referring to it as the Chaity Durga Puja procession, arriving at Koderma’s main market on the 12th.²⁷⁰ The report corroborates the one by Sabrang’s fact-finding team, stating that participants of the procession began hurling abuses against Muslims of the area, in the presence of police personnel – a video posted on Facebook on 13th April depicts a massive crowd with saffron flags chanting abusive slogans about Muslims, while police officials look on without stopping them.²⁷¹ The General Secretary of the Ram Navami Nagar Thara Akhada and an RSS affiliate, Manoj Kumar Jhunnu, also did not dispute the abusive slogans taking place during the procession when he spoke to Sabrang, choosing to distance himself from the procession and express disapproval for the slogans instead.²⁷²

²⁶⁵ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²⁷¹ Ibid

²⁷² Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

According to the fact-finding report, on April 13th the SDO called for a peace committee meeting with members of both the communities attending, and decided to reopen the shops and take a joint peace procession through the town. According to Sabrang’s Muslim informants, members of Hindu community did not come.

However, on the night of April 13th, the police started arresting the Hindu boys who were involved in the *visarjan* procession and, on the other hand, began arresting innocent people from the Muslim community as well for ‘balance’ and to appear impartial. They began arresting 4-5 Muslim people every night, and the nature of these arrests took on a brutal form, keeping the residents terrorised throughout the month of Ramzan. Muslim residents testified that the police from reserved forces would show up drunk after midnight from about 1:00 A.M to 2:00 A.M, bang their doors loudly as if to damage or break them, often using abusive language, and would “take the youth away with them”. The allegations also include damaging the electrical fittings in one case, and terrorising the women in many. They broke the locks on Rais Ahmed’s collapsible gates and proceeding to arrest and beat the residents inside a van carrying them to lock-up. The police made several such arrests, each at night, almost always exercising brutal measures, and targeted working-class Muslims – most of whom, in fear of midnight knocks on their doors, have reportedly left the colony and migrated outside the town.²⁷³

Superintendent of Police of Koderma District Mr. Kumar Gaurav told the fact-finding team that eight cases had been registered, six of them by the police and the rest by members of the community, and that arrests were being put into effect in all the eight cases.²⁷⁴

Statements by Hindu leaders reflect a willingness to absolve the Hindutva mobs of their role in instigating and perpetrating the violence on Ram Navami and after. Mr Jhunnu said to the fact-finding team that the arrest of 28 young people charged in accordance with the IT Act for chanting abusive slogans was an “obstruction to peace”.²⁷⁵ He goes on to resent that the complainant in the IT Act was the State, because if the cases had been filed by the Muslim community, they could’ve been convinced or pressured by the Hindu community to withdraw them.

The report points out that this idea that Indian Muslims should accept hegemony and domination by violent extremists and not pursue legal action in the interest of ‘keeping the peace’ is neither new nor rare, and that there is an inherent inequity in these types of demands.

Referring to the Ram Navami violence, Bajrang Dal’s divisional head Pravin Chandra said, “For the last 70 years, the Ram Navami procession has been passing through Jalwabad Road, when both communities have celebrated the procession cordially. No one has ever stopped the rally, but this year the procession was stopped. After that, the dispute grew and a few stones were thrown at the people there. After this incident, the administration did not take appropriate action, which led to the isolated incidents of vandalism.”²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁶ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on->

Role and Response by State Actors

In Koderma, it has been established earlier that police personnel looked on as the Ram Navami and Chaity Durga Puja processions in Jalwabad and Koderma's main market area respectively chanted anti-Muslim slogans and played provocative songs.

After a video of the police failing to stop the violent procession went viral, the district police booked at least 20 people with the district superintendent of police Kumar Gaurav, assuring that more arrests will follow as investigations are on.²⁷⁷ When asked why police failed to act on the spot, as the procession was moving with unabashed profanity towards Muslims being hurled, deputy commissioner of the district Aditya Ranjan maintained that the cops on ground did not hear any abuses during the procession.²⁷⁸

SP Gaurav stated that “whoever raised abusive slogans will be identified”, yet chose to steer clear of casting aspersions on any Hindutva-affiliate “till the investigation is complete” – regardless of video evidence making it clear this was a procession celebrating a Hindu festival. He did however say that “there was evidence to suggest that during the procession, some Muslim youths tried to stop the procession and a stone was hurled”.²⁷⁹

Muslims whose shops were attacked and vandalised, and who were physically assaulted by a mob chanting Hindutva slogans, also attested to the fact that the police had not provided relief and compensation, even after submitting written complaints to the sub divisional officer and district collector, despite the severe financial losses suffered by these victims.²⁸⁰

The most sinister part of the state's role in the violence in Koderma is the police brutality unleashed on Muslim residents who remained peaceful and did not retaliate despite overt instigation by the Hindutva processions. Among those arrested after the night of April 13th, was a handicapped youth. Another person arrested was one Aamil Ayyub, a 12th standard student studying in Mumbai in Acharya College who had come for vacation and to see his ailing grandfather. His mother was very worried about his future. They actually came to arrest Aamil's uncle – Hoda. However, as Hoda was not at home, they arrested Aamil and younger brother of Hoda – Afridi. The fact-finding report quotes its Muslim informants as asking, “What did we do to deserve this midnight knocks? We did not shout any abusive slogans, nor did we make video of such abusive slogan shouting, nor did we upload the video on social media nor made it viral, why are we being targeted?”²⁸¹

It is important to note that the police chose to conduct these raids and arrests at night instead of in the day, and that while middle-class Muslim youth were being arrested, they mostly targeted the working-class Muslim colony, Maruwari, where the residents are daily wage

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²⁷⁷ Khan, Md Asghar. (29 April 2022). Jharkhand: Communal harmony fragile in Koderma as anti-Muslim slogans rent the air on Ram Navmi; cops look on. *News9*. Retrieved from <https://www.news9live.com/india/jharkhand-communal-harmony-fragile-in-koderma-as-anti-muslim-slogans-rent-the-air-on-ram-navmi-cops-look-on-167344> [07 July 2022]

²⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁹ Ibid

²⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁸¹ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

earners. The report also states that if the police had provided a list of persons they want, the Muslim community would ensure that they submit themselves to the police and fight their cases legally.

4.3. Bokaro

Sequence of Events

Several reports of incendiary Ram Navami processions and how they instigated violence through songs, slogans, threats to mosques and dargahs in multiple Indian states, have mentioned Bermo area in Bokaro, Jharkhand as one of the sites of such communal violence.²⁸² However, details regarding the exact sequence of events in Bokaro and the kinds of losses suffered by the victims, are not publicly available as yet. This is not altogether surprising – in 2019, *FactChecker's* investigation of religion-based hate crimes in Jharkhand found that many incidents of communal violence go unreported in the media because they are too local or too sensitive.²⁸³ The article also quotes a journalist based in Koderma, as saying “There have been times when there have been clashes between the two communities and the police defused the situation. But the authorities request the media to not report it so that it doesn’t lead to more tension.”²⁸⁴

From the scant reports that covered Bokaro on Ram Navami, it appears that in Phusro Rajabeda of Bermo police station area of Bokaro district, two dozen youths riding bikes that were either part of, or heading to join, the Ram Navami procession, entered a particular locality – seemingly a Muslim-majority locality – without prior discussion or permission, at the same time as people of that locality were returning after offering *Namaaz*.²⁸⁵ A ruckus of some sort broke out as a result of this deliberate-sounding confrontation, but the police reportedly gained control of the situation. According to one report, three to four people were reported to be injured in the incident.²⁸⁶

Role and Response by State Actors

Reports describe Bermo SDM Anant Kumar, DSP Satish Chandra Jha, Bermo BDO Madhu Kumari, SHO Shailesh Kumar Chauhan along with others from the police force as having reached the spot

²⁸² Express Web Desk. (11 April 2022). *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/communal-clashes-gujarat-madhya-pradesh-jharkhand-west-bengal-ram-navami-celebrations-7864124/> [07 July 2022]

²⁸³ Purohit K. (04 June 2019). In Jharkhand, Ram Navami celebrations have become weaponised sites of communal tension. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/925788/in-jharkhand-ram-navami-celebrations-have-become-weaponised-sites-of-communal-tension> [07 July 2022]

²⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁵ Kumar M. (10 April 2022). Stone pelting on bike riders going to join Ram Navami procession in Bokaro, 3 injured, police doing camp. *Newsbuzz Live*. Retrieved from <https://newsbuzz.live/states-news/jharkhand-news/stone-pelting-on-bike-riders-going-to-join-ram-navami-procession-in-bokaro-3-injured-police-doing-camp/> [07 July 2022]

²⁸⁶ The Quint Desk: Ed. Talwar S. (11 April 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-multiple-states-2022-several-injured-violence-arson#read-more> [07 July 2022]

and taking control over the situation soon after receiving word.²⁸⁷ There is very little information publicly available about the role of district administration and police in the violence that broke out in Bermo area, Bokaro, on Ram Navami.

Media Portrayal

News 18 Bihar Jharkhand covered the violence in Bokaro and Lohardaga as planned attacks on the Ram Navami processions in both areas.²⁸⁸

Times Now ran a segment titled ‘Ram Navami Riot Toolkit’. They interviewed a Hindu victim, Nageshwar Pandey who blamed the Lohardaga violence on Shamsul Ansari, a chowkidar at the local police station who aided the operation, which also included 1000 Muslim men carrying big stones and axes. *Times Now’s* source claimed that all of these men, who were not from the village, were hiding in the cemetery and the mosque in wait for the Ram Navami procession.²⁸⁹ Although the SIT reportedly stated they would investigate Ansari’s role, the *Times Now* news anchor links these events to Karauli, Rajasthan, stating that the primary accused there too is a Muslim man who is still at large because the Congress-led state government has chosen not to arrest him.

Aaj Tak followed suit, describing the events as a premeditated attack on the *Shobha yatra* in Lohardaga, showing pictures of vehicles or shops set on fire alongside other pictures of violence in other cities including Howrah and Bankura (West Bengal), Sabarkantha (Gujarat), and Anand district (Madhya Pradesh) – compiling these together to portray a concerted attack on the celebration of Hindu festivals across India.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Kumar M. (10 April 2022). Stone pelting on bike riders going to join Ram Navami procession in Bokaro, 3 injured, police doing camp. *Newsbuzz Live*. Retrieved from <https://newsbuzz.live/states-news/jharkhand-news/stone-pelting-on-bike-riders-going-to-join-ram-navami-procession-in-bokaro-3-injured-police-doing-camp/> [07 July 2022]

²⁸⁸ News18 Bihar Jharkhand. (10 April 2022). Bokaro Ramnavami Clash. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvz-lku-WHk> [07 July 2022]

²⁸⁹ TN National Desk. (15 April 2022). Lohardaga Ram Navami violence was ‘pre-planned, 1,000 rioters came out of mosque to attack’, claim victims. *Timesnow*. Retrieved from <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/jharkhand-lohardaga-news-ram-navami-violence-was-pre-planned-1000-rioters-were-carrying-stones-axes-claim-victims-article-90865432> [07 July 2022]

²⁹⁰ Aaj Tak. (11 April 2022). Jharkhand के Lohardaga में रामनवमी की शोभायात्रा पर पथराव, हिंसा और आगजनी के बाद तनाव। Ram Navami. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7J_jdAauov8 [07 July 2022]

5. MADHYA PRADESH

Background

The state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) truly exemplifies India's decline into perpetual communal violence in recent years. According to MP police, the state has recorded 479 cases of riots, registered under section 147 of the Indian Penal Code [whoever is guilty of rioting, shall be punished with imprisonment, or with fine] in the last six months. Of them, over 30% of the cases are related to communal violence.²⁹¹ Political leaders in the state have taken a hard line on issues embraced by Hindu nationalist campaigns – for example, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan supported cow protection and condemned interfaith relationships.²⁹²

Khargone, a town of about 2,00,000 in MP where the worst of the communal violence happened on Ram Navami in 2022, has a history of small-scale tensions. About three-quarters of the population is Hindu; in many neighbourhoods, Hindus and Muslims share the same streets.²⁹³ In recent years, festival processions of both communities appear to have become “DJ-soaked displays of male aggression”, and the events on Ram Navami and after were not the first time Muslims in the area have been provoked.²⁹⁴ On March 10, when BJP won in four out of five states in the assembly elections, crackers were thrown inside the Talab Chowk mosque during the Vijay Rally carried out by party members.²⁹⁵ Members of the masjid committee submitted a complaint at the Kotwali police station in connection with the incident. *The Wire* quoted Hidayatullah Mansuri, chief of the masjid committee, saying “In the last one year, over half a dozen incidents had occurred when mosques and Muslims were targeted during festivals. Last year, stones were pelted on the funeral procession of an imam, but despite complaints nothing happened.”

MP saw a slew of allegations and intimidation against Muslims in recent times, as Hindu extremists have gained influence. Bohra Muslim traders in Dewas were banned from selling firecrackers in boxes adorned with Hindu deities after threats from Hindu Yuva Vahini, Bajrang

²⁹¹ Kakvi K. (08 June 2022). Madhya Pradesh: As the Communal Pot Boils, There Is Only One Winner. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/politics/madhya-pradesh-communal-clashes-increase-bjp-congress-elections> [09 July 2022]

²⁹² Kumar H, Mashal M, Raj S. (11 May 2022). ‘Perpetual Violence’: India’s Dangerous New Pattern of Communal Tensions. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220517185253/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/11/world/asia/india-hindu-muslim-violence.html> [09 July 2022]

²⁹³ Ibid

²⁹⁴ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

²⁹⁵ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad.²⁹⁶ In January 2021, MP police, acting on a complaint from a Hindu vigilante group, arrested a Muslim standup comic and four others because they allegedly “intended to” make jokes about Hindu gods and Union Home Minister Amit Shah – they spent several months in jail.²⁹⁷ In August 2021, Hindu extremists attacked a Muslim bangle salesman in Indore, 130 km south of Khargone, his arrest and imprisonment driving his family to destitution.²⁹⁸

In 2021, taking a cue from the Uttar Pradesh government, Madhya Pradesh passed a strict law to “recover damaged property from protesters”, through which tribunals could recover up to twice the cost of the alleged damage. The Prevention of Damage to Public and Private Property and Recovery of Damages Bill 2021 was passed without a discussion. At that time, the MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra spoke of the need to bring “stone pelters”, “anti-social elements” and “those causing riots” under the ambit of the law in this manner, and they “will not be spared”. It has since been implemented in an overtly selective manner, to arrest and penalise only Muslims amongst those accused. MP has in general seen punitive demolitions primarily used as a tool of punishment for people belonging to religious minorities and DBA communities.

The first incidence of demolitions carried out immediately after communal violence, was when clashes erupted during a donation rally for the Ram temple in Ayodhya in December 25, 2020, which was passing through a Muslim-dominated area in Ujjain, shouting inflammatory slogans.²⁹⁹ The administration proceeded to demolish the house of a “stone pelter”.

On 23rd December 2021, right wing Hindutva groups led a massive ‘Shourya Yatra’ in Manawar tehsil of MP’s Dhar district, where clashes broke out after the police tried to stop them entering a Muslim-majority locality.³⁰⁰ However, the police arrested only Muslims, under charges including the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984. Two days later, the district administration selectively demolished a Muslim man’s three storey building for “sheltering criminals”, despite all the houses in the area reportedly built without building permission.³⁰¹

On April 10th 2022, Ram Navami processions in Khargone and Sendhwa celebrating the festival with anti-Muslim songs and slogans, led to brutal communal violence breaking out in both towns that caused significant losses for both Hindus and Muslims in the region. A fact-finding team comprising members of eight political parties visited Khargone on April 25, and addressed a press conference on April 27 in Bhopal, where they released a 16-page report outlining that the

²⁹⁶ Shrivastava S. (13 November 2020). Why Bohra Muslims In MP Are In Fear Over Firecracker Boxes. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://www.article-14.com/post/why-bohra-muslims-in-mp-are-in-fear-over-firecracker-boxes> [09 July 2022]

²⁹⁷ Purohit K. (07 January 2022). Muslim Stand-Up Comic Jailed—For Jokes He Did Not Crack. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://www.article-14.com/post/muslim-stand-up-comic-jailed-for-a-joke-he-did-not-crack> [09 July 2022]

²⁹⁸ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

²⁹⁹ Dutta A. (30 December 2020). MP: ‘Inflammatory Slogans, Weapons’ at Ram Temple Collection Rallies Lead to Communal Clashes. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-communal-clashes-break-out-indore-ujjan-dhar-several-injured> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁰ Kakvi K. (26 December 2021). MP: Over 12 Muslims Held, Muslim Man’s House Razed After Communal Clash Over Hindutva Rally. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-dhar-communal-clash-raze> [09 July 2022]

³⁰¹ *Ibid*

Muslim community had been constantly subjected to provocations in the last one year at the hands of right-wing groups and men belonging to the ruling party.³⁰² The team comprised Jaswinder Singh, state secretary of Communist Party of India (Marxist), Swaroop Nayak from Rashtriya Janata Dal, Shailendra Shaili from Communist Party of India, Raju Bhatnagar from Nationalist Congress Party, Pradeep Khuswaha from Samanta Dal, Ajay Shrivastav representing the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party, Devendra Singh Chouhan from CPI (ML) and Yash Bharti from Samajwadi Party.

The report held the BJP state government and the district administration directly responsible for the communal violence on Ram Navami.

5.1. Khargone

Sequence of Events

On 10th April 2022, widespread communal violence originating from a Ram Navami procession broke out near Talab Chowk in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. An earlier Ram Navami procession had already passed by Talab Chowk and other Muslim-majority neighbourhoods without incident, but the second one led to arson, mob violence, vandalism and looting, and stones being pelted from houses upon people on the streets, with about 30 houses and shops being set ablaze,³⁰³ at least 30 people including 6 policemen injured, and one resident dead – though this was only discovered later.

The first procession was organised by the Raghuvanshis, a community regularly organising Ram Navami processions in Khargone. It passed without violence, and ended at 12 pm.³⁰⁴ However, due to being angered by the police barricading and blocking entry to Muslim localities along the procession route – including a heated argument between the police and members of the rally – a second procession gathered at Talab Chowk Masjid. This second procession, organised by the Gauraksha Samiti (the Cow Protection Society), used provocative slogans and songs on loudspeakers which triggered a verbal confrontation, followed by physical violence. The songs played by the Ram Navami procession have been described as “targeting Muslims and

³⁰² Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). ‘Cops Suppressed News on Khargone Man’s Death to Ease Way for Demolition Drive’: Fact-Finding Team. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-fact-finding> [09 July 2022]

³⁰³ Nair V. (12 April 2022). Khargone: Cops beat up 70-yr-old Muslim woman after barging into her house. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/khargone-cops-beat-up-70-yr-old-muslim-woman-after-barging-into-her-house-2307394/> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁴ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

objectifying Muslim women” by a police officer.³⁰⁵ Among the chants repeated was one heard across other states, too: “If you are to live in this country, you have to hail Lord Ram.”³⁰⁶

The Gauraksha Samiti, comprising leaders of Right-wing groups and leaders of the ruling party, was created in 2019 and they began celebrating Ram Navami and other major Hindu festivals.³⁰⁷ The Ram Navami procession used the controversial film *The Kashmir Files* to instigate Khargone’s Hindu community. The film’s climactic scene of a Hindu woman being cut up by a mechanical saw was recreated with makeshift devices and placed on a tractor trolley. According to Raju Sharma, the district president of Shiv Sena, who had sponsored the *jhaanki* or tableau, as part of the April 10 Ram Navami procession, all it took to recreate this scene was a mannequin borrowed from a store, a pile of wooden logs to evoke the setting of a saw mill, and a bicycle wheel to stand in for an electrical saw. The back of the trolley this was placed on, displayed a picture of Anupam Kher’s character in the film along with the slogan, “Wake up Hindus, lest other states in India become Kashmir.” The soundtrack of the film with the woman’s sobs was remixed with a music track containing cries of “*Jai Shri Ram*” and “*Har Har Mahadev*”.³⁰⁸

According to the fact-finding report, the rally which should have left Talab Chowk Masjid Square at around 3 pm stayed there till 5 pm – now coinciding with namaaz timings – and played provocative songs in front of the mosque.³⁰⁹ Videos from the hour preceding the outbreak of violence show disc jockeys blaring raucous music as thousands of mostly young Hindu men spilled over from the chowk into nearby lanes – waving flags of “Ram Rajya”, or the rule of Ram.³¹⁰

According to Khargone District Collector Anugraha P, the first incident of stone pelting was reported around 5 pm.³¹¹ Hindus claim the stones came from a lane behind the mosque, Muslims

³⁰⁵ NH Political Bureau. (13 April 2022). Khargone: Muslims fled, took shelter in Mosques; Kapil Mishra instigated violence, claims Congress. *National Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/khargone-muslims-fled-took-shelter-in-mosques-kapil-mishra-instigated-violence-claims-congress> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁶ Kumar H, Mashal M, Raj S. (11 May 2022). ‘Perpetual Violence’: India’s Dangerous New Pattern of Communal Tensions. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220517185253/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/11/world/asia/india-hindu-muslim-violence.html> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁷ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁸ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³⁰⁹ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). ‘Cops Suppressed News on Khargone Man’s Death to Ease Way for Demolition Drive’: Fact-Finding Team. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-fact-finding> [09 July 2022]

³¹⁰ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³¹¹ Express Web Desk. (11 April 2022). Communal clashes in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal during Ram Navami celebrations. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/communal-clashes-gujarat-madhya-pradesh-jharkhand-west-bengal-ram-navami-celebrations-7864124/> [09 July 2022]

say members of the procession first threw them at the police.³¹² By 6pm, rioting and arson had broken out in several neighbourhoods of the town.

When the situation deteriorated at Talab Chowk, police personnel present on the ground resorted to lathi-charge and tear gas shelling. This led to the crowd entering the narrow lanes of Tavdi Mohalla, Sanjay Nagar, Gaushala Marg, Anand Nagar, Bhausar Mohalla, and Khaskhaswadi.³¹³

Nasir Ahmad Khan (63), a retired assistant sub-inspector of police, was watching the Ram Navami procession from his three-storey building in Tavdi Mohalla when violence broke out in Talab Chowk.³¹⁴ As the mob reached his neighbourhood, his house was soon attacked by a group of over 50 people, led by two of his Hindu neighbours. His account of the violence details stones being pelted at his house amidst attempts to break the iron gate to enter the compound – with communal abuses being hurled the whole time. “I shouted and asked Anil, ‘*Tu kya kar raha hai, hum log padosi hain* (What are you doing, we are neighbours).’ Minutes later, Anil’s wife joined the mob. With an intention to provoke the mob, she said, ‘*Ek hi Musalman hai is gali mein, jalado isko ghar ke sath* (There is only one Muslim in the lane, let’s burn him with his house)’” said Khan. Anil Patel, one of his neighbours leading the mob, reportedly associated with the right-wing Hindu group Bajrang Dal, later barged inside Nasir’s home with over two dozen men and set the four motorcycles parked in the compound on fire.³¹⁵

In a police complaint submitted to the Kotwali police station two hours later, Nasir claimed that when Anil was pelting stones, a group of over 40 youths led by a young local, Kanha Bharo (20), began pelting stones and throwing petrol bombs from the rooftop of Dhangar Samaj Dharmshala – the five petrol bombs they threw burnt his kitchen made of bamboo.³¹⁶ Nasir’s elder brother Basheer Ahmad Khan, also retired from the police department, alleged, “They would have burnt us alive if the police did not reach on time.” However, three days after the violence and Nasir’s complaint, no FIR had been registered.

Tilak Singh, DIG Indore Division, told *The Wire* that over 26 houses, 12 vehicles, five shops, a godown and several religious places were either vandalised or were set on fire.³¹⁷ The loss of property, homes and livelihood were felt by both communities.

Videos by citizens and CCTV footage have reportedly established that the procession instigated violence at mosques in Khargone. A 35-year-old Muslim resident of the town detailed the damage to the Dhan Mandi Masjid: “The mosque gate was set on fire, the cameras were broken, the gates

³¹² Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³¹³ Chatterjee S. (15 April 2022). Here’s what led to Khargone violence in MP on Ram Navami. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/khargone-violence-top-developments-stone-pelting-curfew-1937800-2022-04-15>

³¹⁴ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³¹⁵ *Ibid*

³¹⁶ *Ibid*

³¹⁷ *Ibid*

at the back were damaged.”³¹⁸ The Dhan Mandi Mosque was fitted with a CCTV, and footage from April 10 shows a mob on the street hurling stones towards the mosque. The camera shakes as a stone is flung at it, but police personnel stand around on the street, doing nothing to stop the mob.³¹⁹ Jama Masjid, the other mosque that was allegedly attacked on April 10, also had a CCTV installed.

Although there has been no complaint about the attack yet, Muslim residents of Khargone are glad they have CCTV footage. “If we did not have this then we would have to just listen to all the allegations against us, put our head down and accept them,” said the Jama Masjid mosque management committee member. “With this footage we are in a place to go back to the authorities and try one more time to convince them [that we are innocent].”³²⁰

The police ignored distress calls for hours as people were trapped inside with mobs threatening to set fire to the house. Curfew was declared and Section 144 of CrPC imposed in Khargone by the evening of the 10th, but the violence continued in the form of sporadic attacks on Muslim residents of Khargone and neighbouring areas, on that day and for several days after. This is despite the deployment of over 600 additional police personnel including Rapid Action Force, to control the riots.³²¹

Videos taken by eyewitnesses show men in police uniform breaking the gate of Bilal Masjid in Khargone at 3am on 11th April.³²² They can be seen breaking into a house in front of the Masjid that reportedly had no male members of the family present inside. Women inside the house stated that the men in uniform beat up the women including a 70-year-old woman, looted their valuables, before continuing vandalism of the Masjid. The women were severely hurt and reportedly hospitalised.³²³

The fact-finding report emphasized the district administration’s response as being of ‘one-sided action’, stating that “Over a dozen FIRs have been lodged by victims within the Muslim community but police has failed to find a single accused. On contrary, over 40 FIRs were lodged by the majority community and over 160 Muslims have been arrested.”³²⁴

³¹⁸ Iyer A. (06 May 2022). CCTVs recorded violence against mosques during Navratri. But are the police watching the footage? *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023257/cctvs-recorded-violence-against-mosques-during-navratri-but-are-the-police-watching-it> [09 July 2022]

³¹⁹ Ibid

³²⁰ Ibid

³²¹ Jain A. (11 April 2022). <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/indore/madhya-pradesh-curfew-imposed-in-khargone-after-violence-at-ram-navami-procession/articleshow/90775886.cms> [09 July 2022]

³²² Nair V. (12 April 2022). Khargone: Cops beat up 70-yr-old Muslim woman after barging into her house. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/khargone-cops-beat-up-70-yr-old-muslim-woman-after-barging-into-her-house-2307394/> [09 July 2022]

³²³ Ibid

³²⁴ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

Losses incurred

Locals in Khargone informed advocacy group the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), that at least two mosques, four shrines, and two Muslim cemeteries were either desecrated or set ablaze during the violence.³²⁵

In Sanjay Nagar, one of the worst-hit areas, at about 7pm the mob reached the house of Aquila Bi, who had just finished building her house with money she got from Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).³²⁶ The mob burnt down her house, robbed and burnt the Rs 2,00,000 she had saved, but most importantly, they lost the *patta* of the land (paperwork regarding ownership title) and her husband's pension documents.

A total number of 12 houses have been demolished by the district Administration which fall under the scheme.³²⁷

In the densely populated Tavdi Mohalla, which has a sizeable population of both Hindus and Muslims most of whom belong to marginalised castes,³²⁸ two brothers who have retired from the Khargone police force – Basir Ahmed and Nasir Ahmed, said that rioters entered from the bathroom and main gate, destroyed their property and killed their goats with petrol bombs.³²⁹

Near the Talab Chowk masjid, Siraj Bi was forced to flee as a mob set her tiny house on fire. The elderly widow weaves garlands for a living, and among her belongings scorched that day were clothes she had stitched for her daughter's dowry.³³⁰ Two kilometres away, in Sanjay Nagar, Nannu Bai Bhandole too ran for her life as flames engulfed the front part of the house that she had painstakingly built. The autorickshaw that the Dalit woman's son had purchased on a loan was reduced to a burnt carcass.³³¹

While trapped in his house with his wife and son waiting for the police to respond to his distress calls, a driver-turned-shopkeeper, Nawab Khan (65) lost his *kirana* store to arson by a mob of over

³²⁵ The Indian American Muslim Council. (20 May 2022). IAMC Condemns Police Terror Against Muslims in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. Press Release. Retrieved from <https://iamc.com/iamc-condemns-police-terror-against-muslims-in-khargone-madhya-pradesh/> [09 July 2022]

³²⁶ Taskin B. (17 April 2022). Riot-hit Khargone counts its losses, a torched PMAY house, broken dreams & dead animals. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/riot-hit-khargone-counts-its-losses-a-torched-pmay-house-broken-dreams-dead-animals/918802/> [09 July 2022]

³²⁷ Deshmukh A. (17 April 2022). Aftermath of Khargone violence: Muslims bear brunt of anti-Muslim riot. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/17/aftermath-of-khargone-violence-muslims-bear-brunt-of-anti-muslim-riot/> [09 July 2022]

³²⁸ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³²⁹ Taskin B. (17 April 2022). Riot-hit Khargone counts its losses, a torched PMAY house, broken dreams & dead animals. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/riot-hit-khargone-counts-its-losses-a-torched-pmay-house-broken-dreams-dead-animals/918802/> [09 July 2022]

³³⁰ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How 'Kashmir Files' added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³³¹ *Ibid*

half a dozen men.³³² Several other residents near Nawab’s house gave testimonies to *The Wire* about losing their homes and vehicles.

In Sanjay Nagar, Manjula Bai (45), whose house was burnt to ashes, said this is the third time her house has been set on fire since 1992. She said, “Whenever a communal clash breaks out, my house is an easy target. We wanted to move away but stayed as a house under the PM Awas Yojana on this plot was approved.” She added that she was left with nothing and would have to rebuild from scratch all over again “until the next communal incident takes it away again”.³³³

Many residents of Khargone spoke up about how this wasn’t their first experience of dispossession caused by communal riots, especially in recent years. Aisha Khan, who lost everything in the Ram Navami violence – her house, savings, jewellery worth Rs 1,50,000 for her daughter’s wedding and is now struggling for basic amenities like food and water – lives with a family of seven.³³⁴ They were just done with Iftaar on 10th April when a mob of 300 masked, armed individuals attacked their house and forced them to flee. They are left without shelter or money, and said that this is the second communal riot they have witnessed in the past 6 months. Another family living in Sanjay Nagar for the last five decades, spoke of having seen riots in the area in 2015 and 2021.

Superintendent of police Siddharth Choudhary, who was at Talab Chowk, reportedly ordered a lathi charge to disperse the mob when violence broke out, and while he was a kilometre away from Talab Chowk, around 7 pm, he was shot in the leg. “No one knows who fired the shot owing to the chaos,” said an officer who was accompanying Choudhary.³³⁵

Aftermath of the violence

The Deputy Inspector General, Nimar Range, Tilak Singh informed reporters that the police had the situation under control and that no complaint was received after 2am.³³⁶ However, not only did the violence in Khargone continue into the night, but the fallout of the Ram Navami violence later encircled families living several kilometres away from the city of Khargone, with properties and houses of Muslims targeted by locals who accused them of “sheltering rioters”.³³⁷

³³² Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³³³ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³³⁴ Taskin B. (17 April 2022). Riot-hit Khargone counts its losses, a torched PMAY house, broken dreams & dead animals. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/riot-hit-khargone-counts-its-losses-a-torched-pmay-house-broken-dreams-dead-animals/918802/> [09 July 2022]

³³⁵ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³³⁶ PTI. (11 April 2022). Hurling stones at Ram Navami procession triggers arson in Madhya Pradesh. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/stone-pelting-at-ram-navami-procession-triggers-arson-in-madhya-pradesh/article65310748.ece> [09 July 2022]

³³⁷ Kakvi K. (19 April 2022). Khargone: Hindutva Activist ‘Threatened to Rape’ Blind Man’s Daughter for Sheltering Rioters. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-communal-violence-kukdol-muslim-family-attacked> [09 July 2022]

One such victim, belonging to one of just four Muslim families living in the Hindu-majority Kukdol village eight kilometres away from Khargone, described the attack on his house on the night of 12th April – “It was around 9 pm when stones were pelted. Within 10 minutes, they barged inside the home after breaking two doors. They accused us of sheltering rioters. They threatened to rape my deaf and mute daughter, tore the clothes of my wife and attacked us with stones. They forced us to chant Jai Shree Ram.”³³⁸ Other similar attacks on Muslim residents of nearby towns include a garage belonging to Mubarik Khan, located 5km away from Khargone city on the Khargone-Khandwa road, set on fire by a Hindutva mob on April 11th – 36 hours after curfew, with 4 vehicles burnt completely.³³⁹ On April 12, the violence travelled over 62 km away from Khargone to Dhargaon village, which falls under the Mandaleshwar police station. The house of Shahrukh Shaikh (45) was attacked by over 50 men around 9 pm, accusing the family of “sheltering rioters”.³⁴⁰

In the days after the riots, fires broke out at three industrial units on the outskirts of the town – an automobile repair unit, a bone-meal factory, a plastic recycling unit. On the night of April 15th, a decade-old plastic factory belonging to Arif Sufi was set on fire by unidentified men in the Bhadli Industrial area, three km away from Khargone city – the property, worth Rs 45 lakh, was turned to ashes. The police claimed that a short-circuit caused the fire which Sufi has contested in his application to the police.³⁴¹ Sufi, a young first-generation entrepreneur, had set up the plastic recycling unit in 2015. His father, a retired government employee, had broken his fixed deposits and his mother had sold her jewellery to fund his initial investment.³⁴² Eight years later, Sufi’s business was clocking an annual turnover of Rs 60 lakh, before the fire reduced it to a worthless heap. Sufi recounted the shock he experienced when he heard from locals that four days after the riots, a group of men had come to the industrial area to identify Muslim-owned factories. “I have been targeted just because of my religion,” the 31-year-old said. “If the aim was to cause me economic harm and break my will, then I want to ask: if the will of so many people is broken, how will the country progress?”

Shockingly, the burning down of Sufi’s factory took place despite the heavy police force during curfew.³⁴³

In the backdrop of the Ram Navami violence and the state government’s hardening anti-minority stance, there are also reports of Hindus trying to enforce an economic boycott – in person and via Whatsapp appeals – of Muslim businesses in Khargone.³⁴⁴ *Article-14* found that

³³⁸ Ibid

³³⁹ Sarkar S. (12 April 2022). With Khargone, Shivraj Singh Chouhan Drives Home Dream of ‘Bulldozer Justice’. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/khargone-ram-navami-violence-bulldozer> [09 July 2022]

³⁴⁰ Kakvi K. (19 April 2022). Khargone: Hindutva Activist ‘Threatened to Rape’ Blind Man’s Daughter for Sheltering Rioters. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-communal-violence-kukdol-muslim-family-attacked> [09 July 2022]

Ibid

³⁴¹ Ibid

³⁴² Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³⁴³ SabrangIndia. (19 April 2022). Curfew back in place after Madhya Pradesh police record first death in Khargone. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/curfew-back-place-after-madhya-pradesh-police-record-first-death-khargone> [09 July 2022]

³⁴⁴ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott->

many Hindu businessmen had travelled to nearby villages to persuade often reluctant traders to join a boycott.

Shop owners took pledges online just days after the communal violence, the incarceration of mostly Muslims, and demolitions of mostly Muslim homes. Hari Om Patidar, a 52-year-old confectionery shop owner, declared on his Facebook page, “Amrita Namkeen does not have any business dealings with Muslims and will not sell to them either. I take a pledge to boycott them completely.”³⁴⁵ Patidar informed Article-14 reporters that the Muslim community “needed to realise their mistakes”, and that he wasn’t worried about facing losses as a result of this pledge. His decision is part of a pledge taken by several members of the his Patidar community, a dominant agrarian caste, immediately after the violence on 17 April to economically boycott Muslim residents.³⁴⁶

Similar calls have been issued by other Hindu communities in Khargone, including the upper-caste Mahajan community, many of whom took a pledge after the violence to boycott Muslims under the banner of the Sakal Hindu Samaj, a collective with over 500 members – 60 of whom are active, and among those who travelled recently to 11 Khargone tehsils to persuade Hindus to shun Muslims at local fairs.³⁴⁷ Calls for these boycotts by Hindu groups are clearly spreading in an organised manner. Screenshots obtained by Article-14 include a list of 40 Muslim-run shops such as Pakeeza Showroom, Samir Sports, Ali Gifts, circulating on WhatsApp with a direction to Hindu women to stop buying from these establishments and to stop going to certain neighbourhoods (Jawahar Nagar and Birla Marg).³⁴⁸

The Sakal Hindu Samaj, a collective created in 2021 to bring various caste groups under its fold to address issues concerning Hindus in Khargone, has tried to find ways to enforce the economic boycott of Muslim businesses in the district’s villages. *Article-14* quotes real-estate dealer and the leader of the Sakal Hindu Samaj, Trilok Raghuvanshi, stating some of the instructions the outfit is currently giving to Hindus in Khargone – “We have told [Hindu] vendors to put a tilak or a god’s photo on their shop. And now we are putting out messages for people to know which Hindu businessmen to contact to buy flowers, for party decorations, electricians and *kabbadiwalas* (scrap dealers).”³⁴⁹

On 17 April, 150 members from the Patidar community reportedly gathered at Pipari village in Khargone tehsil under the banner of Sardar Patel Yuva Sangathan (Sardar Patel Youth Forum), and vowed to economically boycott Muslims. A participant of the gathering informed *Article-14* reporters that the community was running “awareness drives” in adjoining villages and were specifically not sharing messages about the pledge on social media to avoid media attention.

Another member of the collective, Nilesh Bhavsar, stated that after the 10th April riots, Sakal Hindu Samaj members have travelled across 11 *tehsils* within Khargone district to many villages

of-muslims-626b0b188f64b [09 July 2022]

³⁴⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁷ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

³⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁹ Ibid

to persuade traders in these areas to boycott Muslim businesses at weekly trade fairs. These villages included Bistan, Bhagwanpura, Pipaljhopa, Bhikangaon, Katargaon, Dargaon, Sirwel. The collective claimed to have created smaller groups of 200 traders in each of these villages who have barred Muslim businessmen from participating in the fairs. The collective has also urged residents to stop purchasing from shops rented by Muslims in Khargone's Radha Vallabh Market, where a majority of owners are Hindus.

The Sakal Hindu Samaj leader also attested to the role played the Ram Navami violence in convincing Dalit communities to join their collective. "Dalits had boycotted us (upper-caste Hindus) earlier, but they are comfortable joining us after the riot," he said.³⁵⁰

These economic boycotts have faced no opposition from the local police, administration or state government, despite violating Articles 14, 15(1) and 15(2) of the Constitution.³⁵¹ In fact, the state government's actions and the Muslim boycott attempts in Khargone appear to be a part of growing anti-Muslim sentiment within MP, each feeding off the other.³⁵²

There have also been reports of a social boycott against Muslim residents of Khargone. When *The Wire* visited Kukdol village to meet Reyaz, a mason living in a one-room house who returned to the village after the violence to look after his family, he alleged that he was denied permission to buy groceries and ration from village shopkeepers – one of whom told him "*Tum Musalmano ke is gao me koi jagha nahi hai, bhago warna yahi maar dunga.* (You Muslims have no place in this village. Run away or we will kill you.)"³⁵³

Two days after the Ram Navami violence was allegedly instigated by right wing activists, reports stated that thousands of Muslims living in the area have fled, and others took to nearby mosques, relatives' houses, to seek shelter.³⁵⁴ These claims have been denied by the MP police – who also said due process was followed during the demolition drives in Khargone and Sendhwa.³⁵⁵ Locals also told IAMC that many Muslim families abandoned their villages and sought refuge in surrounding towns in the aftermath of the violence, due to Hindus from adjoining villages having attacked their Muslim neighbours and threatened to rape Muslim women.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Ibid

³⁵¹ CJP team. (31 March 2022). Citizens for Justice and Peace. Retrieved from <https://cjp.org.in/with-calls-for-economic-boycott-of-muslims-are-we-at-the-precipice-of-a-genocide/> [09 July 2022]

³⁵² Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

³⁵³ Kakvi K. (19 April 2022). Khargone: Hindutva Activist 'Threatened to Rape' Blind Man's Daughter for Sheltering Rioters. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-communal-violence-kukdol-muslim-family-attacked> [09 July 2022]

³⁵⁴ NH Political Bureau. (13 April 2022). Khargone: Muslims fled, took shelter in Mosques; Kapil Mishra instigated violence, claims Congress. *National Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/khargone-muslims-fled-took-shelter-in-mosques-kapil-mishra-instigated-violence-claims-congress> [09 July 2022]

³⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁶ The Indian American Muslim Council. (20 May 2022). IAMC Condemns Police Terror Against Muslims in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. Press Release. Retrieved from <https://iamc.com/iamc-condemns-police-terror-against-muslims-in-khargone-madhya-pradesh/> [09 July 2022]

As security was tightened in Khargone, the residents were asked to celebrate the Eid-al-Fitr and Akshaya Tritiya festivals at home.³⁵⁷ Three weeks after communal clashes broke out in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone following Ram Navami rallies, people of Burhanpur – 160 kilometres away – together foiled an attempt to begin similar communal violence in the town on the eve of Eid Ul Fitr.³⁵⁸ On May 2nd, after idols of Hanuman and Ram in a temple at Maliwada were reportedly vandalised, an eyewitness attested that local BJP leader Amit Varude reached Maliwada soon after and began blaming Muslims for the vandalism. However, police analysis of CCTV footage revealed the attacker to be Satish Chouhan – nephew of local BJP leader Prahlad Chouhan.

This has been described as a continuation of BJP's attempts – after Khargone and Sendhwa – to create turmoil in regions where they lost in the 2018 assembly election, by former MP Arun Yadav from Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh.³⁵⁹

A month after Ram Navami, communal tension broke out in another town, Neemuch, after a mob set a mosque on fire hours after placing a Hanuman idol in a century-old shrine. One of the shrine's caretakers, also an eyewitness to the incident, Zubain Nisha, said that police were present there when a Hindu mob was placing a lord hanuman idol on the shrine's wall. "The mob not only placed the idol there but also attacked Muslim colonies in the presence of the police with stones and set a Madni mosque on fire which is 700-meter away from the shrine" she said. Videos of the incident show an enraged mob chanting anti-Muslim slogans.³⁶⁰

Role & response by state actors

In Khargone, the role of the administration before, during and after the Ram Navami violence reveals a pattern of one-sided response against Muslim residents in the violence-hit areas. Allowing the armed procession openly displaying objectionable songs and threats, to go through minority neighbourhoods in a town known to be communally sensitive, without adequate preparation has been criticised widely.³⁶¹

Reports of police brutality show that Muslims were at the receiving end of violence by police officers.³⁶² In videos from Khargone that emerged on 13th April, '*Chutad par maaro, isko chutad par maaro*' which roughly translates to 'hit on body part below the waist and above the thighs' can be heard as police officers physically assault members of the Muslim community on the destructed and deserted narrow lanes of the city.³⁶³ While the man wails in pain the policeman

³⁵⁷ Timesofindia.com. (03 May 2022). Madhya Pradesh: Curfew in violence-hit Khargone on Eid, Akshaya Tritiya; religious places shut. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/madhya-pradesh-curfew-in-violence-hit-khargone-on-eid-akshaya-tritiya-religious-places-shut/articleshow/91278334.cms> [09 July 2022]

³⁵⁸ The Wire staff. (06 May 2022). How a Madhya Pradesh Town Averted a Communal Clash Before Eid. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/society/how-a-madhya-pradesh-town-averted-a-communal-clash-before-eid> [09 July 2022]

³⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁶⁰ Kakvi K. (17 May 2022). *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/MP-Almost-Month-After-Khargone-Riot-Clash-Broke-Neemuch> [09 July 2022]

³⁶¹ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). 'Cops Suppressed News on Khargone Man's Death to Ease Way for Demolition Drive': Fact-Finding Team. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-fact-finding> [09 July 2022]

³⁶² Deshmukh A. (17 April 2022). Aftermath of Khargone violence: Muslims bear brunt of anti-Muslim riot. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/17/aftermath-of-khargone-violence-muslims-bear-brunt-of-anti-muslim-riot/> [09 July 2022]

³⁶³ Ibid

can be heard instructing his colleague to hit another Muslim youth. CCTV footage released after the violence shows the police quietly standing by and watching on Ram Navami as the religious procession turned violent and mosques were attacked in Khargone.³⁶⁴

Other accounts by eyewitnesses and victims depict how the Khargone police used the Ram Navami violence as an excuse to arbitrarily torture Muslim residents. This includes multiple incidents of brutally assaulting women who protested their sons being arrested without explanation and despite their not being involved with the riots.³⁶⁵

Reportage and fact-finding teams have made clear that the response by the local police to the violence in terms of filing FIRs, conducting investigations, offering protection to the victims, and incarcerating the culprits, has been openly favouring one community. In the first three days after the violence, DIG Indore Division Tilak Singh spoke of 33 FIRs have been registered, which included only three from the Muslim side. The police officials said that no one from the Muslim community was coming forward to register FIRs, but several Muslim residents have alleged that the police are suppressing the minority community.

As of 30th April, 175 people had been arrested including two Muslim men who have been charged with the National Security Act (NSA) 1980 which allows a year's detention without formal charges.³⁶⁶ A New York Times article from 11th May reported at least 150 arrests, of which at least 125 of them are Muslims.³⁶⁷ The most recent report – by the IAMC – states that as of 21st May 2022, the police have booked 599 Muslims in 65 different FIRs, while only 6 FIRs have been lodged against Hindu extremists.³⁶⁸

These include clear-cut cases of wrongful incarceration and inaccurate FIRs. Two men, Farid and Azam, who were arrested in connection with violence at Sanjay Nagar on 10th April, were both either hospitalized or out of Khargone that day.³⁶⁹ Farid was named in two cases of rioting registered at the Khargone police station on April 11 and 12, Azam is named among the co-accused with Farid in the FIR lodged on April 12. However, Farid's sister-in-law attested to him being in a hospital on the day, saying "My brother-in-law Farid was hospitalized at the Khargone District Hospital's Orthopaedic Trauma Ward between April 9 and 11, after being injured due to a fall while cleaning the house". "How can my brother-in-law commit any crime, when he was under treatment at the hospital from April 9 to April 11. He has been untraceable from the day he was discharged from the hospital on April 11 and his phone remains switched off," she said.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ Ibid

³⁶⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁶ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

³⁶⁷ Kumar H, Mashal M, Raj S. (11 May 2022). 'Perpetual Violence': India's Dangerous New Pattern of Communal Tensions. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220517185253/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/11/world/asia/india-hindu-muslim-violence.html> [09 July 2022]

³⁶⁸ The Indian American Muslim Council. (20 May 2022). IAMC Condemns Police Terror Against Muslims in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. Press Release. Retrieved from <https://iamc.com/iamc-condemns-police-terror-against-muslims-in-khargone-madhya-pradesh/> [09 July 2022]

³⁶⁹ Singh A. (17 April 2022). Ram Navami violence in MP: FIR against Muslim men 'who were nowhere near the spot'. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/17/ram-navami-violence-in-mp-fir-against-muslim-men-who-were-nowhere-near-the-spot-2443139.html> [09 July 2022]

³⁷⁰ Ibid

Other members of Farid’s family, including his brother and father have also been named in the same FIR. Farid’s co-accused, Azam, wasn’t in Khargone when the violence happened, and according to his wife, his phone too has been untraceable after being named in the FIR.³⁷¹

Meanwhile, Hindu perpetrators of violent named in the complaints written by Muslim families have been allowed to roam free. One of them, Balwant Rajput evaded arrest even after making statements such as “If any Muslim comes into our village to do business, or if they have anything to do and come to our village, it’s a Hindu Rashtra, we will beat them up”.³⁷²

The response by the police to Khargone’s communal violence is littered with examples of how a communalised police force serves as an extension of the Hindutva regime. In Teba Nagar, Shabana Khan’s husband Hakim Khan had been prescribed surgery by the district hospital to remove a painful callus on his foot. He could barely walk when he was arrested by the police, she said.³⁷³ In a particularly gruesome case, rioters had slashed Mehrun Khan’s face with a sword in Anand Nagar, before they entered and looted her house, yet she preferred to lie bleeding all night than head to the hospital with the police. “What if they threw me off somewhere?” she asked.³⁷⁴ The family has now moved to another part of the town – fearing not violent mobs, but the police. “I could get arrested,” her middle-aged son said. Despite visits to the tehsil office to file a compensation claim, the family had not, as of the end of April, received any financial assistance from the administration – not even for Mehrun Khan’s treatment cost.³⁷⁵

An article by *The Wire* on 14th April, three days after the violence, quotes Amjaz Azad, a social activist from Khargone city, saying “All the shops, eateries and homes which have been demolished in the last three days belong to the minority community. Over 104 people who have been arrested are Muslims. Close to 30 FIRs were registered from the majority community but we are struggling for two days for a single FIR. Those who are going to register an FIR are being shouted at.”

The IAMC’s (Indian American Muslim Council) report on state-sanctioned terror in Khargone also includes testimonies from locals who accuse the police of threatening them and forcing them to file complaints against Hindu attackers. In some cases, the police reportedly refused to entertain their complaints.³⁷⁶ The same report also describes testimonies as to police officers conducting raids on Muslim homes in the middle of the night, harassing and abducting the men and women. “Police are breaking into our homes illegally and harassing women. They torture the males brutally and detain them. This has to stop,” Dr. Sofia, a local resident, told the media. After her statement, the police booked Dr. Sofia along with nine other Muslim women for speaking up against the state persecution. “My friend Mohsin died three years ago. His name

³⁷¹ Ibid

³⁷² Deshmukh A. (17 April 2022). Aftermath of Khargone violence: Muslims bear brunt of anti-Muslim riot. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/17/aftermath-of-khargone-violence-muslims-bear-brunt-of-anti-muslim-riot/> [09 July 2022]

³⁷³ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³⁷⁴ Ibid

³⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁷⁶ The Indian American Muslim Council. (20 May 2022). IAMC Condemns Police Terror Against Muslims in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. Press Release. Retrieved from <https://iamc.com/iamc-condemns-police-terror-against-muslims-in-khargone-madhya-pradesh/> [09 July 2022]

appeared on the FIR. That is enough to reveal how biased the police investigations are...they are booking Muslims from voter lists,” Rizwan, a local, told IAMC. The police arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned, and tortured Muslim men – including at least 14 minors – in the days that followed.³⁷⁷

The Wire reported on 9th May that one of the main accused, Iqbal Bani, who allegedly incited the violence in Anand Nagar area, and Afzal, the main accused of riots in Bhatwadi area, have been arrested from nearby Jaora town (in Ratlam district) and Indore. Another key accused, Arsh aka Kaif, was arrested from Kasrawad town in Khargone district.³⁷⁸

There have also been serious allegations of custodial violence, including against minors. On 31st May it was reported that out of the approximately 72 cases registered and nearly 200 arrested, most of whom were Muslims – 12 minors were sent to a juvenile correctional home in Khandwa after their remand at the Khandwa police station, in connection with stone pelting, arson and violence. When they were released after 30 days, the boys reported brutal punishment and harsh conditions at the facility, including physical violence, targeted harassment and humiliation, and denial of food and water.³⁷⁹ Other than having suffered serious injuries, the boys’ accounts also mention being made to sing bhajans and read Hindu texts, and face offensive, dehumanising verbal attacks on the basis of religious and cultural beliefs.³⁸⁰ The arrested children’s advocate and family members described them as severely traumatised. *The Wire* reported that the Inspector of Town at the Khargone police station B.L. Mandloi denied claims of custodial violence, although confirmed that minors were sent to Khandwa.

Earlier in May 2022, women in the region had taken out a protest march demanding the release of innocent minors, stating that youth were being hauled into custody without a fair probe and proper identification.³⁸¹ The protesting women alleged that the police were inhumanely treating their kith and kin, raiding their homes, arresting children and elderly, all in the name of the “rule of law”.³⁸²

There have also been reports of the police and district administration in Khargone harassing journalists of certain media organisations. On April 15, journalist Ghazala Ahmad who reports for digital news platform, ‘The Cognate’ alleged via Twitter that she was harassed by the PRO JS Khargone (Public Relations Officer Jansampark, Khargone) and the Collector of Khargone for an entire day.³⁸³ While other journalists were allowed to report, she claims that she was deliberately

³⁷⁷ Ibid

³⁷⁸ PTI. (9 May 2022). MP Khargone Violence: 3 Main Accused Arrested; 182 People Held So Far in 72 Cases. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/law/mp-khargone-violence-3-main-accused-arrested-182-people-held-so-far-in-72-cases>

³⁷⁹ <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-muslim-minors-allege-brutality> [09 July 2022]

³⁸⁰ Pal S. (31 May 2022). Muslim Minors Detained After Khargone Communal Violence Allege Brutality at Juvenile Home. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/khargone-muslim-minors-allege-brutality> [09 July 2022]

³⁸¹ Ibid

³⁸² IANS. (12 May 2022). Section 144 back in riot-hit Madhya Pradesh’s Khargone. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/north-and-central/section-144-back-in-riot-hit-madhya-pradeshs-khargone-1108622.html> [09 July 2022]

³⁸³ Deshmukh A. (17 April 2022). Aftermath of Khargone violence: Muslims bear brunt of anti-Muslim riot. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/17/aftermath-of-khargone-violence-muslims-bear-brunt-of-anti-muslim-riot/> [09 July 2022]

singled out and restricted from reporting – she was refused a Curfew pass and was asked to show a letter from Press India Bureau which is not a mandate to report on any issue. She wondered if this was because of her Muslim identity/hijab and her organisation The Cognate which is a news platform for Indian Muslims. Similarly, social activist Medha Patkar and Supreme Court lawyer Ehtesham Hashmi were stopped from entering Khargone and Barwani when they were on their way to meet the victims of the violence.³⁸⁴ The police also actively disrupted relief efforts by citizens showing up to volunteer to help riot-affected people.³⁸⁵

According to Altaf Raja, who serves as the Muslim community’s representative in the town, what transpired in Khargone in the days following the Ram Navami violence followed a familiar pattern – wary of the police, Muslim victims avoided going to the police station to file complaints, which meant official tallies reflected more losses on the Hindu side, and more criminal cases against Muslims. What was new was the demolitions, he said.³⁸⁶

While inaction against the perpetrators has been documented, it must be noted that what the administration has been quick to go after, is any person speaking about the BJP’s alleged complicity in orchestrating the riots. When Congress leader Digvijaya Singh claimed that he had heard of complaints that the BJP was “hiring poor Muslims to pelt stones”, the police registered an FIR against the former Chief Minister on a complaint filed by a local person. Subsequently, four more FIRs were registered against Digvijaya Singh for allegedly promoting religious enmity.³⁸⁷

The morning following the Ram Navami violence, addressing reporters in Bhopal, home minister Narottam Mishra said, “*Jis ghar se pathar aae hai, us ghar ko hi patharo kaa dher banaenge* (The houses from where stones were thrown will be reduced to rubble).”³⁸⁸ The “stone-pelter” narrative, made popular by mainstream media, is typically used to refer to the Muslim community, in this case an attempt to pass off the cause of the violence as Muslims attacking the Ram Navami procession, thereby being the sole instigators.

Hours after Mishra’s comment, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan’s statement took an equally strong stance: “Stringent action will be taken against the rioters. They will be made to pay for the losses to both public and private properties.”³⁸⁹ He added that the Prevention of Damage to Public and Private Property and Recovery of Damages Law has been passed by the government in December, and a claims tribunal is being formed to recover the losses.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴ Ibid

³⁸⁵ Ibid

³⁸⁶ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

³⁸⁷ Trivedi D. (20 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220607043215/https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [09 July 2022]

³⁸⁸ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³⁸⁹ Ibid

³⁹⁰ Ibid

A day after Chouhan's statement, a notification regarding Madhya Pradesh's first claims tribunal in Khargone to recover damages to property from the accused, was issued by the government under the new law.³⁹¹ As per the law, a claims tribunal headed by a retired judge will hear cases related to damaged property and recovery. However, what took place first, after the chief minister and home minister's statements, was a spree of demolitions by the district administration that razed down homes, shops, and kiosks of Muslim citizens specifically.³⁹² While officials such as the district collector Anugraha P stated that notices regarding illegal constructions had been issued – the owners have refuted this claim and countered that the shops and houses were razed arbitrarily. The demolition drive is examined in detail later in this chapter.

Further, just prior to the communal violence, Khargone saw hate speech and instigation of violence against Muslims in the context of Ram Navami, by BJP leader Kapil Mishra – infamous for his role inciting the anti-Muslim violence in Delhi, February 2020 – who was attending the Shri Ram Janmotsav Shobha Yatra in the area. Sharing photos and videos of the procession, he tweeted, “*Na Musa na Burhan, Bas Jai Shree Ram. Hamari Ramnavami yatra Khargone Madhya Pradesh me shuru.*” [Neither Musa nor Burhan (separatist militants who were killed in Kashmir), there will only be the chants of Jai Shri Ram. Our Ram Navami procession at Khargaon in Madhya Pradesh has begun.]³⁹³

In a speech Mishra made in Bhikangaon, 50 km from Khargone, on the evening of Ram Navami, he said that if Hindus did not draw lessons from *The Kashmir Files* then one day similar films would be made about Delhi, Bengal, Kerala, for that matter, even Khargone.³⁹⁴ Due to Mishra's presence in Bhikangaon and the size of the gathering – 14,000 according to a senior police officer – the administration anticipated possible violence there instead of Khargone, and distributed the police force accordingly.

But in Khargone, a Hindu-majority town, the Ram Navami violence only served to validate the fears that *The Kashmir Files* stoked. Hindus in the area now see the Muslim-majority neighbourhoods through the version of Muslims the film portrays – a bloodthirsty community that supported militants as they raped and killed the Kashmiri Pandits and forced them to flee the valley. An elderly Hindu man accosted the BJP MP while he was making a round of Hindu neighbourhoods on April 23, shouting “Even my nine-year-old granddaughter now fears rape”. However, instead of calming these fears, the BJP state government is reinforcing and

³⁹¹ The Quint Desk. (13 April 2022). ‘House Built Under PMAY’: Khargone Residents Suffer Demolitions Post Violence. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/madhya-pradesh-khargone-demolitions-ram-navami-violence> [09 July 2022]

³⁹² Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

³⁹³ Anwar T. (13 April 2022). Ram Navami Violence: Institutionalised bid to subvert democracy. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Ram-Navami-Violence-Institutionalised-Bid-Subvert-Democracy-Mobsters-Pave-Way-Hindu-Rashtra> [09 July 2022]

³⁹⁴ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

strengthening them. The state’s Agriculture minister and district-in-charge Kamal Patel said, “What has happened in Kashmir Files has happened in Khargone”.³⁹⁵

Kapil Mishra tweeted on 11th April ascribing blame for the nationwide violence on Ram Navami, entirely onto the Muslim community, calling it a well-planned conspiracy to blame Hindus. “Where I was, there was no riot. And yes, if the investigation is done then only a jihadi and a Congressman hiding behind him will come out in every riot. Jihadis pelted stones and set fire to Khargone,” he said in Hindi in another tweet.³⁹⁶

The fact-finding team referenced earlier unequivocally holds BJP responsible for “creating communal turbulence in Khargone to polarise voters after losing nine out of 10 seats in the 2018 Assembly elections”.³⁹⁷ Not only have members of the party led incendiary processions in the same area, earlier in 2022 itself; the catalyst for the Ram Navami violence was an incendiary procession called by BJP state vice-president Shyam Mahajan who was displeased with the police having barricaded entry to Muslim localities.³⁹⁸

The death of Ibraish Khan

On April 10, Ibraish Khan had left his home in Khargone for the evening *namaz*, and to share *Iftar* with others at the local mosque. He never returned home. His body was found eight days after his brother Iqbal said the family had filed a ‘missing persons’ report.³⁹⁹ In video testimony given by the victim’s brother, reported by Ghazala Ahmad for *The Cognate*, he describes witnessing Ibraish being beaten by a mob armed with sticks, stones, and swords, even naming some of the men in the mob.⁴⁰⁰ They would have attacked him too, he says, therefore he couldn’t save his brother and had to flee – and the family began searching right after.

Serious allegations have been levelled against the police and Khargone district administration regarding this case – the fact-finding committee accused the police of “deliberately concealing the death of Ibraish Khan amidst Khargone riots to help their crusade against the minorities post violence.”⁴⁰¹ Khan, who had stepped out in the Anand Nagar *mohalla* and became the first death recorded in the Khargone violence, was severely injured when his family was finally able to identify him at Indore’s Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital on Monday, 18th April. His brother Iqlakh said “The police did not even tell us where our child was ... he was injured, his body was

³⁹⁵ Ibid

³⁹⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20220430225304/https://www.thequint.com/web/20220430225304/https://www.thequint.com/news/india/stone-pelting-arson-vandalism-mp-khargone-ram-navami-procession#read-more>

³⁹⁷ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newsclick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

³⁹⁸ Ibid

³⁹⁹ SabrangIndia. (19 April 2022). Curfew back in place after Madhya Pradesh police record first death in Khargone. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/curfew-back-place-after-madhya-pradesh-police-record-first-death-khargone> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁰⁰ Ahmad G. (21 April 2022). Khargone Violence: The Death of Ibraish Khan. *The Cognate*. Retrieved from <https://thecognate.com/khargone-violence-the-death-of-ibraish-khan/> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁰¹ Tiwari V. (27 April 2022). Khargone Violence: Fact-Finding Team Claims Police Hid Ibraish Khan’s Death. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220516173452/https://www.thequint.com/news/india/khargone-violence-fact-finding-team-claims-police-hid-ibraish-khans-death> [10 July 2022]

mutilated, there were injuries on his face. He was in police custody”.⁴⁰² “The people in Anand Nagar attacked my brother with weapons and crushed his head with a stone,” he alleged while speaking to reporters.⁴⁰³

According to the police, however, a body was found on April 10, sent to the hospital and later identified as Khan’s after which his family was informed. Rohit Kaswani, officiating Khargone superintendent of police, reportedly told the media that Khan was found unconscious with head injuries in Anand Nagar, taken to the district hospital where he succumbed to injuries on April 12. However, the victim’s family alleged a “cover-up” by the police – according to Iqlakh, his brother was “brutally thrashed by rioters and later detained by police. Several people told us they saw my brother in police custody. They said that my brother had suffered injuries on his head and was bleeding.” Iqlakh alleged that on April 13, the family asked the police about his brother but they denied that he was in custody, and that on April 14, his mother filed a missing complaint but police did not inform them about his death.

The fact finding team referenced earlier also asked why the police hid Khan’s death from his family till April 18, accusing the police of concealing the death in order to pursue their crusade against the Muslim community, including bulldozing their homes and make them look like the perpetrators of the violence.⁴⁰⁴ One of the members, Jaswinder Singh, said: “The death of Ibraish Khan was deliberately concealed from his parents, from the authorities in Bhopal, so that the administration could carry out their oppression of the minorities post riots.”

The team also asked why the police filed a case of ‘unnatural death’ instead of a murder case despite the short post-mortem report confirming homicide.⁴⁰⁵ Significantly, the case of Ibraish Khan’s killing was registered under Section 174 (police to inquire and report on suicide, etc) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) although the police had knowledge of the victim being badly beaten. The preliminary post-mortem revealed the cause of death to be head injury. The police’s refusal to register the case under Section 302 (murder), the opposition said, spoke volumes of its discriminatory practice.⁴⁰⁶

Further, according to the FIR, police tried to find the whereabouts of the deceased man in the locality for days but “did not find anything.” The fact-finding report questions this, pointing out that the body was found 300 metres from Khan’s house, that everyone in the locality knew he was missing and his family was searching for him, and asked why they hid the death even from the CM and HM for five days.⁴⁰⁷ The report concludes that hiding Khan’s death for a week has

⁴⁰² SabrangIndia. (19 April 2022). Curfew back in place after Madhya Pradesh police record first death in Khargone. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/curfew-back-place-after-madhya-pradesh-police-record-first-death-khargone> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁰³ PTI. (18 April 2022). Police confirm first death of communal violence in MP’s Khargone. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/police-confirm-first-death-of-communal-violence-in-mps-khargone-after-mans-body-found-in-indore-hospital/article65331384.ece> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁰⁴ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). ‘Cops Suppressed News on Khargone Man’s Death to Ease Way for Demolition Drive’: Fact-Finding Team. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-fact-finding> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

⁴⁰⁶ Trivedi D. (20 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220607043215/https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁰⁷ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). ‘Cops Suppressed News on Khargone Man’s Death to Ease Way for Demolition Drive’: Fact-

served the purpose of the government – to contribute to a witch hunt to target a particular community. “The BJP government and the police would be on the backfoot if the news of Ibris’s death was revealed on the very first day. They may not have been able to demolish the homes and shops of the Muslim community nor be able to carry out one sided action,” said a member of the fact-finding team.⁴⁰⁸

On 22nd April it was reported that the police had arrested five people for the murder of Ibraish Khan, identified as Dilip, Sandeep, Ajay Karma, Ajay Solanki and Dipak Pradhan.⁴⁰⁹ Rohit Kashwani, superintendent of police said that the five accused men have confessed to having killed Khan out of “religious frenzy” and have also been identified by witnesses – and that at least three more men are on the run.

Demolition Drives

Within 24 hours of the Ram Navami violence, while Khargone was still under curfew, the district administration began a demolition drive in Talab Chowk and other areas that had been hit by violence. According to Pawan Sharma, Divisional Commissioner, Indore, 45 properties were demolished in Khargone on Monday, 11th April.⁴¹⁰ It was later reported that according to a document that a senior official of the state home department sent to reporters in Bhopal, 49 properties were demolished in Khargone that day – and all were owned by Muslims.⁴¹¹

The punitive nature of the demolitions

The process of carrying out the demolitions, and statements made by ministers of Madhya Pradesh government, members of the district administration, and local police, reveal a clear motivation and pattern. On the morning of April 11, Madhya Pradesh’s home minister Narottam Mishra told reporters in Bhopal: “The houses of those pelting stones will be turned into a pile of stones.”⁴¹²

Deputy Inspector General Khargone Tilak Singh said “We have started from the area near Mohan talkies, Khargone. Three establishments were demolished in the area and we are moving forward to other areas to carry out similar drives as per our policy of zero tolerance of violence”.⁴¹³

Finding Team. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-fact-finding> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

⁴⁰⁹ Dwary A. (22 April 2022). Five Arrested for Murder During Ram Navami Clashes in Madhya Pradesh. *NDTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/five-arrested-for-murder-during-ram-navami-clashes-in-khargone-madhya-pradesh-2908944> [10 July 2022]

⁴¹⁰ Singh V. (12 April 2022). 45 properties of suspected rioters demolished in Madhya Pradesh. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/properties-of-suspected-rioters-demolished-in-madhya-pradesh/article65311707.ece> [10 July 2022]

⁴¹¹ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

⁴¹² Ibid

⁴¹³ Video editor Sharma A. (11 April 2022). 77 Arrested After Stone Pelting & Arson in MP’s Khargone Amid Ram Navami. *The Quint*. Retrieved on 10 July 2022 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220430225304/https://www.thequint.com/news/india/stone-pelting-arson-vandalism-mp-khargone-ram-navami-procession>

The targeting of Muslim-owned businesses in the Mohan Talkies area took place on the orders of state chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.⁴¹⁴ The CM's immediate response to the violence was to announce that "rioters will not be spared, there is no place for rioters in Madhya Pradesh. They have been identified and strictest action will be taken against them. Action will not only be limited to arrests, the damages will be recovered from the private or public property of the rioters."⁴¹⁵

Statements made by ministers of the Madhya Pradesh government and Khargone's district administration point to a clear punitive motivation for the demolitions, although, some of them cited 'encroachment' as the offence that led to demolitions – and that some of these properties 'coincidentally' belonged to alleged rioters. While MP's Home Minister Narottam Mishra said that homes belonging to "stone pelters" were demolished, Indore Divisional Commissioner Pawan Sharma took a different stance, stating that "not all, but some of the accused involved in the communal riots own these properties, they were encroaching on public land and action has been taken based on land revenue records".⁴¹⁶

The District Magistrate Khargone stated that only "unauthorised encroachments" were demolished, however, in response to an RTI, the DM claimed that no demolition orders were issued by her office – directly contradicting the idea that these demolitions fall under the Land Revenue Act 1959, as the DM is the officer in-charge of land revenue matters.⁴¹⁷

Not only are there major discrepancies in the fact that local police claimed they demolished illegal encroachments while the MP home minister and chief minister claim response to rioters and stone-pelters – there are also multiple violations of due process related to dealing with encroachment. Residents and street vendors who had their properties demolished were not served the mandatory prior notice, and even in case they were served they were not given reasonable time to comply.⁴¹⁸

Further, the demolitions are not covered by the Madhya Pradesh Prevention and Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Act, which does not provide for demolition as a punishment. The MP law prescribes the right of those accused to be heard, in particular before a tribunal – which are required to give their decision within three months.

The Madhya Pradesh Bhumi Vikas Rules 1984 (rule 6) require "a careful and detailed study" of a structure, including its surroundings, "before commencing any work of demolition". Rule 35 talks about "Demolition of Building", which suggests that before a building is demolished, the

⁴¹⁴ Nair V. (12 April 2022). Khargone: Cops beat up 70-yr-old Muslim woman after barging into her house. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/khargone-cops-beat-up-70-yr-old-muslim-woman-after-barging-into-her-house-2307394/> [09 July 2022]

⁴¹⁵ Singh V. (12 April 2022). 45 properties of suspected rioters demolished in Madhya Pradesh. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/properties-of-suspected-rioters-demolished-in-madhya-pradesh/article65311707.ece> [10 July 2022]

⁴¹⁶ Ibid

⁴¹⁷ SabrangIndia. (19 April 2022). Curfew back in place after Madhya Pradesh police record first death in Khargone. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/curfew-back-place-after-madhya-pradesh-police-record-first-death-khargone> [09 July 2022]

⁴¹⁸ Singh R, Ahmed AU. (25 April 2022). Demolitions As Collective, Illegal Punishment, With Mainly Muslim Properties Destroyed After Riots. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/demolitions-as-collective-illegal-punishment-with-mainly-muslim-properties-destroyed-after-riots-6265a9ad591d8> [10 July 2022]

owner shall be notified of service connections within the building, including water, electric, gas and sewer.⁴¹⁹ Permission to demolish a building shall not be issued until a release is obtained from the utilities, stating that their respective service connections and “appurtenant equipment”, such as meters and regulators, have been safely removed or sealed and plugged.⁴²⁰

Analysis by legal journalists and advocates thus found the demolitions in MP to be illegal and arbitrary, as they failed to justify legal grounds and government authorities contradicted each other.⁴²¹

On April 11, a day after the Ram Navami violence, the CM’s social media handles uploaded a video of him addressing the public, where he can be seen warning them that if anyone looks wrongly at women, “nothing would be left of their houses and shops”. He then makes references to “gangsters, wrongdoers and rioters”.⁴²²

Therefore, the district administration saying that the drive has nothing to do with the communal violence has been contradicted by a lot of evidence speaking to the contrary. Even a tweet from the Khargone Jansampark office contradicts it, by saying that the demolished houses belonged to “rioters”.⁴²³ Simultaneously, Indore Divisional Commissioner Sharma also described the goal of the demolition drive as “to instil fear of financial losses among the accused.”⁴²⁴

Of the 12 shops demolished in the Talab Chowk area, eight were run by Muslims, and the remaining four were by Hindus. All the 12 shops were part of the Khargone Jama Masjid complex and owned by the masjid committee.⁴²⁵ The four Hindu shopkeepers who were on rent at Talab Chowk Masjid committee shops were allowed to vacate before the demolition, but Muslim shopkeepers were refrained from doing so and those who tried were caned by the police.⁴²⁶

“Six months ago, the municipal corporation measured the area but no notices were issued. But a day after the incident, when the city was under a strict curfew, 12 shops which were part of the mosque complex were razed,” said Hidayatullah Mansuri, chief of the masjid committee, who also lost his shop.⁴²⁷ Muslim clerics alleged that the police and state administration were openly targeting houses in the Muslim *basti* – Qazi-e-Shahar, Bhopal and Syed Mushtaq Ali submitted a

⁴¹⁹ Ibid

⁴²⁰ Ibid

⁴²¹ Ibid

⁴²² Sarkar S. (12 April 2022). With Khargone, Shivraj Singh Chouhan Drives Home Dream of ‘Bulldozer Justice’. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/khargone-ram-navami-violence-bulldozer> [09 July 2022]

⁴²³ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

⁴²⁴ Sarkar S. (12 April 2022). With Khargone, Shivraj Singh Chouhan Drives Home Dream of ‘Bulldozer Justice’. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/khargone-ram-navami-violence-bulldozer> [09 July 2022]

⁴²⁵ Anwar T. (13 April 2022). Ram Navami Violence: Institutionalised bid to subvert democracy. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Ram-Navami-Violence-Institutionalised-Bid-Subvert-Democracy-Mobsters-Pave-Way-Hindu-Rashtra> [09 July 2022]

⁴²⁶ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

⁴²⁷ Kakvi K. (14 April 2022). Khargone: Communal Violence Leaves Many Displaced, State Action Targets Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-khargone-ram-navami-muslims> [09 July 2022]

memorandum to Director General of Police (DGP) Sudhir Saxena accusing the administration of demolishing Muslim houses and putting community members in jail “in a clear violation of the law of the land”.⁴²⁸

Losses incurred, dispossession

The ongoing curfew prevented owners of shops who live in other localities with no way to stop the demolitions. Ayub Khan, a resident of the Aurangpura Square neighborhood, lost seven shops in Talab Chowk to the demolition drive – losing more than \$26,000 in the destruction, he now faces the daunting task of rebuilding without sufficient money. “The demolished shops had stood there for over 70 years and we never received a single (government) notice,” he said. “Indeed my shops were demolished because I am a Muslim who refused to bend before BJP leaders. The way the district administration is targeting Muslims after the violence in Khargone, it’s evident that they hate a particular community.”⁴²⁹

By noon, bulldozers came crashing down on the modest single-room home of Hasina Fakhroo built on government land using PMAY housing scheme funds.⁴³⁰ The front of Javed Shaikh’s chemist shop, housed in the compound of the Talab Chowk mosque, was shaved off.⁴³¹ Qasim Sheikh from Gulshan Nagar in Khargone, whose hands were amputated after an electrocution, suffered the loss of his small shop as it was razed to the ground in the demolition drive allegedly for pelting stones he cannot even grasp.⁴³²

Mohammad Nadeem Shaikh, a 36-year-old resident of Gulshan Nagar, was sleeping in his residential house with his family when he heard his house being demolished. In the presence of many police officials and other functionaries, his house was being razed to the ground by a JCB.⁴³³ “Although we were extremely terrified, we dared to open the door to interrogate but the officers dragged me and my three brothers out of our home and started beating us ruthlessly. It was around 50 officers assaulting and streeing us around”, said Nadeem. The brothers described being struck around 50 times, their clothes torn, and their elderly father thrashed as well. According to Nadeem, not only did they not have anything to do with the violence several kilometres from their home but there were no rallies in their area at all, making this a wholly unwarranted attack.

⁴²⁸ SabrangIndia. (14 April 2022). Khargone’s Muslim outfits accuse police of only arresting Muslims. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/khargones-muslim-outfits-accuse-police-only-arresting-muslims> [10 July 2022]

⁴²⁹ Kakvi K, Mogul R, Mitra E. (22 April 2022). His house was demolished because he is Muslim, he says. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/04/21/india/india-hindu-muslim-violence-khargone-bulldozing-intl-hnk-dst/index.html> [10 July 2022]

⁴³⁰ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

⁴³¹ Ibid

⁴³² SabrangIndia. (19 April 2022). Curfew back in place after Madhya Pradesh police record first death in Khargone. *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/curfew-back-place-after-madhya-pradesh-police-record-first-death-khargone> [09 July 2022]

⁴³³ Khan A, Faisal M. (21 April 2022). Tore our clothes, thrashed our father: Depositions from Khargone. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/21/tore-our-clothes-thrashed-our-father-depositions-from-khargone/> [10 July 2022]

Nadeem’s family of 17 people, who had been residing in Gulshan Nagar since 2009, did not receive any notice for their demolished building, even up until at least 8 days later. He told a Maktoob Media reporter that it was not just their home but also their adjoined offices that were razed and there was a loss worth 6-8 lakhs, including the office and its paraphernalia. This is despite him having all the legal documents for their building – reports, registries, and permission record from the *nagar palika* – in fact, Nadeem spoke of his family being robbed of the chance of having the case dismantled legally, by the administration failing to serve any prior notice. For them, rebuilding their lives is disorienting and fraught with helplessness, as they are “not familiar with police stations, courts or the procedures involved in filing a report”.⁴³⁴

Multiple reports have made clear that the properties demolished were arbitrarily chosen. A striking account of the arbitrariness at play was given by Amjad Khan, who runs a 400-employee, three-unit strong business that makes and sells biscuits under the brand name “Best Bakery”.⁴³⁵ As a well-known face of his community, Khan was often roped in by the police to help maintain peace in Khargone. On the day of Ram Navami too, he was asked to be there at the Talab Chowk Mosque and ask Muslim boys to disperse and not watch the procession. When violence broke out, he spent three hours combing the lanes of Khargone trying to diffuse the situation – for example, stopping Muslim boys who threw stones at a passing fire vehicle, telling them “This is going to douse the fires, why are you targeting it”. However, the next day he was informed by the police that he could be seen in the CCTV footage from the riot-hit areas, and that he would go to jail and his home and bakery would be demolished – despite him reminding them that he had been enlisted by no less than the police station in-charge and the sub-divisional police officer. “I was supporting the police at risk to my own life”, he said.⁴³⁶ The next morning, despite sending over all the official documents related to his business to the chief municipal officer, “from the No Objection Certificate issued by the municipality to GST registration” – a municipal team arrived outside his house to take measurements. When he rushed to the police station, he met the additional police superintendent, in the presence of the sub-divisional officer, who vouched for his role as a civil police volunteer.

His units were built on land he owns, and he had followed every single norm, and yet bulldozers arrived outside his three units later that day, with top officials in attendance – the chief municipal officer, the district collector, the divisional commissioner of Indore. According to Khan, the police officer took the municipal officer aside and briefed her. “The CMO ma’am then told her team, spare his home and two bakeries, demolish only one,” he said. On being asked why, she said he did not have the requisite building permission for it, and that it violated the MOS, or marginal open space norm. When he contested this, she revealed it was the police that had given them his name. As for the additional police superintendent, he confirmed to the *Scroll* journalist that he was present at the demolition site, but on being asked for more details responded that the police “have nothing to do with this”.

Amjad Khan may have been targeted due to a case of mistaken identity – another ‘Amjad Khan bakerywala’, reportedly a resident of Qazipura, had been identified by a Hindu man’s complaint

⁴³⁴ Ibid

⁴³⁵ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How ‘Kashmir Files’ added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

⁴³⁶ Ibid

about rioters burning his house.⁴³⁷ But hours after the bulldozers left after demolishing one unit of his business, they showed up outside Super Bakery which is run by the other Amjad Khan, and demolished it as well. The Super Bakery owner's wife, Ameena Khan, estimated that their losses exceeded Rs 30 lakh, and said they had never been given any notice.

The Quint reported the demolition of the house of yet another Amjad Khan – a resident of Khaskhaswadi area who claimed his house was constructed under the benefits of PMAY. “They came with 5-6 bulldozers and crushed the house which they themselves had given permission and money to build. My house was a *kaccha* house and I made a *pucca* house after I got the money under PM Aawas Yojana. Everyone is saying that my house was demolished as an action against the stone pelters, but I never pelted stones. I live over 1km from the area and I am a daily wage labour working every day to feed my family. I can't afford to take a day off,” said Khan.⁴³⁸

Another resident, Sadulla Baig, told *The Quint* this was the second time his house was demolished in the last one year, that he is not a rioter and that he is now fighting for the survival of his four children. “My house was demolished once last year after the government told me that a part of my house is built on government land. They came, tore down the front portion and demarcated the limit of the house. This time they came and further demolished my house. I live with four kids and they destroyed everything, where am I supposed to take my kids and go?” said Baig.⁴³⁹

In MP, since 2020, there have been plenty of instances of punitive demolitions against the families of those accused, under CM Shivraj Chouhan, where rule of law has been subverted. The demolitions that immediately followed the Ram Navami violence signal an important shift in terms of normalising collective punishment, as the district administration unilaterally demolished – according to some reports, 90 structures – meaning that any legal probe or investigation would have to have been carried out in one day, thereby signalling a complete eschewing of due process.⁴⁴⁰

Relief and rehabilitation

Despite carrying out demolition drives, the MP government has not put forward any rehabilitation or resettlement plans for these neighbourhoods, except for claims to recover damages from the alleged rioters. According to the fact-finding team referenced earlier, “even two weeks after the incident, hatemongering and targeting of a particular community continues unabated. Several videos and photos have surfaced that are openly calling for boycotting Muslims. Religious places are still under lock and relief work is yet to begin.”⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Ibid

⁴³⁸ The Quint Desk. (13 April 2022). ‘House Built Under PMAY’: Khargone Residents Suffer Demolitions Post Violence. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/madhya-pradesh-khargone-demolitions-ram-navami-violence#read-more> [09 July 2022]

⁴³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁴⁰ PTI. (20 April 2022). How did MP govt complete probe in a day and demolish 90 houses in Khargone, asks Ajay Singh. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/how-did-mp-govt-complete-probe-in-a-day-and-demolish-90-houses-in-khargone-asks-ajay-singh/articleshow/90960573.cms> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁴¹ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

The aftermath saw over a hundred Muslim households displaced as they left Khargone to avoid further state harassment.⁴⁴² In Al Jazeera’s video testimonies, victims of the demolitions talk about living in fear for their safety from further Hindutva violence, as well as the indebtedness forced upon them due to having to rebuild their homes and livelihoods.⁴⁴³

In June 2022, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, Indore Bench directed parties in a petition to maintain status quo regarding property of a resident of Khargone whose property was partly demolished by the authorities, till the next date of hearing.⁴⁴⁴ The Petitioner, a tent house owner, testified that the State authorities had demolished a part of his property despite him being the legal owner and having regularly paid taxes. He argued the State was acting arbitrarily and illegally, seeking a judicial inquiry against the State authorities and for the Court to direct authorities to compensate him as well as others for suffering joblessness and homelessness as a result of the punitive demolitions.

5.2. Sendhwa

Sequence of events

The events in Sendhwa of Barwani district, Madhya Pradesh on April 10 appear to have followed the same chronology and pattern as in Khargone, of Ram Navami processions turning violent.

A procession on Jogwara Road led to communal violence, with a city policeman and five others injured, vehicles being lit on fire and religious places being targeted.⁴⁴⁵

Reports of stone-pelting at the Ram Navami procession dominated media headlines and statements by state government officials. Barwani SP Deepak Kumar Shukla, said that the police had identified more than 50 accused involved in the stone-pelting against whom action would be taken, and that over 20 people have been arrested already.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² Deshmukh A. (17 April 2022). Aftermath of Khargone violence: Muslims bear brunt of anti-Muslim riot. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/17/aftermath-of-khargone-violence-muslims-bear-brunt-of-anti-muslim-riot/> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁴³ Al Jazeera English. (16 May 2022). Muslims targeted by demolitions in India speak of their ordeal. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9Zw-VTrwNs> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁴⁴ Thomas Z. (16 June 2022). Khargone Demolition Drive: MP High Court Orders Status Quo On Partly Demolished Property of Tent House Owner. *Livelaw*. Retrieved from <https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/khargone-demolition-madhya-pradesh-high-court-status-quo-natural-justice-fundamental-rights-201674> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁴⁵ News Desk. (11 April 2022). MP: Muslims targetted following Ram Navami rally in Khargone. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/mp-muslims-targetted-following-ram-navami-rally-in-khargone-2306726/> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁴⁶ FP News Service. (12 April 2022). Sendhwa: Fire in godown at site of Ram Navami violence, subsequent demolitions, 50 stone-pelters identified. *Free Press Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.freepressjournal.in/indore/sendhwa-fire-in-godown-at-site-of-ram-navami-violence-subsequent-demolitions-50-stone-pelters-identified> [10 July 2022]

The day after the violence, on April 11th, as the demolition drive began in Khargone, the administration and police simultaneously began one in Jogwara road in Sendhwa, selectively bulldozing houses and shops of ‘stone-pelters’.⁴⁴⁷

Within a day of the drive, there were reports of arson in the same area, Jogwara road – a major inferno at the warehouse of a tent house owner, Sanjay Patil, who lost goods worth several lakhs before the fire brigade arrived.⁴⁴⁸ There were reportedly rumours of the fire being related to the demolition drive, but the police and local administration did not confirm this as the exact reason for the fire had not been ascertained. The administration then restarted the demolition drive on Jogwara road.

There are not as many details publicly available for Sendhwa as the Khargone riots were deadlier. However, the atmosphere in the state prior to Ram Navami, the response by the state CM and HM to the April 10th violence in Khargone and Sendhwa, the pattern of instigation by Hindu processions and targeting of Muslims by the administration and police is well established.

Role and Response by State Actors

By April 15th, Sendhwa police had arrested 40 accused after 14 different FIRs were lodged.⁴⁴⁹ Barwani SP Deepak Kumar Shukla reportedly said that the police dug out criminal backgrounds to “strengthen their case against the miscreants”.⁴⁵⁰

However, three of these men – Shahbaz, Fakru and Rauf – are in jail in connection with an ‘attempt to murder’ case registered against them on March 5.⁴⁵¹ Although they are incarcerated, they were also accused of setting a motorcycle on fire on April 10.

Shahbaz’s mother Sakina has alleged that her house was vandalized after communal clashes and no notice was served to her.⁴⁵² “The police came here, my son is in jail for almost one and a half months. He was arrested after a fight but the police came threw us out, my child is in jail so I want to ask why the FIR was registered against him. We told the policemen that he is jail but no one was ready to listen to us. We folded our hands, apologized. They have taken my younger son also,” she said.

When asked about the lapse, police officials said that the case was filed based on the statement of the complainant.⁴⁵³ Shortly after this, it was reported that two other men, Farid and Azam,

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁴⁹ FP News Service. (15 April 2022). Sendhwa Ram Navami violence: Three accused are in jail since March. *Free Press Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.freepressjournal.in/indore/sendhwa-ram-navami-violence-three-accused-are-in-jail-since-march> [11 July 2022]

⁴⁵⁰ FP News Service. (12 April 2022). Sendhwa: Fire in godown at site of Ram Navami violence, subsequent demolitions, 50 stone-pelters identified. *Free Press Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.freepressjournal.in/indore/sendhwa-fire-in-godown-at-site-of-ram-navami-violence-subsequent-demolitions-50-stone-pelters-identified> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁵¹ Dwary A. (15 April 2022). 3 Madhya Pradesh Ram Navami Clash Accused Had Been in Jail Since March. *NDTV*. Retrieved from https://www.ndtv.com/cities/3-accused-of-rioting-in-madhya-pradeshs-barwani-were-in-jail-during-clash-2890131#pfrom=home-ndtv_topscroll [11 July 2022]

⁴⁵² Ibid

⁴⁵³ Ibid

arrested in connection with violence Khargone’s Sanjay Nagar area were not in the city that day – one of whom was hospitalised already at the time.⁴⁵⁴

The police also made attempts to disrupt documentation and relief efforts in Khargone and Sendhwa. A team of social activists and advocates was in Khargone on Saturday to meet the victims of the April 10 communal violence in both districts, but the local authorities and police allegedly didn’t allow them to meet the victims, citing security reasons.⁴⁵⁵

“There is something wrong which is being hidden. We’ve come to know about an FIR in Sendhwa against three men who were lodged in jail since last month. Owing to these reasons, we’ll be petitioning the MP High Court soon, seeking a probe by an independent agency into the entire violence and subsequent action. If needed a petition will be filed in the Supreme Court under Article 32 in the future,” said SC advocate Ehtesham Hashmi.⁴⁵⁶

The fact-finding team that visited the violence-affected areas on April 25 directly blamed the ruling party, BJP, for creating turbulence in Sendhwa block of Barwani district, 60 km away from Khargone.⁴⁵⁷ Similar to Khargone, the team attributed the stirring of communal tension to political motivations – their joint statement reads: “They said there are 10 assembly seats in Khargone and Barwani (the other district that saw riots on Ram Navami in Sendhwa block). If the results of past four assembly polls are analysed, it could be seen that in 2003, 2008 and 2013, the BJP won six to seven of these 10 seats. However, in 2018, the BJP lost nine of the 10 seats (and also lost the polls with a slim margin). It is this defeat that the BJP is not able to digest and therefore it is conspiring to cause communal polarisation to win the (2023) polls”.

The team further alleged that over four to five communal incidents have taken place in Sendhwa block of Barwani district in the past one year.⁴⁵⁸

Demolition Drive

On the instructions of chief minister Shivraj Chouhan, the district administration and police demolished illegal buildings of those involved in the attack on Ram Navami procession on April 11th.⁴⁵⁹

In a report dated 15th April, when asked about the demolition of Shahbaz’s – one of the accused ‘rioters’ who was already in jail since March – family properties, the local tehsildar Manish Kumar Pandey said that thus far 13 illegally constructed houses have been fully demolished and

⁴⁵⁴ Singh A. (17 April 2022). Ram Navami violence in MP: FIR against Muslim men ‘who were nowhere near the spot’. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/17/ram-navami-violence-in-mp-fir-against-muslim-men-who-were-nowhere-near-the-spot-2443139.html> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

⁴⁵⁷ Kakvi K. (28 April 2022). Khargone: Joint fact-finding team blames BJP for violence, district administration for bias. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Khargone-Joint-Fact-Finding-Team-Blames-BJP-Violence-District-Administration-Bias> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

⁴⁵⁹ Dwary A. (15 April 2022). 3 Madhya Pradesh Ram Navami Clash Accused Had Been in Jail Since March. *NDTV*. Retrieved from https://www.ndtv.com/cities/3-accused-of-rioting-in-madhya-pradesh-barwani-were-in-jail-during-clash-2890131#pfrom=home-ndtv_topscroll [11 July 2022]

20 other constructions, which were built by encroaching upon public land, have been partially demolished.⁴⁶⁰

Videos shared by MP government's official Twitter handle showed demolition of homes in Khargone and Sendhwa, in the presence of senior police and administrative staff, and confirmed that the demolitions in Sendhwa were punitive.⁴⁶¹ The MP government Public Relations Officer JS Badwani wrote in a tweet accompanying the video of bulldozers destroying houses, that "The accused, who pelted stones on Ram Navami procession in Sendhwa yesterday, got severe punishment. The district administration demolished their multi-storey homes".⁴⁶²

A statement by Commissioner (Indore range) Pawan Kumar Sharma to the media reads "We have so far identified 84 people. Besides sending the accused in jail we are also demolishing their properties".⁴⁶³

Media Portrayal

Mainstream media coverage of the Ram Navami violence had immediate, dire, consequences in Khargone. According to Mohammad Nadeem, whose family lost their home in the demolition drive, his family's had been circulating on news channels with blatant propaganda – including a clip by News18 India where the journalist, in a distasteful attempt to promote islamophobia and violence, falsely accused his father Rafeeq, an elderly man, of stone pelting at the Ram Navami procession. "There were no processions taken out here or anywhere near my house. Even if that were the case, my father wouldn't be able to pelt stones because he can barely walk without any support. He is a 75-year-old man who needs assistance to even move. Why are they lying? It's all lies," said Nadeem to Maktoob Media.⁴⁶⁴

As explained earlier in this chapter, *The Kashmir Files*, a controversial nationalist film that has been described by many as anti-Muslim propaganda, played a very important role in mobilising the Hindu community in Khargone to resort to violence against Muslims on Ram Navami. Not only that, but BJP minister Kapil Mishra (known instigator of the anti-Muslim riots in Delhi in 2020) also mentioned in his speech on Ram Navami that Hindus need to take lessons from the film.⁴⁶⁵

After the Ram Navami violence, this became a common sentiment in Khargone. "Just like *The Kashmir Files*, they [Muslims] are out to make Khargone Files," said Mahesh Muchhal, a Bajrang

⁴⁶⁰ Singh A. (15 April 2022). Trio jailed for a month booked for burning two-wheelers in MP during Ram Navami violence! *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/15/trio-jailed-for-a-month-booked-for-burning-two-wheelers-in-mp-during-ram-navami-violence-2442408.html> [11 July 2022]

⁴⁶¹ Ummid.com. (12 April 2022). BJP govt in MP demolishes homes of 'stone pelters' in Khargone, Sendhwa. Retrieved on 11 July 2022 from <https://ummid.com/news/2022/april/11.04.2022/bjp-govt-in-mp-demolishes-homes-of-stone-pelters-in-khargone-sendhwa.html>

⁴⁶² Ibid

⁴⁶³ Ibid

⁴⁶⁴ Khan A, Faisal M. (21 April 2022). Tore our clothes, thrashed our father: Depositions from Khargone. *Maktoob*. Retrieved from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/04/21/tore-our-clothes-thrashed-our-father-depositions-from-khargone/> [10 July 2022]

⁴⁶⁵ Sharma S. (29 April 2022). How 'Kashmir Files' added to communal fires in Khargone that ended with bulldozer injustice. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022860/how-kashmir-files-added-to-communal-fires-in-khargone-that-ended-with-bulldozer-injustice> [09 July 2022]

Dal worker whose home was torched in Sanjay Nagar, in a statement echoing Mishra's. "They say just like Hindus were forced to leave Kashmir, we will be forced to leave Khargone," said another Hindu resident. The incendiary film, accused of generating anti-Muslim sentiment, has received significant endorsement and patronage from the regime since it was released in March 2022, including by Prime Minister Modi. Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Chouhan had granted half-day of leave to policemen to watch the film. In Khargone, leaders like Raju Sharma had organised free shows of the film.

According to a member of the Sakal Hindu Samaj, the (at least 20) free screenings of *The Kashmir Files* in March 2022 "laid the ground for a receptive audience and helped bolster the collective in Khargone".⁴⁶⁶

Media reports have largely portrayed the minority community as carrying out an armed, planned attack in Madhya Pradesh.⁴⁶⁷ CNN News 18 covered the Khargone violence as a "clearly one-sided attack", implying it was premeditated against the Hindu festival, alongside repeatedly scrolling titles such as "BJP claims vindication" and "State had to bulldoze". Depicting only Hindu victims' testimonies, news anchors and correspondents described the State's actions as justified in context of the pressing need to "control rioters".⁴⁶⁸ ABP News followed suit, giving no mention of any provocation or incendiary aspect of the procession itself, only that it was attacked almost as soon as it began.⁴⁶⁹

Other channels, like Zee Hindustan focused on the narrative of threat to Hindus and followers of Ram in the country, assigning blame on to the '*desh virodhi*' (anti-nationalists).⁴⁷⁰ The fact that the MP government was demolishing houses of only Muslims was not a secret, as even mainstream television media covered the drive with headlines such as '*Ramdrohiyon ke ghar par bulldozer*' (Betrayers of Ram having their houses bulldozed) and '*Ramdrohiyon ki Lanka jalaa*' (Burn the abode of the betrayers of Ram).

⁴⁶⁶ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁶⁷ Trivedi D. (20 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220607043215/https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [09 July 2022]

⁴⁶⁸ CNN-News18. (14 April 2022). MP violence: Fresh visuals emerge; the footage shows rioters wielding swords and vandalising vehicles in Khargone on Ram Navami. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_l0saHXFXvc [11 July 2022]

⁴⁶⁹ ABP News. (11 April 2022). Chaos erupted in at least two districts of Madhya Pradesh during the Ram Navami celebrations on Sunday. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODPBuAMzv5o> [11 July 2022]

⁴⁷⁰ Zee Hindustan. (12 April 2022). Ram Navami Violence : Madhya Pradesh. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQvpQ7bX-Is> [11 July 2022]

6. DELHI

Background

After Narendra Modi's government assumed office in 2014, the National Capital Region has seen innumerable cases of communal violence, mostly against Muslims, beginning with the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in 2015.⁴⁷¹ Junaid, a boy of only 16, was stabbed to death numerous times on a local train as he made his way back from Delhi's Jama Masjid after Eid Shopping with his friends, his friend Hasim and brother were also stabbed on the train but survived the attack.⁴⁷² In another instance Aftab Alam, a driver from Trilokpuri, Noida, was asked to chant 'Jai Shree Ram' as heard on the last call Alam made to his son Mohammad Sabir, which he recorded.⁴⁷³ He was found by the police strapped to the side of his car, lifeless.

In 2019, the passing of the CAA and the announcement to commence NRC prompted nationwide protests including in Delhi.⁴⁷⁴ In December of 2019, the Delhi police violently retaliated against a student-led protest and open fired at unarmed university students at Jamia Millia Islamia following which started a 4-month long sit-in by residents of Shaheen Bagh as they blocked and took over the arterial six-lane Kalindi Kunj highway.⁴⁷⁵

In February of 2020 Delhi saw its worst communal clash in recent history with a death toll of at least 52 people, mostly Muslims⁴⁷⁶. BJP MLA Kapil Mishra threatened and intimidated the Delhi Police in February of 2020 to remove protestors from Jaffrabad and Maujpur claiming if the police did not take action he will "hit the streets," while the women at the sit in protest in Jaffrabad attempted to block the Jaffrabad-Seelampur-Maujpur road. The violence that ensued from it included burning down of Muslim businesses, mosques, houses as armed Hindu vigilantes encouraged by Mishra's vitriol rummaged through several neighbourhoods of North-East Delhi, even asking Muslim men to disrobe at gunpoint/knifepoint before assaulting them.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷¹ Grey, D. (2020, September 8). The Lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq. CJP. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://cjp.org.in/mohammed-akhlaq-lynching-case-timeline/>

⁴⁷² Maniyar, Z. (2021, June 22). Junaid Khan's lynching: A timeline of his case since 2017. CJP. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://cjp.org.in/junaid-khans-lynching-a-timeline-of-his-case-since-2017/>

⁴⁷³ Ara, I. (2020, September 7). "Say Jai Shri Ram", Killers of Muslim Man in NCR Said, Police Deny Murder Was Hate Crime. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022 from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jai-shri-ram-muslim-driver-lynched-death-uttar-pradesh>

⁴⁷⁴ BBC News. (2020, January 4). Shaheen Bagh: The women occupying Delhi street against citizenship law. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50902909>

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid

⁴⁷⁶ Delhi Riots Lawyers' Report : Citizens & Lawyers Initiative : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : (2020, October 5). Internet Archive. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://archive.org/details/delhi-riots-2020-lawyers-report>

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid

After the North East Delhi Pogrom against Muslim residents in several localities, several ground reports including one by the Delhi Minorities Commission held the Delhi Police complicit for the violence.⁴⁷⁸ A fact-finding committee led by MR Shamshad pointed to the repeated increments to violence throughout the Delhi assembly elections by BJP leaders as the unchecked continuation of vitriol led to the violence. The committee deemed the violence, “planned, organised and targeted,” prompted by Kapil Mishra’s incendiary remarks and carried out in the presence of Deputy Commissioner of Police Ved Prakash Surya.⁴⁷⁹ The report clearly states the specific and surgical targeting of Muslim homes and business, and the inaction of police even as the violence was unfolding right in front of the Delhi Police, ignoring repeated calls on the emergency numbers stating they had no orders to take action.⁴⁸⁰

In April 2022, Delhi saw two attacks – one on Ram Navami, against students in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus, and a week later, brutal violence followed by a punitive demolition drive unfolded in the neighbourhood of Jahangirpuri, North Delhi.

6.1. JNU campus

Sequence of Events

The incident took place in Kaveri Hostel after members of the right-wing Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) protested against non-vegetarian food being served on Ram Navami. Several students opposing the ABVP were injured in the attack – videos that surfaced on social media included a student bleeding from the forehead, another with injuries of his back.⁴⁸¹

Students’ testimonies including those of the Left student unions recalled the incident as ABVP members turning violent and attacking fellow students upon realising that non-vegetarian food was being served in the hostel – despite it being routine for the mess to serve it. According to the JNU Student Union councillor, Anagha Pradeep, every Sunday both non-vegetarian and vegetarian meals are served in the hostel as a matter of usual practice.⁴⁸² Members of the ABVP harassed and heckled the vendor that came to deliver chicken as it allegedly interrupted with the havan the ABVP was conducting near the hostel. The JNU admin claimed that the altercation took place between two groups, as the Left students objected to a havan taking place inside the Kaveri Hostel on the occasion of Ram Navami. However, eye witness accounts clearly state that the ABVP members attacked the students.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁸ Iyer, A. S. (2020, July 16). A Different Chronology: Minority Panel’s Report on Delhi Riots. *The Quint*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/delhi-minorities-commission-fact-finding-report-delhi-riots-bjp-jamia-shaheen-bagh>

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid*

⁴⁸¹ Staff, T. W. (2022, April 11). Violence in JNU After ABVP Allegedly Tried to Stop Non-Veg Being Cooked on Ram Navami. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/rights/jnu-violence-non-veg-ram-navami-abvp>

⁴⁸² Baruah, S. (2022, April 11). *JNU: Students injured in scuffle over ‘Ram Navmi pooja’, ‘non-veg food.’* *The Indian Express*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/jnu-violence-students-injured-7862961/>

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*

The Mess Secretary of the mess committee which is an elected student body, independent of the university administration, refuted the admin claims by the admin and ABVP that the Left students instigated violence in response to the havan by bringing non-vegetarian food into the hostel. Mess Secretary Raghiv said, “We decide the menu for the whole month at the beginning of the month. It’s not decided on a day-to-day basis. ABVP has politicised the whole issue. Every year non veg is served. There has never been a problem.”⁴⁸⁴

Navin Kumar, Kaveri Hostel president corroborated Raghiv’s account, ““The menu was pre-decided but the vendor who came to deliver the chicken was heckled and shooed away. More than half of the hostel residents were supposed to eat non veg for dinner but they couldn’t because ABVP did not allow. The Ram Navami puja was held without any problem. Nobody objected to it being held.”⁴⁸⁵

Apeksha Priyadarshni, councillor JNU claimed that members of the ABVP hit the Left students with flower, pots, lathis, sweepers, bricks, stones while the police stood there and did nothing claiming that ABVP members that attacked the students inside Kaveri were the same students that violently attacked students on January 5, 2020.⁴⁸⁶ Some of them were publicly identified in the media while no arrests were made after the January violence where members of the ABVP violently attacked students.⁴⁸⁷

Role and response by state actors

The Delhi Police registered an FIR against unidentified students who members of ABVP, JNUSU, SFI, DSF, and AISA.⁴⁸⁸ Violence had last broken out on the JNU campus in January 2020, when masked men and women had attacked students and teachers, allegedly particularly targeting Muslim students and student leaders from Left parties. While an FIR was registered and several of these people were later identified in the media as members of ABVP and other Hindu nationalist groups – no arrests have been made to date.⁴⁸⁹

6.2. Jahangirpuri

Sequence of Events

On April 16th, a *Shobha Yatra* for Hanuman Jayanti took place in Jahangirpuri, New Delhi organised by Prem Sharma and Braham Prakash belonging to Hindutva outfits of Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, without seeking prior permission and in violation of the notice issued by ACP

⁴⁸⁴ Shankar, A. (2022, April 12). JNU violence: Admin breaks silence, says clashes began after students objected to ‘havan’ inside hostel on Ram Navami. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/jnu-violence-ram-navami-left-abvp-7864551/>

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

⁴⁸⁷ Staff, T. W. (2022, April 11). *Violence in JNU After ABVP Allegedly Tried to Stop Non-Veg Being Cooked on Ram Navami*. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/jnu-violence-non-veg-ram-navami-abvp>

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid

Jahangirpuri in light of the pogrom of 2020.⁴⁹⁰ This year’s procession struck residents of the area, who had witnessed several Hanuman Jayanti processions, as different – a huge crowd had gathered with a majority of the participants armed with swords, knives, baseball bats and hockey sticks.⁴⁹¹ A few of them were also brandishing *kattas* (country-made pistols).

According to reports, the first two rallies passed peacefully after they weren’t allowed to pass through the mosque on Kushal Road. A Hindu resident of the area testified to the fact this diversion prevented the violence from breaking out in the day itself.⁴⁹² The third and final rally didn’t follow the prescribed route and reached Kushal Road crossing through B and C blocks. Here, the entire neighbourhood is home to small traders, migrant workers and Bengali-speaking Muslim waste collectors.

At around 5 pm, the procession had reached the mosque in Block C, Jahangirpuri, where the provocative nature of the procession caused violence to break out.⁴⁹³ Eye witness accounts claim that the procession turned violent when members of the VHP and Bajrang Dal attempted to hoist the flags they were carrying with Jai Shri Ram written on it, inside the mosque on the minarets. A resident Salman Khan said to *The Wire*, “The mob with members of the Bajrang Dal went outside the mosque and tried to wave the saffron flag there. They were also dancing to loud music.” Communally provocative lyrics and objectionable slogans are clearly audible in videos of the incident.⁴⁹⁴

NewsClick’s report quotes an eyewitness stating that the time of reaching the mosque was closer to 6:20 pm, when it was preparing for Iftar, and that he recognised some of its participants as his own schoolmates.⁴⁹⁵ The eyewitness also described two policemen accompanying the mob, even as it was chanting anti-Muslim slogans.

According to *The Wire*’s witness, Salman Khan, “The shopkeepers in the area tried to stop the mob, while a few women got involved and asked the mob to go away. This turned violent where a few people were injured.”⁴⁹⁶ The incident reportedly involved stone-pelting from members of the procession as well as those objecting, and even gunshots fired from a country-made pistol though it is not clear by whom. Some vehicles were reportedly set ablaze during the incident.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁰ Jaipurkar, A. (2022, April 19). Jahangirpuri violence: VHP, Bajrang Dal men held for taking out yatra sans permission. *The Federal*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thefederal.com/states/north/delhi/communal-clashes-that-happened-in-delhi-on-hanuman-jayanti/>

⁴⁹¹ Ahemad, T. (2022, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁴⁹² *Ibid*

⁴⁹³ Pal, N. J. A. S. (2022, April 12). Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence-jahangirpuri>

⁴⁹⁴ Anwar, T. (2022, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁹⁶ Pal, N. J. A. S. (2022b, April 17). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16*. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence-jahangirpuri>

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*

A young Muslim owner of a readymade clothes shop at C Block's DDA Market described the third rally, organised by Bajrang Dal, as taking the road to the mosque solely to engineer a confrontation. "Could not these enthusiastic devotees find any temple to portray signs of their faith? What was the reason for the Hindus to forcibly enter a mosque during a festival?" he asked.⁴⁹⁸

According to him, Muslims maintained restraint despite the provocation. The eyewitness counts corroborate the other report, in that the violence began when members of the procession forcefully entered the mosque to hoist a saffron flag. When the people inside the mosque strongly objected and chased them away, there was a stampede and subsequently, both groups started pelting stones. A few shots were also fired, one of which injured a policeman. Reporters at the scene confirmed saffron flags and stones scattered at the mosque entrance after the incident. According to some reports, nine people were injured during the scuffle, including eight police officers and one civilian.

A fact-finding team consisting of members of the CPI-M and civil society activists also reported the same sequence of events.⁴⁹⁹ Visiting the area on 17th April, the multiparty fact-finding team met the locals, who confirmed that previous iterations of the Shobha yatra had not been communalised in this manner or loaded with weapons.⁵⁰⁰ On the same day, Karnail Singh of the BJP raised an incendiary slogan, "*Jisko Is Desh Mein Rehna Hoga, Jai Shri Ram Kehna Hoga,*" (Those who want to remain in the country, must chant 'Glory to Ram') right in front of the Jama Masjid Mosque in Jahangirpuri Block C where the violence broke out the evening prior.⁵⁰¹

The nature of instigation was clear in terms of the conditions for violence it created – young men part of the mob clad in saffron, brandishing swords and pistols, gathered in front of the mosque shouting abusive statements and playing music on loudspeakers, the lyrics of which contain unprecedented hate speech as it often goes undetected. Video footage accessed and seen by *NewsClick* confirmed claims that several participants were armed. According to Shankar Kumar, a Jahangirpuri resident enrolled at Delhi University, the procession "targeted" areas inhabited by very poor Muslims who make their living by selling vegetables in the nearby markets and picking up garbage. "The whole thing was planned in the same way as the unrest in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Chhattisgarh on Navratri and Ram Navami," he further alleged.⁵⁰²

Another local, Sheikh Amzad, was inside the mosque when the violence took place on 16th evening. He was quoted as recalling that while they were praying namaz "the procession

⁴⁹⁸ Anwar, T. (2022b, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁴⁹⁹ Pal, N. J. A. S. (2022a, April 12). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused's Birth Certificate Shows He's 16*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence-jahangirpuri>

⁵⁰⁰ Sabrang India. (2022, April 18). *Jahangirpuri: "Peace" on the ground, but what about the fear in the hearts?* SabrangIndia. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/jahangirpuri-peace-ground-what-about-fear-hearts>

⁵⁰¹ Ibid

⁵⁰² Anwar, T. (2022a, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

gathered outside and started screaming ‘*Maaro inn gaddaro ko*’ (Kill these traitors). We were just doing our usual Ramzan rituals, what is wrong in that? Does reading namaz makes one a traitor?”⁵⁰³

In videos of the Jahangirpuri rally, many young boys were seen brandishing hockey sticks, swords, and even guns. A report published by The Print found that several of the children from Block G – inhabited primarily by Bengali Hindus, most belonging to lower castes – attending the rally were mobilised by the local RSS shakha, allegedly run by Suken Sarkar, one of the men later arrested in connection with the violence.⁵⁰⁴ His brother, Suresh Sarkar, a Hindu Vahini and Bajrang Dal member who the police questioned and later released, also convinced kids from the locality to join the rally.

The Print’s journalist spoke to teenagers who attended the rally, some of whom carried swords. They spoke of pride in their Hindu identity as being the reason for joining, however remain traumatised after the violence.⁵⁰⁵ Their hatred and fear of Muslims, whom they call ‘Bangladeshis and Pakistanis’ was evident in their responses, and they consume a steady diet of militant nationalism via social media, films, and TV. According to Suken Sarkar, the idea for the rally was proposed by local *karyakartas* of the VHP and Bajrang Dal as a way to demonstrate the locality’s allegiance to the greater cause.⁵⁰⁶ For the lower caste group, the ‘Hindutva cause’ represents a path to social mobility, and such activities by on-ground Hindutva groups provide ways to access this desire for a pan-Hindu identity.

Despite all this, amid heavy police deployment, the Delhi Police made around 22 arrests in connection with the violence instigated by the Hindutva mob, but they were mostly if not all, Muslim.⁵⁰⁷ By the first half of Sunday, 17th, 14 individuals had been arrested, all of whom were confirmed to be Muslim. Towards the second half of the day, more Muslim youth were picked up by the police. Another report from 18th April stated that out of 23 arrested, as per their medical records, 18 are Muslims.⁵⁰⁸

The main accused Mohammed Aslam, who was dragged out from his house by the police without even being allowed to dress himself, is merely 16, although some of the media reported him to be 22.⁵⁰⁹ According to the police, Aslam fired the bullet that injured a sub-inspector and a

⁵⁰³ Sabrang India. (2022, April 18). *Jahangirpuri: “Peace” on the ground, but what about the fear in the hearts?* SabrangIndia. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/jahangirpuri-peace-ground-what-about-fear-hearts>

⁵⁰⁴ Pandey, T. (2022, April 26). *Desire for pan-Hindu identity, hatred for Bangladeshis – Why teens joined Jahangirpuri riots.* ThePrint. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://theprint.in/features/shakha-taught-us-to-be-brave-how-children-were-drawn-into-jahangirpuri-violence/930389/>

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid

⁵⁰⁶ Pandey, T. (2022, April 26). *Desire for pan-Hindu identity, hatred for Bangladeshis – Why teens joined Jahangirpuri riots.* ThePrint. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://theprint.in/features/shakha-taught-us-to-be-brave-how-children-were-drawn-into-jahangirpuri-violence/930389/>

⁵⁰⁷ Pal, N. J. A. S. (2022b, April 17). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16.* The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence-jahangirpuri>

⁵⁰⁸ Anwar, T. (2022a, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal.* NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁵⁰⁹ Pal, Nikita, J. S. (2022b, April 17). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16.* The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence->

country-made pistol was confiscated from him. However, Aslam's sister-in-law, while speaking to *The Wire*, alleged that Aslam was at home when the incident took place and refuted the allegations that he fired shots during the incident.⁵¹⁰ She also spoke of the police manhandling her when they dragged him out.

According to the FIR filed by the Delhi Police, the procession was "peaceful" until it reached the mosque, where "one Ansar along with four to five people started quarrelling" with the participants of the rally.⁵¹¹ "That led to the commotion with people from both sides pelting stones at each other," it mentions. The Delhi Police implied that Ansar (an accused) along with 4-5 people may have been the reason behind the riot, claiming that the violence on the day of the procession was a pre-planned affair.⁵¹² As the investigation continues the police slapped the unforgiving NSA on 5 accused including Ansar who the police is fashioning as the prime accused, Sonu, Salim, Dilshad, and a man named "Gulli".⁵¹³ As of April 22 the police had arrested 25 people including 2 juveniles in relation to the violence.

Neighbours and family strongly asserted that Ansar was wrongly accused. "We were waiting for the Azaan to break our fast. Suddenly, his mobile rang and he was called to defuse the situation at the mosque. He helped the police control the situation and rushed the injured policemen to the hospital. He came back exhausted around 8 pm," his wife Sakina, a mother of five, told NewsClick.⁵¹⁴

"Around 11 pm, a few men in uniform took him to the spot, where he was made to sit for hours. I called him thrice but he said that the cops were not letting him go. When I called him around 3 am, he told me that he had been arrested," Sakina added.

From the available information, it appears Ansar may have been framed due to having a prior record of arrests – according to the police, he was earlier involved in two cases of assault and had been repeatedly arrested under preventive sections and booked five times under the Public Gambling Act and the Arms Act. However, both Hindus and Muslims praised him, stating that that his family had been living there for 12 years and he had always been helpful, "never indulged in any form of violence". According to his wife, Ansar is an influential resident who often comes through for the residents of the area including during COVID-19 and other emergencies. "When they [Hindus] were dying during the pandemic, he arranged oxygen cylinders for them. He distributed thousands of ration kits to people who had lost their source of livelihood during the lockdown without religious discrimination. Now, we are being called outsiders, terrorists, Bangladeshis and even Rohingyas by the same thankless lot," she said.⁵¹⁵

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⁵¹⁰ Ibid

⁵¹¹ Anwar, T. (2022a, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁵¹² Ibid

⁵¹³ PTI. (2022, April 19). *Five accused in violence at Delhi's Jahangirpuri booked under stringent NSA. . . The New Indian Express*. Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2022/apr/19/five-accused-in-violence-at-delhis-jahangirpuri-booked-under-stringent-nsa-2443975.html>

⁵¹⁴ Ibid

⁵¹⁵ Ibid

According to another report, while Muslim residents appeared largely conciliatory, pinning the blame on outsiders and right-wing outfits and not their neighbours, Hindu residents of Jahangirpuri have in fact described their resentment against what they describe as a “Muslim mob” saying that “they are all Bangladeshi and Rohingya crooks”.⁵¹⁶

In the aftermath of the violence and demolitions, many Muslim men fled the locality and their partners and families struggle to put food on the table. Nargis, 20, is worried for her life and that of her infant as her husband is absconding in the light of the police raiding Muslim homes in the aftermath of the April 16th violence. Many of the residents affected by the violence are from the *Khotta* community, a Bengali Muslim group, battling the prejudice against them by political parties and the mainstream media. Both the BJP and AAP leaders have labelled them infiltrators, consistently referring to them as Bangladeshi or Rohingya Muslims.⁵¹⁷

Role and response by state actors

A Delhi court observed that the Delhi Police “utterly failed” in stopping the Hanuman Jayanti Procession for which no permission was granted as it is already an area that has seen communal clashes within the past two years.⁵¹⁸ Additional Sessions judge Gagandeep Singh of the Rohini Court said, “The issue seems to have been simply brushed aside by the senior officers. The liability on the part of the concerned officials needs to be fixed so that in future no such incident takes place and the police is not complacent in preventing the illegal activities”. Singh stressed on not glossing over the failure of the Delhi Police in containing the procession and stated that complicity of the Delhi Police should be investigated.⁵¹⁹

The Court took notice of the fact that the Delhi Police was accompanying an illegal Hanuman Jayanti procession in a Muslim majority area such as Jahangirpuri. Several parts of North Delhi saw grave loss of life during anti-Muslim pogrom in 2020, the citizens still reeling from it.

The court highlighted that according to the contents of the extremely biased FIR (FIR No. 0440/2022), led by Inspector Rajiv Ranjan, many police personnel from the DCP reserved accompanied the procession on its route instead of breaking it up and dispersing the crowd. The FIR completely fails to mention the procession consisting of VHP and Bajrang Dal members carrying swords, baseball bats, fire arms while shouting extremely provocative slogans and songs.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶ Saikia, A. (2022, April 18). *Why two Hanuman rallies went off peacefully in Delhi's Jahangirpuri – but the third sparked trouble*. Scroll.in. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://scroll.in/article/1022036/why-two-rallies-went-off-peacefully-in-delhis-jahangirpuri-but-the-third-sparked-trouble>

⁵¹⁷ Abdulla, S. (2022, June 19). *Jahangirpuri violence: In absence of men, Muslim women struggle to put food on table*. Maktoob Media. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/19/jahangirpuri-violence-in-absence-of-men-muslim-women-struggle-to-put-food-on-table/>

⁵¹⁸ Staff, T. W. (2022b, April 18). *Jahangirpuri: “Why Was Police Accompanying Instead of Stopping Illegal Procession,” Asks Court*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/law/jahangirpuri-delhi-police-procession-court>

⁵¹⁹ Ibid

⁵²⁰ Anwar, T. (2022a, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti->

The FIR in question had been lodged under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 147 and 148 (rioting and rioting armed with a deadly weapon); Section 149 (offences by an unlawful assembly in prosecution of a common goal); Section 186 (voluntarily obstructing a public servant in the discharge of their public functions); Section 353 (assaulting a public servant); Section 332 (voluntarily causing hurt to a public servant); Section 307 (attempt to murder) and more, as well as Section 27 of the Arms Act (punishment for using arms).⁵²¹

As of 8th May, total of 30 people, including three juveniles, had been arrested in the case, with the police having slapped the stringent National Security Act against five of the accused.⁵²²

As mentioned earlier, most of the arrests were of Muslim men. The 14 arrests made right after the Hanuman Jayanti violence were all Muslim men including 22-year-old Zakir, a daily wage labourer whose mother Johura Bibi asked, “If it was a fight between two sides, why only Muslim boys have been arrested?”⁵²³ Similar questions were raised by Sheikh Sarwar, whose father Shiekh Saurabh, a sanitation worker with MCD, has been arrested.⁵²⁴ “Even if the police version is true, the cops stationed there could have stopped the two sides from indulging in heated exchanges. Why did they choose to be mute spectators?” asked Mohammad Tabrez, a social worker in the area.⁵²⁵

On Sunday, after facing harsh criticism, the Delhi Police arrested 6 more people, mostly Hindus, however, the widespread belief in the neighbourhood remains that of the police having behaved in a biased and partisan manner.⁵²⁶ “All they needed to do was make sure there was heavy deployment near the mosque, everyone knows what the situation in the country is right now,” said an older Muslim resident. Another woman, Anjuna Bibi, reported that her phone had been taken away by the police as she went to the police station to enquire after Akshar and Aslam, her neighbours who had been picked up in the dead of night. According to her, “They snatched my phone because I was recording the way they were pushing and shoving us around. They said I have to bring the phone’s box and purchase receipt if I want it back.”⁵²⁷

There have been numerous reports of the police brutalising Muslim men and women, while conducting raids. In the early hours of April 17, Delhi Police arrested the Ali brothers and their brother-in-law, a minor, on the charge of being involved in the communal clashes. “About 15 of

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⁵²¹ Pal, N. J. A. S. (2022b, April 17). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence-jahangirpuri>

⁵²² Staff, T. W. (2022b, April 18). *Jahangirpuri: “Why Was Police Accompanying Instead of Stopping Illegal Procession,” Asks Court*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/law/jahangirpuri-delhi-police-procession-court>

⁵²³ Saikia, A. (2022, April 18). *Why two Hanuman rallies went off peacefully in Delhi’s Jahangirpuri – but the third sparked trouble*. Scroll.In. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://scroll.in/article/1022036/why-two-rallies-went-off-peacefully-in-delhis-jahangirpuri-but-the-third-sparked-trouble>

⁵²⁴ Anwar, T. (2022a, April 18). *Witnesses Narrate How Jahangirpuri Hanuman Jayanti Rally Turned Communal*. NewsClick. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/Witnesses-Narrate-Jahangirpuri-Hanuman-Jayanti-Rally-Turned-Communal>

⁵²⁵ Ibid

⁵²⁶ Saikia, A. (2022, April 18). *Why two Hanuman rallies went off peacefully in Delhi’s Jahangirpuri – but the third sparked trouble*. Scroll.In. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://scroll.in/article/1022036/why-two-rallies-went-off-peacefully-in-delhis-jahangirpuri-but-the-third-sparked-trouble>

⁵²⁷ Ibid

them (the police) barged into their home and arrested them. Even before the police brought them out of the building, they had been beaten black and blue,” said their sister Manu, 35.⁵²⁸ The police went on to beat Manu and her sisters-in-law, Aspia and Moni, when they tried to intervene. “They beat us like dogs and flung us into the lanes when we tried to stop them. I hurt my head and got a black eye as well. But they did not stop,” said Manu, showing injury marks under her right eye. “They did not even spare Akshar’s 6-year-old son.”⁵²⁹

According to another woman, Sabeena, when she asked the police to help drop the injured women to the nearest hospital, the police refused and said they “did not care whether the women lived or died”.⁵³⁰

On April 20th, after receiving a letter from the Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party chief Adesh Gupta demanding that they bulldoze illegal encroachments of “anti-social elements and rioters”, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) locked up residents in barricaded lanes and undertook an “anti-encroachment drive in Jahangirpuri, demolishing homes, shops and businesses, mostly belonging to Muslims.⁵³¹ They continued the drive for over an hour – in the presence of the NDMC Mayor and Delhi police – despite the Supreme Court’s stay order that came in under an hour from the start of the demolitions.

None of the applicable state laws – the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 or Delhi Development Act, 1957 – allow the government agency to demolish buildings and structures without giving an advance notice to the affected parties, which it did not do.⁵³² Further, these punitive demolitions, given that the people being targeted had been resettled there by the state itself in the 1970s from the banks of the Yamuna, have been widely described as illegal and in violation of the Constitution, as well as violating multiple Fundamental Rights of the victims.⁵³³

The fact that municipal authorities ignored a SC order to halt the demolitions is a telling sign of the communalised state of administrative response – the State taking on retributive action against those it deems “anti-social”.

Several Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, including Manoj Tiwari and Kapil Mishra, have alleged that the incident in Jahangirpuri was a “conspiracy”⁵³⁴ – the same way they have alleged the Ram Navami violence across states was a conspiracy against Hindu festivals.

⁵²⁸ Hussain, E. (2022, April 27). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. BehanBox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵²⁹ Ibid

⁵³⁰ Hussain, E. (2022, April 27). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. BehanBox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵³¹ Gupta, A. J. J. A. M. J. (2022, July 21). *Despite BJP’s Claims, Jahangirpuri Demolitions Were Far From a Legitimate Anti-Encroachment Drive*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/government/jahangirpuri-demolitions-not-legitimate-anti-encroachment>

⁵³² Ibid

⁵³³ Madan, S, Malik, Rhea. (2022, May 15). *How Punitive Demolition Drives Deepen The Precarity Of Muslim Women*. BehanBox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/05/12/how-punitive-demolition-drives-deepen-the-precarity-of-muslim-women/>

⁵³⁴ Pal, Nikita, J. S. (2022b, April 17). *Jahangirpuri Violence: 22 Arrested, Main Accused’s Birth Certificate Shows He’s 16*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-communal-violence->

As for the Delhi government, AAP politicians and ministers were quick to assign blame to “Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators” for the Hanuman Jayanti violence, although they claim that these so-called infiltrators had been brought into the country intentionally by the BJP in order to foment disharmony.⁵³⁵ Delhi’s chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was quick to condemn ‘stone-pelting on the procession’ as the cause of the violence, stating that strict action would be taken against the guilty.⁵³⁶

In the aftermath of the violence and demolition drives, police harassment continued to last and has contributed heavily to the dispossession and disenfranchisement caused to Muslim households in Jahangirpuri. Men and boys have fled the area in fear of further state harassment – locals allege that police arrested whoever they caught during the midnight raid and tortured others.⁵³⁷ Over a dozen women told *Maktoob Media* that the men in their families are hiding due to police harassment. “[the police personnel] threaten us that they will seal our houses. Some of the houses have a notice on the door,” said Asiya. Locals also complain about police using racial slurs and derogatory terms against them.

These men can’t afford to migrate their families along with them due to financial constraints, and many among them are left with no medium to send their daily wage to their families. Sakeena, who lives in the shanties across C block where the situation is even worse, has a son-in-law (Amir) detained on the night of violence at 2 am and allegedly tortured while in custody. She now also has to deposit money in jail. “He couldn’t walk when I met him the day after he was arrested,” she claimed.⁵³⁸ According to the women interviewed by Maktoob, the police have turned merciless and also disrupt their ability to keep makeshift shops, in order to stay afloat, running. Like several others, Rukhsana, a mother of two, said she is frightened by the heavy presence of security forces in the area. “Each time I see them, I feel like something is about to go wrong,” she said.⁵³⁹

Demolition Drive

In a series of events that are tantamount to blatant human rights abuse via systematic economic and social excommunication of working-class Muslims all over the country, Delhi witnessed state-sanctioned demolitions of poor Muslim houses in broad daylight in the face of a Supreme Court order to cease demolitions. In Delhi, it took place at the behest of the Delhi BJP chief who

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⁵³⁵ Joy, S. (2022, April 20). BJP settling Bangladeshis, Rohingyas in India to stage riots: AAP. Deccan Herald. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/national-politics/bjp-settling-bangladeshis-rohingyas-in-india-to-stage-riots-aap-1102372.html>

⁵³⁶ Desk, O. W. (2022, April 16). Delhi: Stones Pelted At Hanuman Jayanti Procession In Jahangirpuri, Vehicles Torched. <https://www.outlookindia.com/>. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/delhi-violence-erupts-amid-hanuman-jayanti-procession-in-jahangirpuri-news-191868>

⁵³⁷ Abdulla, S. (2022b, June 19). *Jahangirpuri violence: In absence of men, Muslim women struggle to put food on table*. Maktoob Media. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/19/jahangirpuri-violence-in-absence-of-men-muslim-women-struggle-to-put-food-on-table/>

⁵³⁸ Abdulla, S. (2022b, June 19). *Jahangirpuri violence: In absence of men, Muslim women struggle to put food on table*. Maktoob Media. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/19/jahangirpuri-violence-in-absence-of-men-muslim-women-struggle-to-put-food-on-table/>

⁵³⁹ Hussain, E. (2022b, April 27). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. BehanBox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

called for the demolitions, fulfilled by NDMC (North Delhi Municipal Corporation) answering Gupta's demand that the houses of 'anti-social elements and rioters' be flattened to the ground.

Bulldozing houses in a low-income basti is entirely illegal as nearly 76.3% of the population in Delhi lives in unplanned, unauthorised colonies in tacit agreement and full cognizance of public authorities. Taxes are accrued and services are provided to these colonies as is traditional and normative in the Global South where these unplanned neighbourhoods are patronised by governments to the benefit of both state and citizens. While evictions and demolitions are a common occurrence in India, the demolitions in Jahangirpuri were entirely illegal and, beyond the gruesome ordeal that a demolition drive springs onto a community or neighbourhood, violate the right to housing under Article 21 and statutory rights.

It followed a pattern also observed in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat where homes and shops of mostly working-class Muslims were bulldozed. The NDMC expressly requested 400 Delhi Police personnel to maintain law and order during a demolition drive prompted by Delhi BJP's Adesh Gupta's call for demolitions. A copy of Gupta's letter was sent to the commissioner of the NDMC, following which the NDMC wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Police informing them of the scheduled joint anti-encroachment drive comprising of the public works department, health sanitation department, veterinary department, and the police has been scheduled in Jahangirpuri.⁵⁴⁰

Three UN Special Rapporteurs wrote a joint letter to the Narendra Modi government on June 9th condemning the use of bulldozers to demolish Muslim homes in several parts of the country.

Signed by the special rapporteur on the right to housing and a professor of law and development at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, alongside the special rapporteur on minority issues as well as the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the letter "condemns, criticises and protests the manner in which the houses of Muslims are being demolished on the orders of local governments, allegedly on the belief that these people were involved in inter-communal clashes with Hindus". The letter calls the demolitions an act of collective punishment and asks the government of India to share with the basis on which it has acted.⁵⁴¹

CPIM's Brinda Karat rushed to the scene and stood in front of the Bulldozer at the demolition site, with the copy of the Supreme Court's stay order. By this time over 20 shops were bulldozed, as well as the front of the mosque where the clashes began, as the locals resisted the illegal procession, while the Hindu temple on the same street (equally informal in its legal standing) was spared.⁵⁴² "They were motivated not to uphold the law but to uphold a very sectarian,

⁵⁴⁰ Staff, T. W. (2022c, April 20). *Jahangirpuri: NSA Against 5, NDMC Plans "Anti-Encroachment Drive" in Area*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/jahangirpuri-nsa-against-5-ndmc-plans-anti-encroachment-drive-in-area>

⁵⁴¹ Thapar, K. (2022, June 18). *UN Special Rapporteurs Condemn Home Demolitions in India, See Collective Punishment of Muslims*. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/un-special-rapporteurs-condemn-home-demolitions-in-india-see-collective-punishment-of-muslims>

⁵⁴² Sharma S. (2022, April 21). *Where is the justice?: Despair after Delhi authorities bulldoze mosque, homes in response to religious riots*. Independent, UK. Retrieved July 12, 2022 from <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/jahangirpuri-demolition-bulldozer-delhi-riots-b2062120.html>

communal agenda of the party in power, that is the BJP,” Karat said in response to the demolitions further adding that the powers that be are bulldozing the law itself.

Nine bulldozers were brought to the streets of Jahangirpuri on Wednesday morning destroying the entrance of the mosque and the staircase leading up to it, despite there still being several people inside. “Where is the justice?” said Sayeda Biwi, owner of the shop demolished two doors from the temple. Poor Muslim women were some of the worst hit from the demolitions. Sayeda Biwi recalled the traumatic incident as she wondered why the police and civic authorities targeted one community and did not demolish other structures in the neighbourhood. The policemen abused her, detained her husband briefly and watched as they demolished their shop. “We were trying to save each penny for Eid, but this is the government’s Eid present to us,” she added.⁵⁴³ Muslim residents in the neighbourhood questioned the legality of the process, claiming they were given no notice or warning prior to the demolitions.

Rashida Bewa, a widow who has been living there for decades, lost her kebab cart to the demolitions which was her only source of income to feed her four children. “I will ask the government to do one thing: ask the policemen to line us up in a queue and shoot us all at once.” She told *The Independent*. “We are ready to take a bullet. Shoot us. But we are not ready to bear the atrocities upon us....We are trying to earn respectable, meager income that we are making here. We are not stealing from anyone, we are not begging on streets. What will I do now,” she asked, adding that she was not involved in the Hanuman Jayanti violence.⁵⁴⁴

Lawyers working fighting the case said the demolition was brought forward from 2pm in anticipation that the courts might try to stop it. The NDMC mayor Raja Iqbal Singh said, “The work will continue as the order has not reached us” on NDTV news. Another resident, Rashida Bewa, whose home was partially demolished as her kids watched, reported that her only source of income, her food cart perished in the demolition, leaving her sans a source of income with four children to feed as a widow, and the sole earner of the household. Rashida told the independent, “We are trying to earn respectable, meagre income that we are making here. We are not stealing from anyone, we are not begging on streets. What will I do now?”

The biggest blow to law and the constitution is the planned nature of the demolitions sans notice which is a constitutional right of the residents of Jahangirpuri. A pattern now well established when cross referenced with other states experiencing targeted demolition Muslim home and shops, is that the demolitions follow a religiously motivated clash as instigated by Hindutva mobs in Muslim majority neighbourhoods. Muslims in Jahangirpuri were branded as rouge ‘militant’ Rohingyas, illegal immigrants, rioters, threats to livelihoods of Hindus and other slurs now part of common parlance in the media. M.R. Shamshad said, “A politician or the state cannot decide which structure is illegal. The fact that the demolition drive destroyed the only source of livelihood of many families is a matter of concern. There is no sense of justice.”⁵⁴⁵

Local residents alleged that the incidents in Jahangirpuri followed the pattern of communal tensions in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. “The bulldozer tactic is typical of the BJP-led government,”

⁵⁴³ Ibid

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid

⁵⁴⁵ Pal S. (2022, April 20). ‘One Sided Attempt to Target Muslims’: Jahangirpuri Residents Angered by Demolition Drive. The Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/jahangirpuri-demolition-driver-muslims-target-residents>

alleged Sabeena (24), a local resident. “Yogi [Adityanath, UP chief minister] does it in Uttar Pradesh and Amit Shah has replicated it in Delhi. It came days after the clashes. What else are we to believe except that this is a state-sponsored attack on the Muslims?”⁵⁴⁶

Losses incurred

According to a BBC report, Gufran’s (42) losses included a notebook containing transactions for his shop. With all the contents of the shop gone, he has no record of what he owed and is owed by the people. Sabina Begun, another resident, who has been residing behind the mosque for over 30 years sobbed as she witnessed the bulldozers being the gate of the mosque to the ground.⁵⁴⁷ The working-class neighbourhood is home to small traders both Hindus and Muslims, while housing a large majority of Bengali Muslim waste pickers. As the drive proceeded and made its way through Janangirpuri residents were barricaded, unable to save their sources of livelihood. The drive, which lasted slightly over three hours, led to the destruction of at least 20 shops.⁵⁴⁸ According to a report by BehanBox, as many as 50 shops, kiosks, and carts, mostly owned by Muslims, were demolished during the drive.⁵⁴⁹

Javed, the owner of the first tea shop leading up to the Jama Masjid told *The Wire*, “Everything is lost. Those who actually instigated the violence are scot-free, while people who work hard and earn their daily bread are the ones suffering. Do I look like a rioter? To us, this is all political. We understand what is going on. We are being targeted.”⁵⁵⁰

Also demolished was a paan shop run by two brothers, Mukhtiar (28) and Akshar Ali (26), who have been arrested for the clashes – their wives are left with no means of livelihood or support.⁵⁵¹

According to a woman who watched several tin sheds being demolished, “...when my sons were fasting in our holy month of prayer. They want to ensure we starve, that we fail to earn our food, that we fail to earn our water.” The brother of another resident called Arif, (whose shop was demolished) lost 1 lakh worth of stock and now is in crippling debt. Kashif questioned, “...Why are they not cracking down on Hindus and singling us out? The demolition started next to the masjid and stopped where the temple is. This is all pre-planned.”⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁶ Hussain E. (2022, April 26). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. Behanbox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵⁴⁷ Srivastava N. (2022, April 21). *Jahangirpuri: How religious violence razed homes and dreams*. BBC Hindi. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61172227>

⁵⁴⁸ Pal S. (2022, April 20). ‘One Sided Attempt to Target Muslims’: *Jahangirpuri Residents Angered by Demolition Drive*. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/jahangirpuri-demolition-driver-muslims-target-residents>

⁵⁴⁹ Hussain E. (2022, April 26). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. Behanbox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵⁵⁰ Pal S. (2022, April 20). ‘One Sided Attempt to Target Muslims’: *Jahangirpuri Residents Angered by Demolition Drive*. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/jahangirpuri-demolition-driver-muslims-target-residents>

⁵⁵¹ Hussain E. (2022, April 26). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. Behanbox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵⁵² Pal S. (2022, April 20). ‘One Sided Attempt to Target Muslims’: *Jahangirpuri Residents Angered by Demolition Drive*. *The*

It has been well documented that the worst victims of the targeted demolitions have been Muslim women. Most of the women came originally from West Midnapore, Haldia, 24 Parganas, and Murshidabad. Some date their history in Delhi back three generations – most families have been here in Jahangirpuri for 40 years. Reports now describe their impending destitution.

They already lived precarious lives as *kabaadi* workers, rag pickers and waste-sorters. They collect waste from nearby colonies, transport it, sort it and pack the sorted waste in separate bori (gunny sacks) which are kept outside, on the side of the main street. Each bori was worth Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 according to the women.⁵⁵³ That the demolition drives were meant to dispossess is hard to miss, given the destruction of the hand carts and cycle carts on which rag pickers piled their bags of garbage to then transport, sort and sell through *kabaadi* shops; and the destruction of the fruit stalls, gumtis (kiosks), and the wooden ‘shop’ tables of India’s poorest women.

40-year-old Sakina Beva, a widow and waste-sorter who earned a daily income of Rs. 250 with which she looked after her unemployed sons. Her source of earning was bulldozed. Manjura Bibi, her neighbour, lost two *thelas* (cycle carts) on which she, with her husband and son, carried sacks of waste, and then hired women like Sakina to sift and sort. Hafiza Bibi and Rojina, both of whom collected waste from Mukherjee Nagar, lost their *thela* and *boris*. Several more women, from ages 19 to 54, all had their *thelas*, *boris*, and shops crushed by the bulldozers. The women corroborated other reports in that the bulldozing began unannounced around 10 am, when some of them were asleep after Fajr namaz. It must be noted that the vast majority of these losses were movable property, and could never be considered a permanent encroachment. The administration chose to crush hand carts, cycle carts, and humble bags of waste belonging to struggling widows and mothers – informal workers, who live in a resettlement colony and not an unauthorised one.⁵⁵⁴

The women spoke of living in constant fear of the bulldozers returning, and of them being rendered homeless.⁵⁵⁵

Media Portrayal

The media’s portrayal of the events of Hanuman Jayanti followed by the demolitions has been largely biased in favour of the Hindu groups, feeding into the national frenzy that has fashioned Muslims as infiltrators, immigrants and a threat to Hindus. Similar to other states, mainstream media’s reportage of the violence began with stone-pelting, with no mention of any instigation, with the Hanuman Jayanti procession depicted instead as peaceful expression of religion under attack. Channels such as News18 went as far as to falsely assert they had permission for the procession to take the route that it did.⁵⁵⁶

Wire. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/rights/jahangirpuri-demolition-driver-muslims-target-residents>

⁵⁵³ Naqvi F, Singh N. (2022, April 29). *How the Jahangirpuri Demolition Destroyed Lives of India’s Poorest Women*. The Wire. Retrieved from July 12, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/women/how-the-jahangirpuri-demolition-destroyed-lives-of-indias-poorest-women>

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵⁵ Hussain E. (2022, April 26). *Livelihoods Lost, Jahangirpuri’s Muslim Women Struggle With Economic & Emotional Precarity*. Behanbox. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://behanbox.com/2022/04/26/livelihoods-lost-jahangirpuris-muslim-women-struggle-with-economic-emotional-precarity/>

⁵⁵⁶ Delhi Shobha Yatra Violence | Hanuman Jayanti | Breaking News | Hindi Debate Live. (2022, April 16). YouTube.

Coverage by channels such as Zee News glorified the use of the bulldozer as response to violence, referring to it as ‘*Dilli mein Baba ka bulldozer formula*’ (In Delhi, Yogi Adityanath’s bulldozer formula) and ‘*dangaiyon par bulldozer*’ (bulldozers used on rioters).⁵⁵⁷ They also repeatedly praised the strong messaging of the administrating of their readiness to deal with ‘rioters’ and ‘anti-social elements’.

The demolitions in Jahangirpuri were broadcast live on several news channels, which is unsurprising given that it took place in the capital city – however, none of whom questioned the legality of an anti-encroachment drive in an area housing those resettled by the state itself. The role of the media in granting legitimacy to collective punishment against a particular community is perhaps most visible through the coverage of Jahangirpuri.

A report on Jahangirpuri by ‘Group of Intellectuals and Academics’ (GIA) has been featured heavily in print media – the same group had earlier submitted their findings in the form of a vindictive and false report on the cause of the pogrom in Delhi in 2020, to Home Minister Amit Shah.⁵⁵⁸ Their current report on Jahangirpuri evades mentioning any provocation by the procession despite tangible evidence including CCTV footage, viral videos and numerous witness testimonies.⁵⁵⁹ They instead chose to emphasize that “a section in Jahangirpuri’s C-block has been occupied by illegal immigrants”, a demonstrably false narrative that fits in with the justifications being provided by many right-wing commentators.⁵⁶⁰

As for residents of the violence-hit neighbourhood, they appear well aware of the one-sided actions of the media and the police, and resent both. “Why does the media show only one side?” complained Mehdul, a butcher, in a report by *Scroll.in*. “All day they are showing videos of Muslims pelting stones, what about the fact that Bajrang Dal people came with arms?”⁵⁶¹

Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p90XKXb21sM>

⁵⁵⁷ दिल्ली में बाबा का “बुलडोजर फॉर्मूला” |Jahangirpuri | Yogi Adityanath | Bulldozer|MCD | Delhi Riots. (2022, April 20). YouTube.

Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zdIbtNvHHc>

⁵⁵⁸ Jayaprakash, N. D. (2020, July 6). Delhi Riots 2020: A Critique of Two Purported Fact-Finding Reports. *The Wire*. Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/delhi-riots-2020-a-critique-of-two-purported-fact-finding-reports>

⁵⁵⁹ Press Trust of India. (2022, April 25). Group Of Academicians Publishes “Fact-Finding” Report On Jahangirpuri Violence. *NDTV.Com*. Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/group-of-academicians-publishes-fact-finding-report-on-jahangirpuri-violence-2919789>

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

⁵⁶¹ Saikia, A. (2022, April 18). Why two Hanuman rallies went off peacefully in Delhi’s Jahangirpuri – but the third sparked trouble. *Scroll.in*. Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://scroll.in/article/1022036/why-two-rallies-went-off-peacefully-in-delhis-jahangirpuri-but-the-third-sparked-trouble>

7. UTTARAKHAND

Background

Uttarakhand, located in the lower Himalayan region, bordering Tibet (China), Nepal, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh (states in India), is often given the epithet, ‘Devbhumi’ (‘Land of God(s)’) for its religiously significant geography. Badrinath (one of the four ‘dhaams’ that every Hindu is supposed to visit in their lifetime) is located in Uttarakhand. All of the Chhota Char Dhaams of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri are also located in Uttarakhand. It has the highest percentage of Brahmins of any state in India, with approximately 25-28% of the population being Brahmin.⁵⁶²

Uttarakhand is also one of the states that has an anti-conversion law in place. The Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act was passed in April 2018,⁵⁶³ a year after the BJP government came to power in the State in March 2017. This Act is frequently referred to as the “love jihad” law, revealing its Islamophobic roots, as opposed to secularism or liberty of faith as indicated in the name.

In December 2021, a “Dharam Sansad” held in Haridwar gained widespread attention for hate speeches from Hindu religious leaders calling for the genocide of Muslims, and use of weapons against them, for the protection of Hindus.^{564 565 566} Several videos of the event and the incendiary speeches became viral on social media and across news media channels.

In April 2022, on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti, violence took place in the Bhagwanpur area in the Haridwar district of Uttarakhand. While Hindus form a majority 69.36% of the population in Bhagwanpur, Muslims have a numerically significant presence in the area with 30.16% of the population identifying as Muslim, compared to their 15% share in the national population. The

⁵⁶² Outlook Web Desk. (4 June 2007). Brahmins in India. Outlook. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20140531222946/http://www.outlookindia.com/article/Brahmins-In-India/234783> [27 June 2022]

⁵⁶³ Asia News International. (10 September 2021). Uttarakhand to make law against forced religious conversions more stringent. NDTV. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/uttarakhand-to-make-law-against-forced-religious-conversions-more-stringent-2535988> [27 June 2022]

⁵⁶⁴ Shukla, Saurabh. (23 December 2021). Hate Speech-Givers in Haridwar Tell NDTV “Neither Regrets nor Fear”. NDTV. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/viral-hate-speech-videos-haridwar-meet-spark-outrage-2667081> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁶⁵ The Wire Analysis. (22 December 2021). Hindutva leaders at Haridwar event call for Muslim genocide. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/hindutva-leaders-dharma-sansad-muslim-genocide> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁶⁶ Grover, Samarth. (22 December 2021). Narsinghanand organises 3-day hate speech conclave in Haridwar. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/haridwar-yati-narsinghanand-organises-hate-speech-conclave> [27 June 2022].

residents of the village in which the violence took place number 2,800 in all – approximately 1,000 of them Muslims, and an equal number Sainis, an OBC community.⁵⁶⁷

Sequence of Events

On the evening of 16 April 2022, a Shobha Yatra (procession) in celebration of Hanuman Jayanti was carried out in Bhagwanpur, Haridwar. Late in the evening, it was allegedly pelted with stones, injuring several people.^{568 569} The incident took place when the procession of around 100 people was passing through a 200 metre ‘Muslim belt’ in the Dada Jalalpur village.⁵⁷⁰

What the NDTV and Republic World reports referenced above (as well as numerous other articles including one by Firstpost⁵⁷¹) failed to mention is: the stone pelting was provoked because of anti-Muslim slogans raised by the procession outside a mosque in Dada Jalalpur village in Bhagwanpur.⁵⁷²

The procession had been organized by the three villages in the Dada area – Dada Patti, Dada Hasanpur, and Dada Jalalpur – and some Hindu organizations. It passed through the first two villages without incident. Upon reaching the third village, the procession stopped outside a mosque and chanted anti-Muslim slogans. A source speaking on condition of anonymity told Newsclick reporters that slogans like “Jai Shri Ram” “Hindustan mein rahena hai, toh Jai Shri Ram kehna hai” were started outside the mosque. Songs were also being played loudly. The procession was asked to leave by the Muslim community present as it was time to break the fast (Roza). However, the procession refused to move, due to which an argument broke out that escalated into violence. Some vehicles were set afire and stones were pelted from both sides during the violence, reportedly injuring around 10 people.⁵⁷³

A report in the Indian Express states that the violence took place in two phases, according to senior officers at the Bhagwanpur Police Station: first, as the Hanuman Jayanti procession was passing through a Muslim area, which continued for about 30 minutes before it was brought

⁵⁶⁷ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁶⁸ Bishay, Nikita. (17 April 2022). Uttarakhand: clashes, stone-pelting mar Hanuman Jayanti rally; probe underway. *Republic World*. Retrieved from <https://www.republicworld.com/amp/india-news/law-and-order/uttarakhand-clashes-stone-pelting-mar-hanuman-jayanti-rally-in-haridwar-probe-underway-articleshow.html> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁶⁹ Asia News International. (18 April 2022). 11 arrested for Hanuman Jayanti violence in Uttarakhand’s Haridwar. *NDTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/police-arrest-11-for-haridwar-violence-situation-now-peaceful-2897328> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷⁰ Express News Service. (18 April 2022). Stones hurled at Hanuman Jayanti procession, 13 booked. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/haridwar-hanuman-jayanti-pelting-stones-at-procession-7873498/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷¹ FP Explainers. (19 April 2022). Nine states, 15 days: India is witnessing a spate of communal violence. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/nine-states-15-days-india-is-witnessing-a-spate-of-communal-violence-10572031.html> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷² Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newsclick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷³ *Ibid*

under control; the second took place in the wee hours of the night, when there was a fresh spate of stone-pelting and incidents of arson.⁵⁷⁴

According to the Newslick report, the purported video of the incident shows big sticks and saffron flags being waved by the crowd, which includes BJP leader Jai Bhagwan Saini. The songs audible on the video have a DJ calling out Muslims as Pakistanis and abusing them with lewd words.⁵⁷⁵

Sachin Kumar, 45, a resident of the village said there was an altercation over the loud songs played during the procession, which set off the violence in which both sides were injured. He admitted, however, that Muslim homes and vehicles were targeted in the arson later at night. A local general store owner, identifying himself as Kallu, said the situation was exacerbated by some announcements from the mosque. The caretaker of the mosque, Mohammad Ziyaul, contests this and says that they only made an announcement after the second round of violence. The 60-year-old reportedly said, “I also want to add that the stone-pelting was not unprovoked... The DJ in the procession was playing offensive songs. When some Muslim youths requested them to stop, they refused. In response, some youths chanted slogans. That caused an altercation.”⁵⁷⁶

According to one Naveen Saini, affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the violence took place because “They [Muslims] are jihadis, conspiring against us Hindus, it is sad to see that they eat here, but they talk of tearing the nation apart.” He said that it was the movie *The Kashmir Files* (released nationwide on 11 March 2022, and made tax free in several BJP ruled states including Uttarakhand⁵⁷⁷) inspired him and others to “fight for their rights”: “The movie inspired me so much, it brought tears to my eyes.” He also said that Hindus need to wake up to finally realize their dream of making India a ‘Hindu Rashtriya’, which he described as “When we wave the saffron flag across the country, with Hanuman Chalisa playing in each home and Yogi Adityanath will be our leader, that will be our Hindu Rashtra.” He also called the violence a “conspiracy” organized by the Muslim community: “The pattern across the country is clear, they pelt stones on our processions, this is exactly what they did here. They made an announcement from the mosques to gather arms, which led to the violence. We had to do something.”⁵⁷⁸ This echoes the pattern of reporting of the violence in Uttarakhand and elsewhere as seen on mainstream TV news channels. Also, neither Saini nor other Hindutva workers contacted by *The Wire* were unable to furnish any videos to corroborate their claims about the announcement to

⁵⁷⁴ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷⁵ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷⁶ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁷⁷ FPJ Web Desk. (15 March 2022). ‘The Kashmir Files’: Full list of states where the Vivek Agnihotri-directorial has been made tax-free. *Free Press Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.freepressjournal.in/bollywood/the-kashmir-files-full-list-of-states-where-the-vivek-agnihotri-directed-movie-has-been-made-tax-free> [5 July 2022].

⁵⁷⁸ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by ‘Kashmir Files’, Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

gather arms from the mosque, despite the existence of several other videos about the incident.⁵⁷⁹

The residents of the town number at 2800, with 1000 of these Muslims, and an equal number of Sainis (an OBC) community. They said they had never witnessed violence of this scale before.⁵⁸⁰ Tension in the village was palpable when Newsclick reporters visited, as a result of which the Muslim community was reportedly hesitant and scared to talk. NewsClick tried but could not get in touch with any member of the Muslim community directly.⁵⁸¹ Even five days after the incident, there were “charred remains of vehicles by the roadside, police presence at every nook and corner, tension, and talk of people leaving.” Around 400-500 Muslims had left the village following the incident, according to an official of the local mosque.⁵⁸² Another report, published on the same day (19 April 2022) in *The Wire* also stated that “tension [was] evident” in the area, as shops remained shut amidst heavy police presence.⁵⁸³

One of the victims was 28-year-old Mohammad Abid. His e-rickshaw, for which he is still paying EMI, was burnt by the mob, along with his elder brother’s car, and two motorcycles belonging to the family. He was also allegedly assaulted by the mob. He left with his family of 8 due the violence, and said there was little reason for them to return. “A mob broke into our house and vandalised it. We were beaten up, and somehow managed to escape. Now we are scared and have fled, leaving everything behind,” he is reported to have said.⁵⁸⁴

Another victim was Alim (name changed) who said, “The main door of my house – which is strong and made of iron – is damaged. You can see, it is no longer even closing. They broke through the door with sticks. My wife was hit on the head and I was hurt while trying to escape.” He showed reporters from *The Wire* an injury on his knee which was pictured in their report.⁵⁸⁵

According to his neighbour Razia (name changed), the Dalit, OBC, and Muslim communities of the village had lived peacefully together for a long time and this incident came as a shock. Some of her silver and Rs. 50,000/- were looted from her house during the violence. “They threw stones at our homes, we had to lock ourselves up to protect ourselves. They broke everything,” she said, adding, “They tried barging into our homes, I could hear them beating sticks on the doors of my

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid

⁵⁸⁰ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁸¹ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁸² Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁸³ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by ‘Kashmir Files’, Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

⁵⁸⁴ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁸⁵ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by ‘Kashmir Files’, Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

home as I ran up the terrace to protect myself and my children. We climbed on to our neighbour's terrace and managed to hide away until it settled." She is the only member of her family to have stayed behind in the village at the time of reporting.⁵⁸⁶

Bano (name changed), another resident, reportedly broke down as she said, "My son was picked up in a brutal crackdown, I was beaten up too...There are young children roaming around our streets, they do not know where their fathers are, we are suffering a great injustice," referring to her own grandson and the arrests. She too is shocked by the violence. "Our children have all grown up together. We do not know how this happened," she said.⁵⁸⁷

Her friends Shilo and Sushila, however, have a different opinion. "We want justice, whoever is the culprit should be brought to light. We do not care if there is a bulldozer, we want the culprits to be caught," Shilo said. Sushila added, "Our children have grown up together, they can never hurt anyone. But the Muslims have done everything."⁵⁸⁸

Leaders of Hindu organisations, including BJP leader Jai Bhagwan Saini, insisted on completing the yatra post the violence. District Panchayat member Anil Saini was quoted by the report as saying, "We put pressure on the police and in the presence of the DM, DIG, we took out the yatra at 1 p.m."⁵⁸⁹ Another report in *The Wire* states that the Yatra was completed at night itself, after violence was quelled at around 1 am, with support from the police force. It quotes Sonu Saini (friend of Naveen Saini) as saying, "After this violence broke out, we had to go on in full force and finish our Yatra. How could we not? We were enthused, we were playing songs against them, the police and the administration supported us and we carried out the Yatra with full flare." It seems from the report in *The Wire* that the second round of violence took place as a result of this second Yatra.⁵⁹⁰

According to Farman (name changed), "We thought that that would be the end, but it was not. The procession returned through the very same route... They broke into our home after setting fire to our vehicles, we did not do anything. But we feared for our lives and had to hide in a small space at the back of the house. Had we been caught we would be dead." His house was vandalised, and the electricity meter of the house was damaged. Valuable and money were also stolen. Outside his home were the charred remains of an e-rickshaw, a motorcycle, and a car. He says the fire was started by those in the procession. Scared of fresh violence, he had reportedly been spending his nights in the field.⁵⁹¹

But according to Naveen Saini, the fresh round of violence was caused by a second round of stone pelting by Muslim households. "There were women on the rooftops pelting stones, which further escalated the violence," he said. His friend, Sonu Saini, told *The Wire*, "They are only leaving the villages right now, there will soon be a day when they leave the nation. We will now have to

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid

⁵⁸⁹ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁹⁰ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by 'Kashmir Files', Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

⁵⁹¹ Ibid

resort to violence, only talks will not serve anything. The youth of this country have woken up. We will now kill them...Their ration cards should be taken away, their voter IDs should be taken away. We are saying this to your face, openly.” Both Naveen and Sonu claim to be affiliated to the Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁵⁹²

The DIG Garhwal (Range) Karan Singh Nagnyal, however, denies any “tension” in the village, and claimed that only those wanted in connection with the violence had fled the village.⁵⁹³ This is an especially sinister statement to make in a climate when there is a clear pattern of one-sided / targeted police investigations of communal cases⁵⁹⁴, as it paints anyone fleeing persecution as already guilty.

He also said that no cases were booked for damage to vehicles as those whose vehicles had been damaged “refused to file cases”, a claim that is disputed by Abid (mentioned earlier) who says that the police did not take cognisance of his written complaint.⁵⁹⁵ It also stands in contradiction to the police’s statements that there is no “tension” in the area following the incident.

Role and Response by State Actors

Following the incident, there was heavy police deployment in the area including the presence of SP Dehat, Pramendra Dopal. The injured were sent to the hospital by an ambulance, by the police.⁵⁹⁶

On the morning of Sunday April 17, the police registered an FIR and booked 12 named persons with 40 unidentified persons. The SO, PD Bhatt told the media on Sunday: “A case has been registered against 12 persons (40 unidentified persons too), including Khurshid, Shahnawaz, Hussain, Paigam, Niwajish, Riyaz, Rahis and Israr. Efforts are on to arrest others.”⁵⁹⁷ It is notable that in this statement to the media, only Muslim names were identified by the officer.

The FIR was registered under Sections 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), 195 A (threatening any person to give false evidence), 147 (rioting) and 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon) of the IPC.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹² Ibid

⁵⁹³ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁹⁴ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁹⁵ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁹⁶ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid

⁵⁹⁸ Express News Service. (18 April 2022). Stones hurled at Hanuman Jayanti procession, 13 booked. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/haridwar-hanuman-jayanti-pelting-stones-at-procession-7873498/> [27 June 2022].

The first six people arrested were all from the Muslim community, as were the next 5 people arrested. The DIG Garhwal is also involved in the investigation, and said he was looking for more people responsible.⁵⁹⁹ The DIG, Karan Singh Nagnyal's version of events were as follows: "The procession was planned for around 3 pm but it got delayed and started at 6 pm on Saturday. Around 8.10 pm when the procession, in which religious slogans were being raised, was passing through a Muslim-dominated stretch, some people started hurling stones at the procession. Police teams responded soon and brought the situation under control. Around 2-3 persons have received minor injuries."⁶⁰⁰

Yogendra Singh, SSP of Haridwar, also said that police forces immediately reached the spot after receiving information about the violence, and brought the situation under control. A Republic World article dated 17 April includes a tweet by ANI (Hindi) [@ANI_HindiNews] which quotes him as saying that "stone pelting" was the source of the clashes, but there's no mention of the incendiary songs or slogans preceding it. He is also quoted as saying, "Some criminals have been arrested. Appeal to people to maintain harmony and brotherhood." The same article also notes that deployment of police forces has been increased owing to the involvement of some "anti-national" sources, according to Singh, and that more arrests would follow shortly.⁶⁰¹

An NDTV article dated 18 April quotes Yogendra Singh as saying, "Eleven people have been arrested. Sufficient force is present in the village. Meetings are being held with the people. The situation is peaceful." The same article quotes him as saying, "Stones were pelted by unknown persons and the search operations have begun to arrest the miscreants. Yes, injuries have been reported but no police personnel was injured in the incident. Over 60 police personnel have been deployed in the area," on Sunday, 17 April, the day after the incident.⁶⁰² Again, there is no mention of the events leading up to the stone pelting.

As of April 21, all the persons identified by name in the FIR were from the Muslim community, fourteen of whom had already been arrested. The same article also quotes Bhagwanpur Police Station SHO P D Bhatt as saying: "Around 10-12 more people will be arrested, including six to seven of those named in the FIR."⁶⁰³

On 17 April, Yogendra Singh (SSP, Haridwar) had also said: "Over 60 police personnel have been deployed in the area."⁶⁰⁴ The DIG was quoted in an article dated 21 April as saying, "We

⁵⁹⁹ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰⁰ Express News Service. (18 April 2022). Stones hurled at Hanuman Jayanti procession, 13 booked. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/haridwar-hanuman-jayanti-pelting-stones-at-procession-7873498/> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰¹ Bishay, Nikita. (17 April 2022). Uttarakhand: clashes, stone-pelting mar Hanuman Jayanti rally; probe underway. *Republic World*. Retrieved from <https://www.republicworld.com/amp/india-news/law-and-order/uttarakhand-clashes-stone-pelting-mar-hanuman-jayanti-rally-in-haridwar-probe-underway-articleshow.html> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰² Asia News International. (18 April 2022). 11 arrested for Hanuman Jayanti violence in Uttarakhand's Haridwar. *NDTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/police-arrest-11-for-haridwar-violence-situation-now-peaceful-2897328> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰³ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people 'don't want to file cases'. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰⁴ Asia News International. (18 April 2022). 11 arrested for Hanuman Jayanti violence in Uttarakhand's Haridwar.

considered imposing Section 144 of the CrPC (prohibitory orders). However, after assessing the situation and meeting all parties concerned, we did not find a need. The police force, including a PAC company, is there just as a precautionary measure.”⁶⁰⁵

In the same report, he is also quoted as saying, “We reached out to [those whose vehicles had been damaged, primarily Muslims], and asked if they wanted to get a complaint registered. They refused and said they do not want any action.”⁶⁰⁶ This was disputed by victims’ statements in at least two reports: An Indian Express report dated 21 April says that one of the victims of the violence, Abid (mentioned earlier) made a written complaint to the police which it did take cognisance of.⁶⁰⁷ Another report in *The Wire* published 2 days before it says that “Muslim families have written to the police detailing the damages they faced and the injuries they have suffered,” yet the only arrests that had taken place until then were from the Muslim community itself.⁶⁰⁸

Demolition Drive

On Sunday, 17 April, the day after the communal violence was reported to have taken place, police reached the village with four bulldozers, threatening the accused to surrender or face demolition of their houses.⁶⁰⁹

Supreme Court lawyer Anas Tanveer termed this move “unconstitutional” and asserted that it was meant to “intimidate the minorities, [amounting to] hooliganism”. Speaking to Newsclick, he said, “There is not a single law which gives power to the government to demolish the house of an accused person. There is no such law in any state. This is completely illegal. The government is using the power which it does not have.”⁶¹⁰

On April 18, Senior Superintendent of Police, Yogendra Singh Yadav told members of the Bhim Army in a meeting that no houses would be bulldozed, which was confirmed by local policemen present on the ground.⁶¹¹

NDTV. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/police-arrest-11-for-haridwar-violence-situation-now-peaceful-2897328> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰⁵ Mishra, Avaneesh. (21 April 2022). Roorkee violence: As some villagers leave, police says people ‘don’t want to file cases’. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/roorkee-violence-some-villagers-leave-police-people-dont-want-to-file-cases-7880848/> [27 June 2022].

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid

⁶⁰⁸ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by ‘Kashmir Files’, Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

⁶⁰⁹ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newsclick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁶¹⁰ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newsclick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁶¹¹ Pal, Sumedha. (19 April 2022). Influenced by ‘Kashmir Files’, Hindutva Workers Threaten to Remove Muslims From Roorkee Village. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/roorkee-ground-report-kashmir-files-communal-hindutva> [5 July 2022].

Since demolitions did not actually begin immediately, the police came under pressure from Hindu leaders to carry them out. Mahamandaleshwar Yatindranand Giri of June Akhara⁶¹² accused the police of only creating a “spectacle” with no genuine intention to carry out the demolition. He is quoted to have said, “A bulldozer exhibition has been organised by the police in Dada Jalalpur and a spectacle is being created. So far, no concrete action is being taken by the police.” He also threatened that if the bulldozers do not run in two days, then there would be a religious parliament and saints from all over the country would gather in the area.⁶¹³ It is important to note that just a few months prior, the “Dharam Sansad” or religious parliament of Hindu leaders held at Haridwar had made calls for a genocide of Muslims in the country.^{3 4 5}

Another religious leader, Prabodhanand Giri of Hindu Raksha Vahini, talked about the ‘purification’ of Muslims at a press conference in response to the situation and said: “The whole state has come under the grip of Islam,” accusing the police of “protecting jihadis.”¹¹ The Hindu Raksha Vahini, on 18 April 2022 also threatened a repeat of the “Dharam Sansad” within 2 days if the “accused” were not arrested.⁶¹⁴

Swami Dinesh Anand Bharti, the head of a right wing outfit announced that he and his supporters would surround the Bhagwanpur tehsil office, and recite the Hanuman Chalisa to push for the arrest of all those accused of pelting stones at the Shobha Yatra. He and his supporters made their way toward the tehsil office on Wednesday, 20 April, in 3-4 tractors and motorcycles. They were stopped by the police at a toll plaza and prevented from entering the area. The police asked them to leave but the ‘seer’ then decided to chant the Hanuman Chalisa there itself, accompanied by several of his followers. They also burnt an effigy of Mamta Rakesh, the Congress MLA from Bhagwanpur who had called the use of bulldozers a way to “threaten people” in the village and slammed the administration for it. Following the “ultimatum”¹³ they left after the police assured them that all the accused would be arrested within a week.⁶¹⁵

An unidentified police officer present said of the incident, “Around 3-4 tractors with Bharti and his supporters were heading towards tehsil office but they were stopped by police at the toll plaza, a few kilometres before the office... Bharti was adamant to go to the tehsil office but police didn’t let him. He then sat at the plaza and started reciting the Hanuman Chalisa there itself.”⁶¹⁶

Soon after this, Uttarakhand officially began the process of demolishing allegedly “illegal” structures. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was quoted by The Print as saying, “Wherever encroachment is found, bulldozers will be used. The process of removing illegal occupants is

⁶¹² Kumar, Prashant. (17 April 2022). अब उत्तराखंड में बुलडोजर की मांग: यतींद्रानंद गिरी बोले- यूपी मॉडल की तर्ज हो कार्रवाई, ऐसा न हुआ तो करेंगे धर्म संसद. *Amar Ujala*. Retrieved from <https://www.amarujala.com/dehradun/mahamandaleshwar-swami-yatindranand-giri-maharaj-of-juna-akhara-said-that-there-should-be-bulldozer-action-in-uttarakhand-like-up> [5 July 2022].

⁶¹³ Tiwari, Satyam. (19 April 2022). Roorkee: Violence erupts on Hanuman Jayanti, police parks bulldozers in Muslim-dominated village. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/Roorkee-Violence-Erupts-Hanuman-Jayanti-Police-Parks-Bulldozers-Muslim-Dominated-Village> [27 June 2022].

⁶¹⁴ Ibid

⁶¹⁵ Das, Kalyan. (21 April 2022). ‘Seer’ stopped from going to violence-affected village in Uttarakhand. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/seer-stopped-from-going-to-violence-affected-village/articleshow/90968075.cms> [27 June 2022].

⁶¹⁶ Das, Kalyan. (21 April 2022). ‘Seer’ stopped from going to violence-affected village in Uttarakhand. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/seer-stopped-from-going-to-violence-affected-village/articleshow/90968075.cms> [27 June 2022].

completely legal. Till now, bulldozers have been used in three places — Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar and Haldwani,” on Thursday, 21 April.⁶¹⁷

On 9 May, The Print reported that officials in multiple districts (Uddham Singh Nagar, Nainital, and Haridwar) were gearing up to conduct “anti-encroachment” drives to demolish “illegal” structures, in order to “get” CM Dhama back into the state legislature, in the by-election slated for 31 May which he was contesting from Chmpawat district.⁶¹⁸

On 22nd May at a function in New Delhi in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the launch of Rashtriya Swanservak Sangh’s magazines ‘Panchjanya’ and ‘Organizer’, CM Dhama said, “The government will not tolerate encroachments of its land and action will be taken against these mazars.” The same report dated 17 June, that is after CM Dhama won the election to the state legislature, also quotes an official of the forest department as saying, “This is the beginning of a big task taken up by the government. More is yet to come. It’s being done in tune with the announcement made by the CM in Delhi. Currently, the forest department has been asked to conduct the survey as such religious structures are mostly located inside forest areas... Illegal mazars and mosques constructed on other government land would also be addressed in the coming days.”⁶¹⁹ In spite of the headline mentioning churches and temples too, there is no mention of religious structures other than those of the Muslim community in the quote by the CM or the forest department official.

Media Portrayal

The media reportage of the communal violence in Uttarakhand was almost indistinguishable from that regarding similar incidents in other states. Just as a report from Goa had said that the stone pelting on a Ram Navami shobha yatra there had been “suddenly” pelted with stones (Republic World)⁶²⁰, ABP Ganga also reported that a Hanuman Jayanti shobha yatra was pelted with stones “suddenly” (“achanak hi”).⁶²¹ The causative factors in the situation such as the deliberately provocative lewd songs, anti-Muslim sloganeering were purposefully left out of the picture.

One of the headlines on Anjana Om Kashyap’s show (Aaj Tak) was: “who is preparing the blueprint for violence?” (“hinsa ka blueprint kaun tayyar kar raha hai?”),⁶²² implying that the stone pelting of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions was a series of orchestrated events rather than localised responses to deliberate provocation. The headlines in all these news shows are along the lines of: “Who is instigating violence on Ram Navami?” which shows a clear

⁶¹⁷ Pandey, Neelam. (22 April 2022). Big hit with BJP, bulldozers now rolling in Gujarat & Uttarakhand, coming soon to Karnataka. The Print. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/politics/big-hit-with-bjp-bulldozers-now-rolling-in-gujarat-uttarakhand-coming-soon-to-karnataka/926715/> [7 July 2022].

⁶¹⁸ Singh, Prithviraj. (9 May 2022). Uttarakhand plans bulldozer drive after bypoll to get CM Dhama back into assembly. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/governance/uttarakhand-plans-bulldozer-drive-after-bypoll-to-get-cm-dhama-back-into-assembly/947728/> [7 July 2022].

⁶¹⁹ Ibid

⁶²⁰ Republic World. (11 April 202). *Communal Violence Reported During Ram Navami Processions Across 5 States, Vehicles & Shops Damaged* [Video]. Youtube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlT_gw1o_SQ.

⁶²¹ ABP Ganga. (17 April 2022). *Breaking : रुड़की में हनुमान जयंती पर निकाली शोभायात्रा पर पथराव!! | Hindi News* [Video]. Youtube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_skdqjPogE.

⁶²² Aaj Tak HD. (24 April 2022). *Halla Bol | Anjana Om Kashyap | Festivals | Religious Violence | Debate Show | Latest News | Hindi* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pd9CERNdJl>.

attempt to (1) assign blame, (2) establish a pattern, implying planning and conspiracy, and (3) through the withholding of crucial information and heavily biased reportage, malign the Muslim community as aggressors. This was seen in the debates in ABP News⁶²³, Times Now^{624 625}, Republic World⁶²⁶, News Nation⁶²⁷, and CNN News 18⁶²⁸.

Hence, coverage by mainstream TV channels clearly paints the minority community involved as unnecessarily aggressive, sectarian, or intolerant who would not let a simple “celebration” take place and are disallowing the aggrieved / oppressed Hindu community from practicing their faith while also implying that a conspiracy is in place, echoing the “Hindu khatre mein hai” narrative of the Hindi right wing.

⁶²³ ABP News Bureau. (11 April 2022). *Communal Clashes on Ram Navami: How did violence erupt? | Hoonkar* [Video]. ABPLive. <https://news.abplive.com/tv-show/hoonkar/communal-clashes-on-ram-navami-how-did-violence-erupt-hoonkar-11-april-2022-1525299>.

⁶²⁴ Times Now. (11 April 2022). *Ram Navami Violence | Are People Assaulted For Following Their Religion? | The Newshour Debate* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvF6Ob8Vh1g>.

⁶²⁵ Ibid

⁶²⁶ Republic World. (11 April 2022). *Ram Navami Violence in 6 states; Who Is Trying To Ignite Communal Spark? | Arnab Goswami Debates* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jUxtPOjMk4>.

⁶²⁷ News Nation. (11 April 2022). *Ramnavmi Violence News: महाराष्ट्र के मालवणी में रामनवमी उत्सव में बवाल | Ramnavmi | Mumbai* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud96b6tfiPQ>.

⁶²⁸ CNN-News 18. (11 April 2022). *Ram Navami Violence | Ram Navmi Clash | JNU Violence | Mumbai Violence | MP Violence | CNN News18* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTW5Z5WuqAA>.

8. RAJASTHAN

Background

As per census 2011, Karauli district has a total population of 14,58,248, out of which Scheduled Tribes stand at 22.3% and Muslims constitute a meagre 5.59%⁶²⁹. According to one report, locals and activists claim that except for a few skirmishes in 2006 and once in 2012, Karauli has never witnessed any large scale communal violence as it happened on 02 April 2022⁶³⁰. Dr Sanjay Madhav, State committee member of the CPI(M) who led a fact-finding committee in the area told Frontline that barring a few incidents in the past, this area has not witnessed violence and arson on this level, stating “Communities have been known to live alongside peacefully. The shops and homes of minority and majority communities are located side by side. It is a mixed population that lives in the narrow lanes of the town”⁶³¹. Akhilesh Parashar, a 26-year-old engineering graduate, also resonated the same – “I live in a Muslim-majority area...There was harmony between the two communities. There have been fights before but nothing of this scale”⁶³².

There are just two houses of Koli families (a caste falling under Scheduled Caste) in the Muslim dominated *basti* of Karauli⁶³³. One of them belongs to Jagdish, who explains the cordial relationship that has existed between the two communities, despite a few communal conflicts broke in the past in the neighbouring areas, “*Abb dekho ye Koliyon ke ghar hain humaare do. Humein koi tareeqe ki pareshaani nahin aati hai yahan par, hum bhaichaare ke saath rehte hain. 2006 mein bhi dange huye they, tab bhi humein koi pareshaani nahin aayi thi. Tab bhi hum kahin bhaagte nahin hain, jaate nahin hain*” (See there are only two families of Koli’s here. We do not face any kind of issues here. We live together with much brotherhood. In 2006 too when riots broke out, we did not face any issues, nor did we run anywhere out of fear).⁶³⁴

Days before the large-scale violence that erupted across at least 9 Indian states on Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti, similar tactics of mobilisation and instigation can be observed from

⁶²⁹ Census India. Retrieved from <https://www.censusindia.co.in/district/karauli-district-rajasthan-107> [03 June 2022].

⁶³⁰ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

⁶³¹ Ibid

⁶³² Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & ‘hidden assault’ - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

⁶³³ The Wire. (07 April 2022). *Youtube*. Karauli: In Rajasthan Riot Aftermath, Police Accused of Assaulting Muslim Minor. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWtNQ3G7gro> [09 June 2022].

⁶³⁴ Ibid

Rajasthan – beginning in Karauli. Although multiple states including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab all saw rallies by Hindutva groups on 2nd April to mark the Hindu New Year, distributing saffron flags, the rally in Karauli, Rajasthan escalated into vandalism, looting and arson mostly targeting Muslim-owned businesses and property.⁶³⁵ At least 35 persons were reportedly injured during the violence, out of whom 25 were discharged from hospitals after treatment.⁶³⁶ Nine people were admitted to the Karauli district hospital, while one person has been admitted to the Sawai Man Singh Hospital in Jaipur.

In the weeks following the events in Karauli, things remained tense in the state, with violence instigated against a Muslim community in Jodhpur after they put up an Eid flag which is put up every year; after which further communal violence took place in Bhilwara and Udaipur as well.⁶³⁷ Internet services were snapped in the districts for several days following each incident.⁶³⁸

Sequence of events

On the occasion of *Hindu Nav Samvatsar* (Hindu New Year), a bike rally was organised by 10-15 Hindutva organisations – including Hindu outfits like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Bajrang Dal, and Sewa Bharti⁶⁴⁰. According to the locals, a route was pre-decided and approved in a peace committee held on 31 March 2022 by the district administration i.e., via Collector Circle, Hindu Gate, Phoota Kot and Hatwara Bazar, latter two being the Muslim-majority areas^{641;642}. The bike rally began at 4 pm in front of the Karauli Collectorate, accompanied by police vehicles and was taken out through the town by “400-500 persons on 200-215 bikes” (as mentioned in the FIR)^{643;644}. As soon as the rally reached the T-Point connecting the lanes of Phoota Kot and Hatwara Bazar, i.e., near the Minharan Masjid, the clashes broke out⁶⁴⁵. When the

⁶³⁵ Staff, S. (2022, April 3). Hindutva groups hold rallies, ask people to hoist saffron flags to mark Hindu New Year. *Scroll.In*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1021002/hindutva-groups-hold-rallies-ask-people-to-hoist-saffron-flags-to-mark-hindu-new-year> [12 July 2022]

⁶³⁶ Ibid

⁶³⁷ Staff, S. (2022b, May 3). Fresh communal clashes in Jodhpur on Eid, curfew imposed. *Scroll.In*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1023154/communal-clashes-break-out-in-jodhpur-over-hoisting-of-religious-flag-four-police-officials-injured> [12 July 2022]

⁶³⁸ Ibid

⁶³⁹ Kakvi, K. (2022, July 5). MP: In Right-Wing Protests Against Udaipur Murder, Calls for Violence Against Muslims. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-udaipur-protests-violence-threats> [12 July 2022]

⁶⁴⁰ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & ‘hidden assault’ - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁴¹ Ibid

⁶⁴² Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁴³ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

⁶⁴⁴ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

⁶⁴⁵ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & ‘hidden assault’ - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

rally reached these Muslim-majority areas, they began raising provocative slogans and playing songs with incendiary lyrics that call for violence against Muslims.⁶⁴⁶ Objection to these actions devolved into what are being called communal clashes. According to the locals, the crowd raised slogans such as “*Topi wala bhi Jai Shri Ram bolega* (One wearing the skull cap will also chant Jai Shri Ram)”⁶⁴⁷. There have been videos taken right before the violence that corroborate such claims and show that along with incendiary sloganeering, swords were being brandished by members of the Hindutva rally⁶⁴⁸. What then followed was targeted violence against Muslims in the area, with vandalising, looting, and burning down the properties and businesses belonging to them. 59 persons suffered property losses in the violence, and a total of 43 properties, including shops belonging to Muslims, and five others belonging to Hindus, were set on fire⁶⁴⁹.

According to another report compiled by Frontline, the *Nav Samvatsar* “*Shobha Yatra*” taken out by around 500 people on bikes was marked by objectionable songs and communal slogan – a modus operandi strangely resembling incidents reported from other parts of the country later in the month. The provocation led to reactions by the affected community. Nearly 80 shops and houses were looted or vandalised, most of them belonging to the minority community.⁶⁵⁰

The nature of songs and slogans blasted on loudspeakers at the rally in Karauli speak volumes of the widespread acceptance of militant Hindutva sentiment. Among other things, their lyrics speak of the need to show Muslims their place by swords and not words, they call for those who don’t say Jai Shri Ram to be sent to their graves, Hindus creating a new history for themselves by entering their enemies’ homes and cutting off their heads.⁶⁵¹

Two fact-finding teams that visited Karauli, one led by a State-level delegation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the other by the National Confederation of Human Rights Organisations (NCHRO), concluded that the violence was premeditated. The head of the first fact-finding team, CPI(M) member Dr Sanjay Madhav pointed out that the call to take out rallies to observe the Hindu New Year was issued throughout the State and so the local administrations had ample time to prevent any mishap, that the administration giving permission for the Shobha Yatra through the bylanes would have known about the assembly of weapons as well as the general danger of such a procession through narrow bylanes housing a mixed population.⁶⁵² They went on to state that the manner in which establishments and shops belonging to minority

⁶⁴⁶ Iyer, A. (2022, April 12). ‘The day my blood boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. Scroll.In. <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [01 June 2022]

⁶⁴⁷ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

⁶⁴⁸ Pragya ka Panna (04 April 2022). *Youtube*. टोपी वाला भी सिर झुकाकर जय श्रीराम बोलेगा | Gorakhpur Mandir Attack | Yati Narsinghanand Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en4le3Z45ag> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁴⁹ Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁵⁰ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

⁶⁵¹ Iyer, A. (2022, April 12). ‘The day my blood boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. Scroll.In. <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [01 June 2022]

⁶⁵² Ibid

community members were singled out for arson indicated that the incident was planned and not a retaliatory measure to stone throwing – but their actions harmed the interests of the majority community members too as their shops and houses lay adjacent to that of their Muslim neighbours.

According to Ansar Indori, advocate and national secretary of the NCHRO, properties worth Rs.2 crore have been destroyed in the violence as the shops were first looted and then set on fire, with the arsonists using inflammable chemicals to target the shops.⁶⁵³ This data coupled with Indori’s fact-finding report shows that the destruction has been a targeted one and victims’ testimonies corroborate this.

Losses incurred

Sayed (43), a tailor by profession who has been running his tailoring shop for the last 15 years, said the miscreants first looted his shop and then set it on fire, leaving him with a loss of approximately Rs. 6 lakh⁶⁵⁴. However, there was a shop of one Giriraj, right next to Sayeed’s, which has not suffered any damage⁶⁵⁵. The fact that none of the shops had any sort of name plates that would reflect their names and religion shows that Sayeed’s shop was marked by the rioters well in advance⁶⁵⁶. Sayeed is disturbed as he has taken loan for his shop and the state government has not announced any compensation plan so far⁶⁵⁷.

Anjum Karaulbi’s runs a readymade garment shop and his brother runs a footwear shop, both of which got destroyed in the violence⁶⁵⁸. Similarly, Fakhruddin Anjum (72), said, “Miscreants selectively targeted Muslim shops. Rioters broke open the locks of the shops in police presence. They first looted the goods and then burnt them. All this happened in presence of the police”⁶⁵⁹. Fakhruddin too has suffered a loss of Rs. 16 lakh – “Police imposed a curfew and asked us to remain indoors. And then our shops were burnt. This happened after imposition of curfew”⁶⁶⁰.

‘Muskan Bangles’, run by 22-year-old Arbaz Khan was another shop that has been completely destroyed in the violence⁶⁶¹. The shop is located on the ground floor of a three-storey building, the owner of whose is a Hindu family who has moved to Mumbai years ago and has been given

⁶⁵³ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

⁶⁵⁴ Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid

⁶⁵⁸ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & ‘hidden assault’ - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁵⁹ Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶⁶¹ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & ‘hidden assault’ - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

on rent to Khan in 2010 for Rs 5,000 a month⁶⁶². Khan was present at the shop along with his 12-year-old brother, father, and mother when 8-9 men knocked at his shop and pulled him out. “They had sticks in their hands and warned us to leave the area if we wanted to stay alive. I held my younger brother and we ran for our lives,” he said.⁶⁶³ Since he lives right across the street, his house was also targeted. And, ever since then, the family has been living the nearby fields struggling to survive – “They have burned down my father’s life savings. We have no food and water...We have never seen such a thing here. There has always been a sentiment of brotherhood...Now we pay 17,000 a month and the lease runs for the whole year, so all the money’s gone now. How will we survive? What will we eat?”⁶⁶⁴.

Sabir had a garage shop in the locality but got completely charred in the violence. His shop was first looted and then set on fire, leading to a total loss of around 20-25 lakhs has a similar ordeal to share,

“RSS-Bajrang Dal ke log, jo bhi samjhein aap un ko, naaron ke peeche ladaai-jhagda ho gaya wahan marke mein. Uske baad seedha, wahan se 2-3 kilometres door mere garage par aa kar, mere garage ko aag laga di.” (After the violence broke out over sloganeering in the market, RSS-Bajrang Dal people, whatever you may call them, targeted and destroyed my shop which is situated around 2-3 kilometres away from the locus of violence).⁶⁶⁵

He claims that his shop was specifically targeted due to his religious identity as there were other garage shops in the same area, which did not face any destruction, stating “*Aur bhi garage hain wahan, us mein aag nagin lagaayi, Musalmaan ka e hi garage hain, us mein dhoondh ke aag lagaayi.*” (There were other garages also, but they were not destroyed. There was only one garage that belonged to Muslims, i.e., mine that was destroyed).⁶⁶⁶

Another shop owner Rizwan resonates the same claim whose shop by the name Rizwan claims the same, “*Musalmano ki dukaanon mein naam dekh dekh ke aag lagaayi hai*” (They targeted shops with Muslim names on the boards and burnt them).⁶⁶⁷ According to Rizwan, he had cash and goods worth 8-10 Lakhs, which was first looted and then set ablaze by the rioters⁶⁶⁸.

Munni who had a bangle shop in the area was also looted and destroyed, “We left at 6 p.m. after offering the namaz. We were afraid, we did not return until 8 p.m. A Brahmin’s son named Babloo broke into my shop. I had around 50 thousand cash and goods worth 3-4 thousand. He looted the *galla* (money box). I am a widow from the past 35 years, now my age is 70. I would have burnt alive, had I stayed here during the violence. I have suffered a loss of around 2-3 Lakhs”⁶⁶⁹.

Kasim who also owns a shop in the area said, “100-150 goons came to the market and targeted our shops. They looted my shop. I had around 60-70 thousand cash in my shop and goods like petha, sugar, namkeen (snacks). All the cash was looted and bags of sugar were taken away too.

⁶⁶² Ibid

⁶⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁶⁵ The Wire. (07 April 2022). *Youtube*. Karauli: In Rajasthan Riot Aftermath, Police Accused of Assaulting Muslim Minor. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWtNQ3G7gro> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁶⁷ Article 14 (21 April 2022). *Twitter*. <https://twitter.com/Article14live/status/1517036675259826176> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid

A lot it was thrown outside and then the shop was set on fire⁶⁷⁰. He also mentioned that each one of them had weapons in their hands, carrying sticks, swords and pistols.⁶⁷¹

According to reports, a bitterness has settled in amongst Hindu-Muslim relations in the area, manifesting in actions such as economic boycotts of Muslims. The manager of a local hotel called Akash while bragging about not having employed Muslim employees in his hotel said that two Hindu landlords who had rented out shop to Muslims had asked them to vacate⁶⁷². Another 28-year-old had also stopped employing Muslim taxi drivers said “The equation between Hindus and Muslims is over”⁶⁷³.

More rallies that were planned for Ram Navami on 10 April 2022 were foiled by the district administration⁶⁷⁴. 65-year-old Keshav Singh Naruka, the deputy secretary of Rajasthan’s Vidya Bharti (education wing, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) who had claimed to make the Nav Samvatsar rally huge by publicising it on social media said more rallies were being lined up in future in Karauli district, “How can they bully us so that we do not organise a rally? Just because there is a Congress government, should we not have a rally? I told the collector – call whoever you want, even the army, I will have the rally”⁶⁷⁵. Repeated calls by the administration and notices issued to “kattar” Hindu youth made Naruka reluctantly cancel his plans, however he seemed adamant to organise similar rallies for future, stating directly – But that does not mean we will not do a rally the next time there is a Hindu festival”⁶⁷⁶.

Roles and Response of State Actors

The violence that broke out on 02 April 2022 was controlled the police by imposition of curfew.⁶⁷⁷ Mobile internet services were also suspended to curb the spread of rumours and police personnel were deployed in heavy numbers to maintain peace and along with four Indian Police Service officers⁶⁷⁸. However, these measures must be seen in light of the police’s role during the violence.

The FIR lodged by Karauli Police Station SHO Rameshwar Dayal Meena, stated that the Nav Samvatsar procession was taken by “400-500 persons on 200-215 bikes” along with sloganeering on ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and songs “of Hindu organisations”⁶⁷⁹. The Karauli Superintendent of Police

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid

⁶⁷¹ Ibid

⁶⁷² Iyer, A. (12 April 2022). ‘The Day My Blood Boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁷³ Ibid

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid

⁶⁷⁶ Iyer, A. (12 April 2022). ‘The Day My Blood Boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁷⁷ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

⁶⁷⁸ Scroll Staff. (03 April 2022). Hindutva groups hold rallies, ask people to hoist saffron flags to Mark Hindu new year. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1021002/hindutva-groups-hold-rallies-ask-people-to-hoist-saffron-flags-to-mark-hindu-new-year> [10 June 2022].

⁶⁷⁹ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

Shailendra Singh Indoliya and district collector Rajendra Singh Sekhawat claimed that the 02 April 2022 Nav Samvatsar rally did not have permission for playing loud music⁶⁸⁰. According to the *Scroll.in*, sub-district magistrate's letter read "DJ and loud speakers should not be used"⁶⁸¹. However, eyewitness accounts as well as videos that surfaced online show music on DJ was played and offensive slogans were also raised in front of the mosque⁶⁸². This was also conceded by Director General of Police (DGP) Mohanlal Lather in the media briefings that the procession's objectionable songs and sloganeering was the reason for violence to break out.⁶⁸³

Despite these after-the-fact acknowledgements, loud music was played by DJs and provocative sloganeering was carried out despite police officials presence in the rally both in plain clothes and in uniform who did not stop all of this from happening for over three hours – thereby lending tacit support.⁶⁸⁴ Whilst the SP, Indoliya, said that they would look into it, district collector Sekhawat said he doubted the police personnel had even read the permission letter.⁶⁸⁵ After the violence, the administration promised to tighten the rules, including sharing scripts of the songs with the administration days before the event in question.⁶⁸⁶

Till 08 April 2022, 23 people have been arrested so far out of the 44 identified accused, as confirmed by DGP Lather in a press conference and a total of 10 FIRs have been registered.⁶⁸⁷ However, more arrests and FIRs were lodged and the toll increased to 14 FIRs as filed by the Muslims which named the accused involved in the targeting of Muslims and their properties, plus 07 FIRs as filed by Hindus naming Muslims as accused⁶⁸⁸. On the basis of these FIRs a total of 30 people have been arrested, out of which 20 are Muslims⁶⁸⁹.

An FIR was filed a day after the violence i.e., on 03 April 2022 under several sections of the IPC: Sections 332 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty); 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty); 307 (attempt to murder); 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings); 147 (rioting), 392 (robbery), 336 (endangering life or personal safety of others)⁶⁹⁰. According to the Police sources

2022].

⁶⁸⁰ Iyer, A. (12 April 2022). 'The Day My Blood Boils': How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan's Karauli. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁸¹ Ibid

⁶⁸² Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁸³ Ibid

⁶⁸⁴ Iyer, A. (12 April 2022). 'The Day My Blood Boils': How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan's Karauli. *The Scroll.in*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid

⁶⁸⁷ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

⁶⁸⁸ Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid

⁶⁹⁰ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & 'hidden assault' - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the->

22 bikes 13 shops — 11 belonging to Muslims and two belonging to the Dalit ‘Khatiks’ — were damaged and subjected to arson in the violence⁶⁹¹.

However, this information must be contextualised with the testimonies of people who alleged that Muslim properties were violently targeted and set ablaze, along with police officers conceding to the fact provocative sloganeering and songs were the catalyst for the violence.⁶⁹²

A fact-finding team raised questions the role of police and the state administration in the violence comprising representatives from various organisations – Forum for Democracy and Communal Amity (FDCA), Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), Rajasthan Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Rajasthan Nagarik Manch and Haryana Jan Adhikar Manch⁶⁹³.

The team had multiple observations and demands arising from their fact-finding reports:

The team noted that the rally stayed in the Muslim area for quite long while raising anti-Muslim and offensive slogans⁶⁹⁴.

Raising of provocative slogans by the procession participants does not find its mention in the FIRs⁶⁹⁵.

Similarly, names of Muslims involved in stone-throwing have been mentioned in the FIR, but names of those involved in torching of the Muslim-owned shops and other properties does not find similar mentions⁶⁹⁶.

Police remained a mute spectator and did not take prompt action when the miscreants were looting and burning the Muslim shops in their presence⁶⁹⁷.

The report noted that the police did not implement the curfew orders properly because there have been incidents of miscreants set ablaze Muslim-owned shops even during the curfew period⁶⁹⁸.

Most importantly, Sahib Singh and Raja Ram Gurjar of the Hindu Sena, chief organisers of the procession, were not arrested so far⁶⁹⁹. According to the Indian Express, both Rajaram Gurjar (a former Karauli Municipal Council chairperson) and his wife Soumya Gurjar (who is the mayor of Jaipur), are Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and “are no strangers to controversies” and have

spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/ [09 June 2022].

⁶⁹¹ Ibid

⁶⁹² Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

⁶⁹³ Ibid

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid

been accused in corruption cases⁷⁰⁰. According to DGP Lather, Rajaram's role in the communal riot "is being investigated" but there is no further information yet.⁷⁰¹

Congress spokesperson Swarnim Chaturvedi said "BJP should answer why, despite Rajaram being named in so many cases, the party continues to reward him, let alone take an action against him"⁷⁰². Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot accused the BJP of communalising the issue and hinted that after the visit of BJP president J P Nadda to Sawai Madhopur, an area adjacent to Karauli, the violence broke out in the area⁷⁰³, "*Ye aag lagane ke liye aate hain, poore desh mein aag laga rahe hain. Aaye, aag lag gayi*" (They come to light the fires, they are setting the entire country on fire. [He] came, and the fires were lit)" He added that BJP was "already in election mode in Rajasthan"⁷⁰⁴.

Experts have indicated that since in the eastern tribal belt of Rajasthan BJP had suffered major defeats in the 2018 Assembly election, party president JP Nadda through his two-day trip to tribal-dominated region of Sawai Madhopur in the state aims at energise the party workers in the five districts – Karauli, Dholpur, Sawai Madhopur, Dausa and Bharatpur – of the region⁷⁰⁵.

The fact-finding team led by a State-level delegation of the CPI(M), believe that multiple visits by BJP national president J.P. Nadda to eastern Rajasthan in recent weeks and his exhortations to strengthen the party in the region could have led to the recent events in Karauli. "When they say they have to strengthen the party, they indicate polarisation is the need of the hour," said Sanjay Madhav, CPI(M) member.⁷⁰⁶

On 03 April 2022, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot reportedly held a high-level meeting on Karauli, in which the officials were asked to ensure that no such events occur in future⁷⁰⁷. Chief Secretary Usha Sharma too held a meeting with police officials as well as the district officials⁷⁰⁸.

There are numerous reports of police brutality. The fact-finding reports accused the police of communal and religious bias as there have been testimonies of under-aged Muslims, that were arrested on the pretext of connection with riots being physically assaulted and harassed at the hands of the police⁷⁰⁹.

⁷⁰⁰ Sabrang India. (09 April 2022). Rajasthan: All you need to know about the karauli violence. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/rajasthan-all-you-need-know-about-karauli-violence> [10 June 2022].

⁷⁰¹ Ibid

⁷⁰² Ibid

⁷⁰³ Ibid

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid

⁷⁰⁵ Asnani, R. (03 April 2022). Nadda on tribal-connect campaign to Wrest Congress Bastion in Rajasthan. *New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/2022/apr/03/nadda-on-tribal-connect-campaign-to-wrest-cong-bastion-in-rajasthan-2437298.html> [12 June 2022].

⁷⁰⁶ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

⁷⁰⁷ Khan, H. (11 April 2022). Ram Navami: Karauli in mind, Gehlot Govt left little to chance. *Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/jaipur/ram-navami-karauli-ashok-gehlot-7864843/> [10 June 2022].

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid

⁷⁰⁹ Indiatomorrow, A. (18 April 2022). Was anti-Muslim violence in Karauli in Rajasthan pre-planned? *India Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://indiatomorrow.net/2022/04/16/was-anti-muslim-violence-in-karauli-in-rajasthan-pre-planned/> [09 June 2022].

According to *The Wire* journalist who visited violence-hit Karauli, multiple Muslim families have complaints about their minor sons being tormented by the police while in lockup⁷¹⁰. One such family that lived near Sainath Khidkiya, hoped for justice for their 14-year-old boy who was allegedly beaten up by the Rajasthan Police in the lockup and tortured the whole night. His father Pappu recalled, “Police arrested my son and beat him the whole night.. [Police] arrested him saying that they merely wanted to talk, but they had rather beaten him up”⁷¹¹. According to his video testimony, “Police personnel came from Sadar police station claiming that they will leave me after recording my statement. Rather they beat me up after reaching the station. They asked me if I have a problem in saying Jai Shree Ram. Then they asked if I was at the rally. To which I said no, I was not a part of the rally and had gone to buy vegetables. Then they gave me 10 lashes at my hands and 10 on behind.”⁷¹²

He added, “I was arrested at night and was beaten up all night till 3-4 a.m. At the time of Fajr (around 5 a.m.), I told them that I wanted to go to the toilet. They lashed out at me”.

The police even instructed him to change his age to 21 or 22 years old, “*Maine apni umr 17 bataayi toh kehne lage ke 21-22 bata*” (when I told him that I am 17 years old, they told me to rather tell my age 21 or 22).⁷¹³ Moreover, according to the family, he was also threatened to not speak about the incident to anyone.⁷¹⁴

Another 18-year-old, Danish, who lives near Wazirpur Gate, described a similar ordeal about how he was arrested and beaten up in police custody.⁷¹⁵ The pattern was the same, the police turned up at their house without an arrest warrant saying that they merely wanted to talk, but instead beat him up and, on telling them that his age at around 17 or 18 years old, he was again beaten up and intimidated to change his age to 20-21 years old. “When I was screaming in pain and prompted Allah, I was again beaten up and asked to go to Pakistan”.⁷¹⁶

His family told *The Wire*, “The police said what’s stopping you from saying Jai Shree Ram?” and that the police threatened the boy with incarceration, “*Tumhe toh 20-20 saal ki saza karwaayenge, aise thodi chorh denge. Bacchon ko itna daraaya, dhamkaaya*” (We won’t leave you and will incarcerate you for 20 years. The children were threatened so much).⁷¹⁷

Media Portrayal

The narrative built around the events in Rajasthan fit right into the kind of Hindutva campaigns they promote. It was covered as a communal clash where the Muslims were portrayed as the

⁷¹⁰ Ali, Y. (08 April 2022). Watch: ‘scared but hoping for Justice’: Families share their ordeal after Karauli riots. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/watch-in-rajasthans-karauli-police-accused-of-assaulting-muslim-minor> [09 June 2022].

⁷¹¹ Ibid

⁷¹² The Wire. (07 April 2022). *Youtube*. Karauli: In Rajasthan Riot Aftermath, Police Accused of Assaulting Muslim Minor. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWtNQ3G7gro> [09 June 2022].

⁷¹³ Ibid

⁷¹⁴ Ali, Y. (08 April 2022). Watch: ‘scared but hoping for Justice’: Families share their ordeal after Karauli riots. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/watch-in-rajasthans-karauli-police-accused-of-assaulting-muslim-minor> [09 June 2022].

⁷¹⁵ Ibid

⁷¹⁶ Ibid

⁷¹⁷ Ibid

prime accused and Hindus as the prime victims who have been reprimanded for celebrating their festivals. For instance, Zee Hindustan ran such tickers while covering the news, “*Hindu manaaye tyohaar toh patthar se karenge prahaar*” (if Hindus celebrate their festivals, they will be attacked with stones).⁷¹⁸

“*Shobhayatra se nafrat toh dukaano mein lagaayenge aag?*” (Hate for Shobhayatra, so will they burn down the shops?).⁷¹⁹

News Nation too ran such tickers that demonised the Muslims and their places of worship, by using the term *Jihadi* for them, blaming them entirely for the riots, “*Dangon ke kitne hathiyaar, jihaadiyon ne kiye they tayyar*” (How many weapons did Jihadi (Muslims) had prepared).⁷²⁰ “*Masjid ya Makaan...har jagah dange ka samaan*” (Both Mosque and houses had weapons for riots).⁷²¹

Further, the communal violence broke out in a non-BJP-ruled state but rather a Congress-ruled state which was linked to an angle of appeasement of Muslims as the cause of the violence. For instance Zee Hindustan ran this ticker while covering the news, “*Rajasthan mein khuli tushtikaran ki dukaan?*” (open polarisation milieu in Rajasthan?).⁷²²

Like other states, the reportage began from the point where the stone pelting had begun, neglecting the context and the events like hateful sloganeering and songs preceding it. The entire narrative, thus, was woven around how the stone pelting started out of nowhere and was the prime cause of the riots. News Nation reported, “*Bike rally par pathraav hua aur kuch hi ghanto mein poora ilaaqa upadrav ki chapet mein aa gaya*” (Stone pelting on bike rally leads to rioting in the entire area).⁷²³

“*Iss baar nav varsh rally par phoolon ki jagah pathar barse*” (this time stones were pelted at the Hindu New Year’s rally instead of flowers).⁷²⁴ Despite this subtle acknowledgement that the stone pelting seemed to be a first time event, the news report did not venture into the nuances or causes of this odd event.

“*Rally muslim bahul ilaaqe se guzar rahi thi jab hi masjid ke paas pahuchte hi logo ne makaan ki chhaton se pathraav shuru kar diya*” (Rally was passing through muslim populated area when people started pelting stones from terrace).⁷²⁵

⁷¹⁸ Zee Hindustan. (04 April 2022). Youtube. हिंदुओं की शोभायात्रा में Violence के बाद Karauli में लगा Curfew | Ashok Gehlot | Rajasthan | Owaisi Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnKETmN2xR4> [09 June 2022].

⁷¹⁹ Ibid

⁷²⁰ News Nation. (05 April 2022). Youtube. Rajasthan News : करौली में दिल्ली दंगों जैसी साज़िश...हिंसा का SIMI कनेक्शन आया सामने | Karauli. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er7cl61tXN8> [09 June 2022].

⁷²¹ Ibid

⁷²² Zee Hindustan. (04 April 2022). Youtube. हिंदुओं की शोभायात्रा में Violence के बाद Karauli में लगा Curfew | Ashok Gehlot | Rajasthan | Owaisi Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnKETmN2xR4> [09 June 2022].

⁷²³ News Nation. (04 April 2022). Youtube. Karauli News | Karauli हिंसा के लिए जिम्मेदार कौन? Violence In Karauli | Rajasthan News Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwiS78OYXxY> [10 June 2022].

⁷²⁴ News Nation. (05 April 2022). Youtube. Rajasthan News : करौली में दिल्ली दंगों जैसी साज़िश...हिंसा का SIMI कनेक्शन आया सामने | Karauli. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er7cl61tXN8> [09 June 2022].

⁷²⁵ Ibid

The victims who were interviewed were also only Hindus, sharing their ordeal, enforcing the one-sided nature of mainstream reportage. Republic TV interacted with Hindu alleged victims, who claimed that Muslims started the violence with weapons and petrol bombs⁷²⁶.

However, the most anti-Muslim, hate-fuelled coverage, can be attributed to Aman Chopra of News18, who demonised Muslim populated areas, mirrored this violence with that to February 2020 North-East Delhi's communal riots, and spread a few statements that did not exactly corroborate with the Police's claims, all in a single segment.⁷²⁷ Few such tickers that demonised Muslim-majority areas were:

“Yahan desh mein aise mohalle hain, jahan Hinduyon ki no entry hai kya!?” (In this country there are areas/colonies where Hindus are not allowed).⁷²⁸

“Wo mohalle, jahan Hinduyon ka jaana jaan-leva hai” (those areas where entry of Hindus could be life threatening).⁷²⁹

“Hinduyon ko Muslim ilaaqon mein shobha yatra nikaalne ki bade qeemat chukaani padi” (Hindus had to pay a big price for taking of the Shibhayatra in Muslim areas).⁷³⁰

At one time, the screen was divided into two comparing the Karauli violence with February 2020 North-East Delhi's communal riots showing pictures of alleged petrol bombs found at Aam Aadmi Party MLA Tahir Hussain, with anchor Aman Chopra saying in the background, *“Patthar ki silliyon pehle se chhaton par ikhatta huye”* (stone slabs were gathered at the terrace beforehand).⁷³¹ *“ye February 2020 Delhi model tha”* (this is February 2020 Delhi model).⁷³²

This comparison was also drawn by News Nation as displayed on of their tickers, *“Karauli mein Dilli dangon jaisi saazish”* (Delhi-like riots in Karauli as well).⁷³³ He called these riots a pre-planned conspiracy of Muslims against Hindus, *“Yahan par bhi chhaton par dangon ki planning ki gayi thi. Chhat par gulel, acid, petrol bomb ikhatta kiye gaye they”* (Here also the planning of riots was carried out).⁷³⁴

However, the theory of riots being a pre-planned conspiracy has been rejected by top officers of Rajasthan Police, who stated “These stone slabs are already in their homes”... “It doesn't appear that they collected it to throw at the people in the rally”.⁷³⁵

⁷²⁶ Republic Bharat. (07 April 2022). Youtube. Karauli Violence: साथ पढ़ने वालों ने ही मुझे मारा, घायल हुए शख्स ने की Republic Media से बात. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLHnoS0b3xQ> [08 June 2022].

⁷²⁷ News18 India. (04 April 2022). Youtube. Karauli Violence: 'शोभायात्रा' पर मुस्लिम बहुल इलाके में पथराव से भड़की हिंसा Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AokEVPQMhM> [09 June 2022].

⁷²⁸ Ibid

⁷²⁹ Ibid

⁷³⁰ Ibid

⁷³¹ Ibid

⁷³² Ibid

⁷³³ News Nation. (05 April 2022). Youtube. Rajasthan News : करौली में दिल्ली दंगों जैसी साज़िश...हिंसा का SIMI कनेक्शन आया सामने | Karauli. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er7cl61tXN8> [09 June 2022].

⁷³⁴ News18 India. (04 April 2022). Youtube. Karauli Violence: 'शोभायात्रा' पर मुस्लिम बहुल इलाके में पथराव से भड़की हिंसा Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AokEVPQMhM> [09 June 2022].

⁷³⁵ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & 'hidden assault' - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the->

Chopra further added that, "Chhaton se bataaya jaa raha hai ke petrol bomb phenke gaye" (petrol bombs were hurled too).⁷³⁶ This too has been rejected by both Shekhawat and Karauli police.⁷³⁷

According to the NHCRO fact-finding report, sections of the media also tried to link the Popular Front of India (PFI) to the violence, regardless of the State PFI president stating that the organisation did not have a unit or members in Karauli.⁷³⁸ Reportedly, some sections of the media emphasized the fact that PFI had warned the government two days earlier about possible tensions during the rally. Regarding this, the PFI State president told a member of the fact-finding team that he had written to the DGP and the Chief Minister that as Shobha Yatras were being taken out across the State, pre-emptive measures needed to be taken to ensure that provocative slogans should not be made.

spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/ [09 June 2022].

⁷³⁶ News18 India. (04 April 2022). *Youtube*. Karauli Violence: 'शोभायात्रा' पर मुस्लिम बहुल इलाके में पथराव से भड़की हिंसा Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AokEVPQMhM> [09 June 2022].

⁷³⁷ Taskin, B. (05 April 2022). Bike Rally, Stone-Pelting & 'hidden assault' - tracking the spark that set Karauli on fire. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/bike-rally-stone-pelting-hidden-assault-tracking-the-spark-that-set-karauli-on-fire/902557/> [09 June 2022].

⁷³⁸ Frontline. (03 May 2022). Demolition squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *The Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [01 June 2022].

9. MAHARASHTRA

Background

Maharashtra has had a significant history of communal violence and strife. In addition to the Hindu-Muslim violence (of which the 1993 riots were a watershed moment, leading to greater geographical segregation and ghettoization), the state has also seen violence along ethnic-linguistic lines, with the Shiv Sena deeming non-Marathis as unwelcome “outsiders”.⁷³⁹ More recently, in December 2019, the BJP-controlled opposition had proposed an anti-conversion law in the State legislature.⁷⁴⁰

The Ram Navami violence in Maharashtra took place in the backdrop of vociferous demands by the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) to ban the use of loudspeakers for Azaan⁷⁴¹, mirroring the demands made by BJP in UP and other states.⁷⁴² Several threats were issued by the MNS to the State government (led by Uddhav Thackeray of the Shiv Sena) about the same. According to Lyla Bavadam (in a May 20 cover story for the Frontline magazine) MNS’ demands are being made keeping in mind the upcoming local body elections in Maharashtra which will see 10 municipal corporations (including the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) and 25 zila parishads go to the polls.⁷⁴³

While provocative acts took place in several parts of Maharashtra, major acts of violence / clashes have been reported in three specific areas: Malad and Mankhurd (suburbs of Mumbai), and Amravati.

Malad had seen localised protests against the CAA-NRC in the months leading to the pandemic.⁷⁴⁴ In March 2021, a BJP leader characterised Malad as a hub of “Bangladeshis and Rohingya

⁷³⁹ Verma, M. K. (2012). Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta, Living with Violence: An Anthropology of Events and Everyday Life. *International Sociology*, 27(5), 635–637. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580912452370a>.

⁷⁴⁰ Mahamulkar, Sujit. (20 December 2019). Maharashtra BJP propose anti-conversion law in assembly. The Times of India. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/maharashtra-bjp-propose-anti-conversion-law-in-assembly/articleshow/72901286.cms> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴¹ Cover Story. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Front Line*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴² Pandey, Sanjay. (25 April 2022). Uttar Pradesh government orders removal of illegal loudspeakers from religious places. *Deccan Herald*. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/north-and-central/uttar-pradesh-govt-orders-removal-of-illegal-loudspeakers-from-religious-places-1103809.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴³ Cover Story. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Front Line*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴⁴ Sabrang. (28 December 2019). Anti-CAA protests attract 25,000 in Malvani, Malad. *Sabrang India*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/anti-kaa-protest-attracts-25000-malvani-malad> [27 June 2022].

Muslims”, claiming they were part of a larger conspiracy to “expel Hindus” from parts of Mumbai.⁷⁴⁵ In Jan-Feb 2022, this area also saw local protests led by Muslim women in support of the female students in Karnataka who were expelled for wearing the Hijab. An All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen leader, Waris Pathan, was arrested *en route* to this protest site on 17 Feb ‘22.⁷⁴⁶

Mankhurd is part of the Mankhurd Shivaji Nagar Assembly Constituency, in Mumbai’s North East Constituency. The minority votes of this area are considered a crucial “game changer” for elections, even as they are mostly residents of the tightly packed, congested parts of the area.⁷⁴⁷ Three quarters of the residents of slums in Mankhurd region are Muslim, which is also home to Deonar Dumping Ground, purportedly India’s largest landfill. Living in poor sanitary conditions, a majority of the working population in these slums are employed either as daily wage workers, or as salaried workers in poorly paying blue-collar jobs.⁷⁴⁸ In April 2019, in the months leading up to the October elections to the Maharashtra State Legislature, the Times of India reported “anti-PM” (Narendra Modi) sentiment in the area.⁷⁴⁹

Amravati city is the administrative headquarters of the Amravati district, and the Amravati division, one of the two divisions of the Vidarbha region on the eastern end of Maharashtra. In the past the Vidarbha region has been in the news for being home to the largest number of farmer suicides in the state (upto 70%).⁷⁵⁰ While Hindus form a majority in Amravati, it also has a sizeable populations of Muslims at 22% of the total population (compared to the district level, and state level share of 14%).⁷⁵¹ In November 2021, a Muslim procession protesting against the anti-Muslim violence in Tripura had turned violent after retaliation from Hindu groups, causing section 144 to be imposed in the town.⁷⁵² The Ram Navami violence in the area was instigated

⁷⁴⁵ OpIndia Staff. (5 March 2021). ‘Malvani pattern a larger conspiracy to expel Hindus and settle Bangladeshis, Rohingya Muslims’: BJP leader Mangal Prabhat Lodha in Maha assembly. *OpIndia*. Retrieved from <https://www.opindia.com/2021/03/malvani-hindu-exodus-bjp-leader-mangal-prabhat-brings-up-in-maharashtra-assembly/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴⁶ PTI. (17 February 2022). India to run by constitution, not Sharia, reiterates BJP amid growing protest over hijab row. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/feb/17/india-to-run-by-constitution-not-sharia-reiterates-bjp-amid-growing-protests-over-hijab-row-2420549.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴⁷ Sen, Somit and hammed Wajihuddin. (22 April 2019). Anti-PM sentiment rings out in Mankhurd and Shivaji Nagar, minority vote may split. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/lok-sabha-elections-2019/maharashtra/news/anti-pm-sentiment-rings-out-in-mankhurd-and-shivaji-nagar-minority-vote-may-split/articleshow/68982724.cms> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁴⁸ Prasad, Rajiya, and M.N. Singh. “Living Condition and Life Style of Mankhurd Slum Dwellers.” Population Association of America 2013 Annual Meeting Program, Population Association of America, n.a, <https://paa2013.princeton.edu/papers/130503>.

⁷⁴⁹ Sen, Somit and hammed Wajihuddin. (22 April 2019). Anti-PM sentiment rings out in Mankhurd and Shivaji Nagar, minority vote may split. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/lok-sabha-elections-2019/maharashtra/news/anti-pm-sentiment-rings-out-in-mankhurd-and-shivaji-nagar-minority-vote-may-split/articleshow/68982724.cms> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵⁰ Sainath, P. (14 November 2007). Maharashtra: ‘graveyard of farmers’. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071116052924/http://www.hindu.com/2007/11/14/stories/2007111453091100.htm> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵¹ Amravati (2022). Wikipedia. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amravati#cite_note-Religion-11

⁷⁵² Shroff, Kaushal. (14 November 2021). Ground report: Flames of violence scorch Amravati in Maharashtra, curfew imposed. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/ground-report-maharashtras-amravati-violence> [27 June 2022].

due to an incident in Achalpur, one of the cities in the Amravati district, which had been ruled by a succession of Muslim rulers since the 14th century.⁷⁵³

Sequence of Events

The recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa was “organized” in at least 30 different places across the state on Ram Navami.⁷⁵⁴ It should be noted that the recitation of Hanuman Chalisa, especially outside mosques or in Muslim-dominated areas, using loudspeakers, was one of the “threats” repeatedly issued by the MNS as retaliation for the use of loudspeakers during Azaan.⁷⁵⁵

The Popular Front of India had organized a protest outside a mosque in Mumbra in Thane district on 15 April (Friday), against the anti-Muslim incidents that had taken place across the state on the occasion of Ram Navami. Mumbra is a Muslim-dominated rural area in Thane. The police confirmed that the group had sought permission to hold the meeting, but had been denied the same by the police. The group decided to go ahead with the meeting anyway, and PFI Mumbra President Abdul Mateen Shekani was reported to have made “inflammatory speeches” and “instigated the people”. Some of the “controversial remarks” he was reported to have made were: “If you will come to remove our loudspeakers installed on the mosques, then our members from PFI will guard it,” and “If you touch even a single loudspeaker, then PFI will be seen at the forefront.” He was also quoted as saying, “A lot of atrocities are happening on Muslims in this country, some people want to spoil the atmosphere of Mumbra too” [but] “if you come after us, we won’t leave you.”^{756 757}

Mankhurd

Around 8:30 PM on 10th April 2022, while Namaaz was being performed at a local mosque in PMGP Colony in Mankhurd area, a group of 15-20 youths, including the main accused, Sonu Choudhary, assembled in the area carrying saffron flags and shouted slogans of Jai Shree Ram. Local residents intervened and asked them to stop, as Namaaz was being read. “We tried to explain to them that namaz is being performed, please do not raise slogans right now. However, they did not listen, finally they left when they saw a huge crowd gathering,” said one of the residents. One of these

⁷⁵³ Achalpur. (2022). Wikipedia. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achalpur>

⁷⁵⁴ Press Trust of India. (19 April 2022). Ram Navami violence: Maharashtra cops collecting details of incidents; at least 20 cases registered. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/19/ram-navami-violence-maharashtra-cops-collecting-details-of-incidents-at-least-20-cases-registered-2443970.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵⁵ Cover Story. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva mobs go on a rampage. *Front Line*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵⁶ Singh, Jayaprakash. (16 April 2022). PFI workers booked in Mumbai for protest outside mosque over ram Navami violence. *India TV*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/pfi-workers-booked-in-mumbra-for-protest-outside-mosque-over-ram-navami-violence-centre-ban-2022-04-16-770087> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵⁷ India Today Webdesk. (18 April 2022). Absconding PFI leaders Abdul Mateen surrenders in Mumbai court. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pfi-leader-abdul-mateen-shekhani-mumbai-court-thane-mumbra-ram-navami-1938987-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022].

people left his bike at the venue, and also issued threats to the residents gathered around.⁷⁵⁸ The group was also allegedly assaulted by two of the locals, who were subsequently arrested⁷⁵⁹.

Around an hour and a half later, a much bigger group of around 40-70 people came to the area, armed with weapons like swords, and aluminium and iron rods. They attacked the vehicles in the area, destroying 20-25 of them, including autos and rikshaws.⁷⁶⁰ According to one of the residents, “They yelled Jai Shri Ram as they destroyed the vehicles, including my auto. It was given to [me] by my father as a means of livelihood. They broke that too and all the vehicles nearby.” The source also said, “We were all scared to see this attack. Our vehicles were destroyed in front of our eyes. But we couldn’t do anything. There were too many of them. They had rods. We could barely understand what was going on and they continued to break vehicles while yelling Jai Shri Ram.” Locals reported that many of the assailants were from outside the area while the rest were youths from nearby places.

Just a few hours before this, the colony members had organised an Iftar party to promote brotherhood among Hindus and Muslims, which had been attended by the local Corporator’s son Deepak Sakre and Samajwadi Party politician Jasuddin Sheikh.⁷⁶¹

Malad

In the evening of April 9 2022, a procession organized by members of the Bajrang Dal reached the Jama Masjid in Malad. They were asked to refrain from playing loud music and drums near the mosque, but they persisted, with Tenjinder Singh Tiwana taking over the drums and playing them. They then proceeded towards Hazrat Masjid, reaching there around 7 pm, just as the Maghrib prayers were starting and Muslims observing Ramzan were beginning to break their fasts. The mob then raised religious slogans, as ex-counselor Vinod Shelar (brother of BJP MLA Ashish Shelar) exhorted them to continue playing (the music and the drums).⁷⁶²

Amravati

On Sunday, 19 April 2022, a saffron flag was put up at Dulha Gate, one of the medieval era gates of a fort at Achalpur in the Amravati district, and an area populated by many Muslim residents. This led to stone pelting between “two groups”, injuring two policemen.⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁸ Sabrangindia. (12 April 2022). We couldn’t do anything, just watched them destroy our vehicles: Mankhurd residents recall Ram Navami violence. Sabrang India. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/we-couldnt-do-anything-just-watched-them-destroy-our-vehicles-mankhurd-residents-recall-ram> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁵⁹ Shaikh, Mustafa. (12 April 2022). FIR against nearly 30 in 2 separate cases of communal disturbance on Ram Navami in Mumbai. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/fir-against-nearly-30-in-2-separate-cases-of-communal-disturbance-on-ram-navami-in-mumbai-1936698-2022-04-12> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶⁰ Sabrangindia. (12 April 2022). We couldn’t do anything, just watched them destroy our vehicles: Mankhurd residents recall Ram Navami violence. Sabrang India. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/we-couldnt-do-anything-just-watched-them-destroy-our-vehicles-mankhurd-residents-recall-ram> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶¹ Sabrangindia. (12 April 2022). We couldn’t do anything, just watched them destroy our vehicles: Mankhurd residents recall Ram Navami violence. Sabrang India. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/we-couldnt-do-anything-just-watched-them-destroy-our-vehicles-mankhurd-residents-recall-ram> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶² Shaikh, Mustafa. (12 April 2022). FIR against nearly 30 in 2 separate cases of communal disturbance on Ram Navami in Mumbai. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/fir-against-nearly-30-in-2-separate-cases-of-communal-disturbance-on-ram-navami-in-mumbai-1936698-2022-04-12> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶³ Naidu, Jayprakash S. (20 April 2022). BJP’s Achalpur president sent to police custody; curfew in twin cities

Madhavrao Garud, senior police inspector of Achalpur police station, was quoted in an Indian Express article dated 20 April as saying, “There were around 70 to 80 people from each of the communities. We rushed to the spot and dispersed the crowd.”⁷⁶⁴

Role and Response by State Actors

The Maharashtra police said that they had issued instructions to people to celebrate the festival by “following noise pollution norms and ensuring communal amity” and that “untoward incidents would include those connected to noise pollution norms and flouting of time limits.”⁷⁶⁵

In response to the at least 30 recitations of Hanuman Chalisa organized across the State, at least five offences were registered against “individuals and mobs” by the Maharashtra police.⁷⁶⁶

31 activists connected with the Popular Front of India were also arrested for holding an “unauthorized” protest, under Sections 188, 37(3), and 135 of the IPC.¹⁵ The persons charged included PFI Mumbra President Abdul Matin Shekani, who was reported to be absconding a day later. According to a report in *The Print*, two police teams were conducting a search operation to locate him.⁷⁶⁷ He surrendered 4 days later in a Thane court, on Monday, April 18 2022.⁷⁶⁸

It should be noted that none of the newspapers mention whether the multiple Ram Navami processions had police permission, or were similarly “unauthorized”.

Mankhurd

Locals reported that when the police arrived, they noted down names of the armed mob, as well as local residents. Two FIRs were registered in connection with the violence: one against two locals who had allegedly assaulted the initial group of 15-20 youths chanting slogans outside the mosque, and another against unidentified armed persons who had attacked the vehicles in the area. The two people who were booked for assault have been arrested; this includes Abdullah Shaikh, the first person who objected to the sloganeering, for causing hurt to the main accused

continues for third day. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/amravati-stone-pelting-curfew-policemen-injured-arrests-7874421/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid

⁷⁶⁵ Press Trust of India. (19 April 2022). Ram Navami violence: Maharashtra cops collecting details of incidents; at least 20 cases registered. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/19/ram-navami-violence-maharashtra-cops-collecting-details-of-incidents-at-least-20-cases-registered-2443970.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid

⁷⁶⁷ Asian News International. (17 April 2022). Maharashtra Ram Navami violence: Police confirm PFI Mumbra president is absconding. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/maharashtra-ram-navami-violence-police-confirm-pfi-mumbra-president-is-absconding/919907/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁶⁸ India Today Webdesk. (18 April 2022). Absconding PFI leaders Abdul Mateen surrenders in Mumbai court. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pfi-leader-abdul-mateen-shekhani-mumbai-court-thane-mumbra-ram-navami-1938987-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022].

in the other FIR, Sonu Choudhary. At least 4 of the people from the armed mob were arrested as well.^{769 770}

The police had also asked the locals to call them if required, but as of April 12, the police had not contacted them.⁷⁷¹ It should be noted that according to an India Today article, the police were quoted as saying, “They were stopped and assaulted by a few locals, following which they went away, only to return with a mob of over 40 men. *The mob didn’t find the people who had assaulted the two and damaged nearly 25 vehicles in the area instead.*” (emphasis added)⁷⁷²

In total, at least 30 people were booked under two separate FIRs related to this event.⁷⁷³

Malad

An FIR was registered against 20+ people, including Tejinder Singh Tiwana and Vinod Shelar who were leading the procession playing loud music and shouting incendiary slogans outside the Jama Masjid and Hazrat Masjid.⁷⁷⁴

Amravati

Following the stone pelting and injuring of two policemen, section 144 was imposed in the twin areas of Achalpur-Paratwada. Sixteen people were arrested Amravati IG Chandra Kishore Meena conducted surveillance of the city after the incident, and additional forces were called in to prevent any further incidents.⁷⁷⁵

Tear gas was used to disperse the crowds. According to Madhavrao Garud, senior police inspector of Achalpur police station, Madhavrao Garud, senior police inspector of Achalpur police station,

⁷⁶⁹ Sabrangindia. (12 April 2022). We couldn’t do anything, just watched them destroy our vehicles: Mankhurd residents recall Ram Navami violence. Sabrang India. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/we-couldnt-do-anything-just-watched-them-destroy-our-vehicles-mankhurd-residents-recall-ram> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷⁰ Shaikh, Mustafa. (12 April 2022). FIR against nearly 30 in 2 separate cases of communal disturbance on Ram Navami in Mumbai. India Today. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/fir-against-nearly-30-in-2-separate-cases-of-communal-disturbance-on-ram-navami-in-mumbai-1936698-2022-04-12> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷¹ Sabrangindia. (12 April 2022). We couldn’t do anything, just watched them destroy our vehicles: Mankhurd residents recall Ram Navami violence. Sabrang India. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/we-couldnt-do-anything-just-watched-them-destroy-our-vehicles-mankhurd-residents-recall-ram> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷² Shaikh, Mustafa. (12 April 2022). FIR against nearly 30 in 2 separate cases of communal disturbance on Ram Navami in Mumbai. India Today. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/fir-against-nearly-30-in-2-separate-cases-of-communal-disturbance-on-ram-navami-in-mumbai-1936698-2022-04-12> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷³ Kumar, Dhananjay. (18 April 2022). Section 144 imposed in Maharashtra’s Amravati after saffron flag put up at Dulha Gate. India Today. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/maharashtra/story/amravati-violence-dulha-gate-stone-pelting-section-144-1938733-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷⁴ Singh, Jayaprakash. (16 April 2022). PFI workers booked in Mumbai for protest outside modque over ram Navami violence. India TV. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/pfi-workers-booked-in-mumbra-for-protest-outside-mosque-over-ram-navami-violence-centre-ban-2022-04-16-770087> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷⁵ Kumar, Dhananjay. (18 April 2022). Section 144 imposed in Maharashtra’s Amravati after saffron flag put up at Dulha Gate. India Today. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/maharashtra/story/amravati-violence-dulha-gate-stone-pelting-section-144-1938733-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022]

said, “We have registered three FIRs. One against the group of men who hoisted the flag and other two against the two communities.”⁷⁷⁶

BJP’s Achalpur President Abhay Matne, who was accused of hoisting the saffron flag over Dulha Gate, leading to the violence, was produced before a magistrate on April 19, and remanded into police custody till April 22. He was traced to Pune and arrested by a special police team sent there for the purpose.⁷⁷⁷

Madhavrao Garud, senior police inspector of Achalpur police station, added, “Matne and 27 others arrested so far are in police custody. Their custody will end on April 21-22. The decision of lifting curfew or continuing with it will be taken on Thursday morning [i.e. 21 April].”⁷⁷⁸

Maharashtra Home Minister Dili Walse-Patil was quoted by India Today as saying, “The situation in Amravati is now under control. The police are investigating the incident. Strict action has been ordered against the perpetrators of communal violence... Communally charged content is being uploaded on social media to create rifts over caste and community issues. The cyber police are keeping a watch on such posts.”⁷⁷⁹

By April 19, 20 cases had been registered state-wide in connection with incidents of communal violence,⁷⁸⁰ and at least 61 people had been arrested.⁷⁸¹ As a preventive measure for the near future, 2 lakh police forces, 38 thousand home guards and 100 companies of SRPF were also deployed across Maharashtra, and the cyber team was asked to keep an eye on social media.⁷⁸²

Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil, in response to these incidents, was quoted as saying, “In the last few days, since the release of The Kashmir Files, it has been noticed that there is an attempt to create distance between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. We are probing the incidents that took place on Ram Navami.”⁷⁸³ In an earlier article dated 11 April 2022, the

⁷⁷⁶ Naidu, Jayprakash S. (20 April 2022). BJP’s Achalpur president sent to police custody; curfew in twin cities continues for third day. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/amravati-stone-pelting-curfew-policemen-injured-arrests-7874421/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁷⁹ Kumar, Dhananjay. (18 April 2022). Section 144 imposed in Maharashtra’s Amravati after saffron flag put up at Dulha Gate. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/maharashtra/story/amravati-violence-dulha-gate-stone-pelting-section-144-1938733-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸⁰ Press Trust of India. (19 April 2022). Ram Navami violence: Maharashtra cops collecting details of incidents; at least 20 cases registered. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/19/ram-navami-violence-maharashtra-cops-collecting-details-of-incidents-at-least-20-cases-registered-2443970.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸¹ Kumar, Dhananjay. (18 April 2022). Section 144 imposed in Maharashtra’s Amravati after saffron flag put up at Dulha Gate. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/maharashtra/story/amravati-violence-dulha-gate-stone-pelting-section-144-1938733-2022-04-18> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸² Hindustan News Hub. (13 April 2022). Lessons from Ram Navami Violence! 2 lakh police personnel deployed in Maharashtra for upcoming festivals. *Hindustan News Hub*. Retrieved from <https://hindustannewshub.com/india-news/lessons-from-ram-navami-violence-2-lakh-police-personnel-deployed-in-maharashtra-for-upcoming-festivals/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸³ Shaikh, Mustafa. (12 April 2022). FIR against nearly 30 in 2 separate cases of communal disturbance on Ram Navami in Mumbai. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/fir-against-nearly-30-in-2-separate-cases-of-communal-disturbance-on-ram-navami-in-mumbai-1936698-2022-04-12> [27 June 2022].

Quint reported that he “said that some people are trying to spread riots in the name of caste so that they can take advantage of it”.⁷⁸⁴

Media Portrayal

Most mainstream TV media reportage described the Ram Navami processions as being attacked unprovoked despite the fact that information about the provocation and circumstances leading to the violence was available in the public domain.

CNN News 18’s Zakka Jacob reported on the communal clashes that took place on Ram Navami in 6 states in the country, including Maharashtra. “The trigger,” he reported, “in all of these cases was Hindu processions being targeted in Muslim localities because it was being too intrusive and loud music was being played. Since when has taking out processions in the name of Ram become illegal in India? After all, all communities take out processions... and we’ve had them pass of rather peacefully in the years past.” This puts the onus of “tolerance” on the Muslim community and plays into the narrative of Hindus being in “danger”, unable to practice their religion freely in their own country that Hindutva leaders have been using as an excuse to impinge on the civil rights of minority communities. It completely glosses over the provocative nature of these processions, the music being played, the slogans being raised, and also the context (calls for a ban on the use of loudspeakers for Azaan), in which the incidents took place. It deliberately misrepresents the “clashes” as the result of an aggrieved and oppressed Hindu community, which has itself been tolerating the processions of “Muslims, Christians, Buddhists” all these years.⁷⁸⁵

News Nation (Hindi) covered it in a similar vein, asking obviously targeted questions like, “Desh mein sampradayi zeher gholne ki koshish kaun kar raha hai? Ram bhakton ke khilaaf samaaj mein aaj kitney Raavan maujood hain?” (Who is spreading communal poison in the country? How many Ravans are present in society against the followers of Ram?) Calling it a “Muslim ladkon ka hungama” (A ruckus created by Muslim boys), and repeatedly playing a viral video from Malvani (in Malad, Mumbai) of an altercation, it identifies those who attacked the processions as “Jihadi gang ki toli” (regiment of terrorist gangs), implying that the violence was premeditated by these “Jihadi gangs”, who were waiting for the Hindu processions to pelt them with stones.⁷⁸⁶

ABP News hosted an hour long panel discussion anchored by Rubika Liyaquat about the issue on 11 April, at 5 pm. Attended by KK Sharma (Spokesman, BJP), Rahini Nayak (Spokesman, Congress), Vijay Shankar Tiwari (Spokesman, Vishwa Hindu Parishad), Shoaib Jamei (President, Indian Muslim Foundation), Syed Asim Wawar (Spokesman, All India Majmlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen), and Vishal Mishra, (Asst. Professor, University of Delhi), the panel discussion descended into chaotic arguing several times as it was aggressively conducted by the host who, while taking cognizance of specific offensive statements made against Muslim women, was quite

⁷⁸⁴ The Quint. (11 April 2022). Violence in 7 States on Ram Navami: One Dead in Gujarat, One in Jharkhand. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-multiple-states-2022-several-injured-violence-arson#read-more#read-more> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸⁵ CNN-News18. (2022, April 11). Ram Navami Violence | Ram Navmi Clash | JNU Violence | Mumbai Violence | MP Violence | CNN News18 [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTW5Z5WuqAA>

⁷⁸⁶ News Nation. (2022, April 11). Ramnavmi Violence News : महाराष्ट्र के मालवणी में रामनवमी उत्सव में बवाल | Ramnavmi | Mumbai [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud96b6tfiPQ>

clearly targeting the Muslim community as being intolerant. When Shoaib Jamei pointed out that taking the processions through “Muslim area” was done deliberately to provoke, Liyaquat argued that calling an area “Muslim” (and hence one that Hindu Processions should possibly avoid) was a communal move motivated by hatred and intolerance. She also went on to pretend ignorance about the provocative anti-Muslim sloganeering which had taken place, and strongly implied that the pattern of violence was planned by those who pelted stones on the processions. Her belligerent questioning was also aimed selectively at the representatives of IMF and AIMIM, as well as (tokenistically, it seemed), Prof. Mishra of DU, clearly indicating bias and a pre-determined agenda for the discussion.⁷⁸⁷

Times Now, News 18 India (Hindi), Aaj Tak, - all reported on the incidents in a similar manner: calling the attacks on the Ram Navami processions unprovoked aggressions, painting the processions as innocent, aggrieved devotees who had merely been “celebrating” the birth of Ram, and implying that the violence from the Muslim community across the states was linked through some bigger conspiracy of which the unsuspecting Hindus were victims.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ ABP News Bureau. (11 April 2022). Communal Clashes on Ram Navami: How did violence erupt? | Hoonkar (11 April 2022). *ABP Live*. Retrieved from <https://news.abplive.com/tv-show/hoonkar/communal-clashes-on-ram-navami-how-did-violence-erupt-hoonkar-11-april-2022-1525299> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁸⁸ Newslaundry. (2022, April 16). How TV news covered Ram Navami violence & Alia weds Ranbir | TV Newsance 167 [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/C81jlR4xgU>

10. GOA

The formerly Portuguese colony of Goa, annexed by India in 1961, is home to multiple faiths: 66.1% Hindu, 25.1% Christian, 8.3% Muslim and 0.1% Sikh.⁷⁸⁹

According to an article in the Frontline, “Historical material available on the Goan Muslim community says they are original inhabitants and not immigrants from other States. The community largely traces its origins to the 14th century Bahmani Sultanate, which controlled the Deccan region. During the 16th century Portuguese conquest of Goa, the Goan Muslims were violently persecuted, leading many to flee the territory. Currently, most Goan Muslims live in Madgoan and Vasco in South Goa, Valpoi, Bicholim and Satari in North Goa. By and large a community of traders and businessmen, they also have a significant presence in politics, with many Muslims winning elections over the years.”⁷⁹⁰

In March 2022, the BJP Government won the State election with complete majority for a third consecutive term. Ranjan Solomon, a columnist and human rights activist, and one of the eyewitnesses to the Ram Navami violence which took place in the State, said “The [religious] tolerance [in the state] is not just a smokescreen, it’s an absolute lie.” He also asserted that, “It is a myth that Goa is defined by the absence of communal stress. The fact is there are latent prejudices that lurk between communities. Communalism here survives in silence and concealment.”⁷⁹¹

According to Solomon, “When we recently conducted workshops with the youths, they told us their parents told them not to eat in a Muslim or Christian home. And that Brahmins are certainly the upper class. This generation ideally should not even know about these layers but they do. These are small but clear signs of underlying tensions.”⁷⁹²

The Ponda district in Goa is said to be an especially “sensitive” area. According to Sandesh Prabhudesai, an author and journalist based in Goa, “It is not just the Hindu majority which causes issues, Christians also play a part in targeting Muslims living in Goa. For instance, for three decades, Muslims in the Madgoan area have tried to build a kabrastan (cemetery) but they have been denied permission.” The Sanatan Sanstha, an “extreme right wing” organization with a criminal record is headquartered here at Ponda which, according to Solomon, proves State

⁷⁸⁹ The Hindu. (26 August 2015). India’s Religions by Numbers. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/religious-communities-census-2011-what-the-numbers-say/article7582284.ece> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁹⁰ Katakam, Anupama. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva Mobs Go on a Rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> (pg 33 - 35) [27 June 2022].

⁷⁹¹ Ibid

⁷⁹² Ibid

support. The Bajrang Dal also established a chapter in Goa in October 2021, just before (BJP) Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's visit in November 2021.⁷⁹³

Just to the east of Ponda is the Mormugao Sub Division, separated only by a stretch of the Zuari River. Mormugao is home to the historical city of Vasco de Gama. Hindus form 70.42% of the population here while Muslims and Christians form 15.42% and 13.26% respectively.⁷⁹⁴ On Ram Navami violence took place in this area, in a village called Baina, in an area variously identified as Islampur Baina or Islampur-Baina.

Sequence of Events

On April 11 2022, a procession celebrating Ram Navami turned violent in Baina village. According to one version of events reported in the Quint: youths from Sancaole were pelted with stones from the top of a house when they were passing by with their two wheeler procession in the Islampur Baina area. In retaliation, the youths (who belonged to the “majority community”), went back to the area and assaulted a youth, who belonged to a “minority community”, which resulted in verbal clashes.

However, the youth who was assaulted denied the allegation of pelting stones and said he was attacked without provocation.⁷⁹⁵

According to another report in Deccan Herald, the two wheeler procession was allegedly passing near “a place of worship” when the stones were pelted from it, and in the chaos that ensued, the procession participants entered the said place of worship to beat up a person inside.⁷⁹⁶

A Frontline article, however, disputes this version of events. The CCTV footage of the event, which their reporter had access to, “shows men dressed in saffron and holding saffron flags attempting to enter a mosque in Baina village during the time of Iftar (breaking of the Ramzan fast), leading to a fracas between the two communities. The footage shows a few elderly Muslim men placating the men dressed in saffron.”⁷⁹⁷

This clearly follows the pattern seen in other parts of the country wherein processions or assemblies celebrating Hindu festivals, raising religious or sometimes outright anti-Muslim slogans deliberately pass through Muslim-dominated areas, or close to mosques, thereby instigating violence.

⁷⁹³ Ibid

⁷⁹⁴ *Mormugao Population, Religion, Caste, Working Data South Goa, Goa - Census 2011*. (2022). Censusindia.Co.In. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from <https://www.censusindia.co.in/towns/mormugao-population-south-go-go-803248>

⁷⁹⁵ The Quint. (11 April 2022). Violence in 7 States on Ram Navami: One Dead in Gujarat, One in Jharkhand. *The Quint*. Retrieved from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-multiple-states-2022-several-injured-violence-arson#read-more#read-more> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁹⁶ DHNS Panaji. (12 April 2022). 13 arrested in Goa in connection with Ram Navami procession related violence. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/west/13-arrested-in-go-in-connection-with-ram-navami-procession-related-violence-1100200.html> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁹⁷ Katakam, Anupama. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva Mobs Go on a Rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> (pg 33 - 35) [27 June 2022].

Response by State Actors

Following the incident at Islampur-Baina, in which one person was injured⁵ police immediately arrived in the area. Three FIRs were registered, under various sections for “unlawful assembly, rioting and inciting religious sentiments”.⁷⁹⁸

The deputy Superintendent of Police, Salim Shaikh, and police inspector in-charge of the local police station (Vasco), Nitin Halarnkar were either suspended, or transferred hours after the incident.⁷⁹⁹

In an article dated 12 April, the Superintendent of Police, South Goa, Abhishek Dhaniya is quoted as saying, “We have received complaints from both sides. On merits, we have registered (complaints) and taken up investigation. We have registered offences under Sections for unlawful assembly, rioting and inciting religious sentiments. We have got the footage (of incident) and are trying to identify the people. We will take necessary action.”⁸⁰⁰

An Indian Express article of the same day mentions Dhaniya as saying that the police are “investigating whether an incident had actually taken place between the two groups or if the chaos was caused by rumour-mongering.” He is also reported to have said that the issue was resolved and peace restored on Sunday night itself, and that there was no tension in the area on Monday.⁸⁰¹

Based on the CCTV footage, 13 people had been arrested, according to a report in the Deccan Herald dated April 12.⁸⁰² A later article in Frontline mentions further arrests, saying that up to 17 Muslim men were arrested on bailable charges in connection with the incident.⁸⁰³

State Bharatiya Janata Party president Sadanand Tanavade was quoted as saying, “No one should take law into their hands. Whatever is the case, law stands by itself, therefore no one should take law in their hands. The CM has already given instructions regarding it and proper action will be taken against the culprits,” while addressing media persons at the chief minister’s official residence in Panaji.⁸⁰⁴

⁷⁹⁸ Express News Service. (12 April 2022). Clashes in Goa, three FIRs lodged; investigation on. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/goa/clashes-in-go-3-firs-lodged-investigation-on-7865117/> [27 June 2022].

⁷⁹⁹ DHNS Panaji. (12 April 2022). 13 arrested in Goa in connection with Ram Navami procession related violence. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/west/13-arrested-in-go-connection-with-ram-navami-procession-related-violence-1100200.html> [27 June 2022].

⁸⁰⁰ Express News Service. (12 April 2022). Clashes in Goa, three FIRs lodged; investigation on. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/goa/clashes-in-go-3-firs-lodged-investigation-on-7865117/> [27 June 2022].

⁸⁰¹ Ibid

⁸⁰² DHNS Panaji. (12 April 2022). 13 arrested in Goa in connection with Ram Navami procession related violence. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/west/13-arrested-in-go-connection-with-ram-navami-procession-related-violence-1100200.html> [27 June 2022].

⁸⁰³ Katakam, Anupama. (20 May 2022). Demolition Squad: Hindutva Mobs Go on a Rampage. *Frontline*. Retrieved from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/demolition-squad-hindutva-mobs-go-on-a-rampage-ram-navami-hanuman-jayanti-islamophobia/article38483689.ece> (pg 33 - 35) [27 June 2022]

⁸⁰⁴ DHNS Panaji. (12 April 2022). 13 arrested in Goa in connection with Ram Navami procession related violence. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/west/13-arrested-in-go-connection-with-ram-navami-procession-related-violence-1100200.html> [27 June 2022].

Media Portrayal

In line with much of the reportage that happened regarding the Ram Navami violence in other states, reports coming out of Goa were also heavily biased in their portrayal of events.

A journalist from Goa, reporting to the Republic TV Newsroom said that while the procession was passing through the Baina area, stones were “suddenly” pelted on it from behind a mosque in Islampur, while admitting that the crowd assaulted one of the locals present in response to the stone pelting and escalating tension, before the arrival of the police to control the situation. He also goes on to say that another “problem” is created when the minority community went to the police station later in the night to file a complaint and “the drama continued”⁸⁰⁵

This was similar to the way in which ABP News, News Nation, CNN News 18, News 18 India, Aaj Tak, Times Now covered the incidents of clashes in Goa and other states on the occasion of Ram Navami. Most mainstream TV news channels sought to portray the incidents as unprovoked attacks on the celebratory processions, who were caught unawares by the aggression.^{806 807 808 809}

The implication of this one-sided reportage in the context of multiple reports of violence was that somehow, the attacks on the processions had been systematically planned. The actual provocative songs being sung, or slogans being chanted, often outside mosques or within Muslim communities, was completely glossed over and not mentioned, despite videos of these incendiary tactics being available in the public domain.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁵ Republic World. (2022, April 11). Communal Violence Reported During Ram Navami Processions Across 5 States, Vehicles & Shops Damaged [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlT_gw1o_SQ

⁸⁰⁶ NewsLaundry. (2022, April 16). How TV news covered Ram Navami violence & Alia weds Ranbir | TV Newsance 167 [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/C81jIR4xgU>

⁸⁰⁷ CNN-News18. (2022, April 11). Ram Navami Violence | Ram Navmi Clash | JNU Violence | Mumbai Violence | MP Violence | CNN News18 [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTW5Z5WuqAA>

⁸⁰⁸ News Nation. (2022, April 11). Ramnavmi Violence News : महाराष्ट्र के मालवणी में रामनवमी उत्सव में बवाल | Ramnavmi | Mumbai [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud96b6tfIPQ>

⁸⁰⁹ ABP News Bureau. (11 April 2022). Communal Clashes on Ram Navami: How did violence erupt? | Hoonkar (11 April 2022). *ABP Live*. Retrieved from <https://news.abplive.com/tv-show/hoonkar/communal-clashes-on-ram-navami-how-did-violence-erupt-hoonkar-11-april-2022-1525299> [27 June 2022].

⁸¹⁰ NewsLaundry. (2022, April 16). How TV news covered Ram Navami violence & Alia weds Ranbir | TV Newsance 167 [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/C81jIR4xgU>

11. WEST BENGAL

Background

Not just the Hindi Heartland, data stands testament to the fact that even the eastern state of West Bengal has borne the brunt of the rising of communal violence in the larger political context of increasing Hindu Nationalism under the BJP.^{811 812} While in some other states, 2022 witnessed the first case of Ram Navami Violence, for West Bengal this was not the first time. Ram Navami was not a major celebration here, instead the feminine force of shakti- Annapurna Puja was celebrated to commemorate this festival.⁸¹³ Ram in Bengal was not seen as a war hero, but as the benevolent son of the eldest king. Celebrations were often marked with mothers fasting for their sons.⁸¹⁴ However, since 2016, the festival took political centre stage, and a shift was noted. The state had begun witnessing armed processions by members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and cases of incitement against minorities. Participants of the rally were seen brandishing swords and tridents.

In 2017, communal clashes during Ram Navami broke out for the first time in pockets of Purulia and Bardhaman.⁸¹⁵ In 2018, the Trinamool Congress too joined the BJP in celebrating this festival with zest and weapons.⁸¹⁶ Despite increased police deployment, at least two people lost their lives in the communal clashes that erupted during the Ram Navami processions that year. In Raniganj a small town in the coal belt, the situation remained tense from March 25th to the 27th 2018⁸¹⁷. Local shops and motorcycles were set on fire during the rally. In Kandi, Murshidabad, an armed mob aggressively made their way into the local police station. The police used the force of baton to control the crowd. In Bardhaman too, a puja pandal was attacked. In Purulia, one person was killed, and five policemen sustained injured in clashes. In several places, sword brandishing BJP supporters were seen challenging the ban imposed by the government on armed rallies in

⁸¹¹ Shastri, S. (29 October 2020). Communal Violence in Twenty-first Century India: Moving Beyond the Hindi Heartland. *Studies In Indian Politics*, 8(2), 266-280. doi: 10.1177/2321023020963721

⁸¹² Singh S (30 March 2018). Communal violence cases up in Bengal: Home Ministry. *The Hindu* Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/communal-violence-cases-up-in-bengal-home-ministry/article23385683.ece>

⁸¹³ Devdan Chaudhuri (28 March 2018) Ram Navami violence: Why Hindutva forces are fanning communal flames in West Bengal. *Daily O*. Retrieved 30 June 2022. <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/ram-navami-violence-west-bengal-rss-bjp-hindutva-mamata-banerjee/story/1/23147.html>

⁸¹⁴ Pal, S. (2021). *The Bengal conundrum* (p. 563)

⁸¹⁵ NDTV (28 March 2018) One Dies In Clashes As BJP Holds Rally In Bengal's Purulia On Ram Navami. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/clashes-in-bengals-purulia-on-ram-navami-as-bjp-holds-armed-rally-1828451>

⁸¹⁶ Pal, S. (2021). *The Bengal conundrum* (p. 563)

⁸¹⁷ Nath,S (26 March 2018) Ram Navami Clash: MHA Asks Report From Bengal Govt, Promises Paramilitary Forces If Required. *News18*. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.news18.com/news/india/centre-seeks-report-from-west-bengal-govt-on-violence-during-ram-navami-1701789.html>

several places in the state. The Chief Minister, Mamta Banerjee made strong statements condemning these actions, stating that this was not a part of the Hindu tradition. “Some unidentified people have come here from outside...These trouble-mongers holding pistols and swords are resorting to hooliganism. This is West Bengal. This is not our culture. We celebrate Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Ganpati puja peacefully. We also celebrate Ramzan, Christmas,” she said. Additional DGP (Law and Order) Anuj Sharma echoed similar sentiments. He said, “Despite the police not giving permission, armed rallies were taken out at various places. The police will take legal action against it.”

However, the then Bengal BJP President, Dilip Ghosh who was seen participating in a rally armed with a sword, had a different opinion. He argued that ‘astra puja’ that loosely translates to worship of weapons was common to Ram Navami Celebrations. At these rallies, slogans were raised on Kashmir and Pakistan to polarize people. ‘I looked after the Hindu Jagaran Manch since 2011 and I wanted to give a voice to Hindus who saw partition and division in Hindu Society. They felt insecure about the way Muslims were being appeased. They felt they would be refugees in their own land. No political party talked in favour of Hindus. If one talked in favour of Hindus, he was branded as communal. Political parties talked for the Muslims to get votes. We caught that point and needed an issue through which we could unite the Hindu voices. We used Ram Navami for that. This was not a part of the Bengali tradition. We got a huge response and it worked well for us.’⁸¹⁸ In 2017, he was also seen giving a war cry from his constituency, claiming “Here, a fight is on between Ramzada (Ram Bhakts) and Haramzada (bastards).” The BJP went on to post vitriolic islamophobic statements on their official facebook pages with captions like ‘*Sabdhan Bangabashi, Pratinityoto ei rajyo howe utheche jehadider nischinto asroysthol*’ i.e ‘Bengal’s citizens must be fearful, as the state is on its way to being a jihadi hub’⁸¹⁹. Thereafter, he was booked by the police for taking out armed processions during Ram Navami.⁸²⁰

While historians and scholars have explained violence in Bengal through the idiom of ‘party society’, scholars like Hossain, “..More than inter or intra party violence, as it appears in the media, there is a clear Muslim angle to it.” This is clear when one traces similar trends of attack on Muslims in the horrific killings of Keshpur and Garbeta in the early 1990s, the cost that the community bore during the Nandigram violence 2007 and as recently as the Telinpara violence where a ground report revealed that Muslim houses and shops were identified and strategically attacked.⁸²¹ These simmering communal tensions found steam in an aggressive Ram Navami procession and West Bengal witnessed yet another year of targeted violence against the minorities.⁸²²

⁸¹⁸ Pal, S. (2021). *The Bengal conundrum* (p. 563)

⁸¹⁹ DNA Watch (5 April 2017) Ram Navami celebrated across Bengal; facing RSS heat, TMC joins festivities in Siliguri. Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-watch-ram-navami-celebrations-across-bengal-facing-rss-heat-tmc-joins-festivities-in-siliguri-2382406>

⁸²⁰ Scroll (7 April 2017). West Bengal BJP chief booked for taking out sword procession on Ram Navami. Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://scroll.in/latest/833938/west-bengal-bjp-chief-booked-for-taking-out-sword-procession-on-ram-navami>

⁸²¹ Ghosh H (16 May 2020) Ground Report: What Really Happened in Violence-hit Telinipara, West Bengal. (2022). *The Wire* Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://thewire.in/communalism/ground-report-what-really-happened-in-violence-hit-telinipara-west-bengal>

⁸²² Hossain, A. (6 April 2022). Exploited as foot soldiers: How Muslims are getting crushed by Bengal’s political violence. *Scroll* Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://amp.scroll.in/article/1021016/exploited-as-foot-soldiers-how-muslims-are-getting-crushed-by-bengals-political-violence>

Sequence of Events

On the 11th of April, West Bengal saw over 1000 rallies organised by Ram Bhakts and members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Reports of incitement and provocation came from the three districts that have been noted to have a strong BJP presence in the state, i.e Bankura, Howrah and Siliguri. In Siliguri, men, women and toddlers alike were seen dancing to anti Muslim songs with lyrics like “*Jo chhoega hinduo ke hasti ko Mita dalenge uske har ek basti ko rehna hai toh Rahim banke raho, Aurangzeb banoge toh kat daal lenge*”. This was followed by “*Jai Shri Ram*” and chants for a “*Hindurashtra*.”⁸²³

In Bankura, Howrah and Kakinara⁸²⁴ this incitement led to ‘clashes’ on ‘both sides’, with at least 20 people sustaining injuring, 30 arrests⁸²⁵ have been made by the police, as per reports several of them have been identified as BJP workers.⁸²⁶ Local media reports from Bankura, Birbhum, West Burdwan, Hoogly (Chuchura), and Howrah have confirmed that several of these processions were armed. Both local TMC and BJP leaders have been at the forefront of these celebrations. According to India Today, TMC block president Manotosh Ghosh was seen brandishing a sword at one of the processions in Malda⁸²⁷. In Hoogly, women walked with tridents and men flaunted their swords. In Howrah’s Shibpur area, the State President of the BJP, Umesh Roy was also seen with a sword in his hand. In Durgapur, Dilip Ghosh the ex-state president of the BJP was seen Brandishing lathis. In Bhatpara, BJP MP Arjun Singh alleged that the police were seen confiscating weapons from the people, framing this confiscation as an impediment to their rightful religious expression in keeping with the tradition of Ram Navami. In another rally organised by the Arya Samaj that was crossing Bhatpara 100 youths armed with swords were seen. This Mahavir Jayanti Committee was headed by Trinamool MLA Somnath Shyam. It is important to note here that Bhatpara is a communally sensitive area and clashes have been seen in the recent past here.⁸²⁸ Similar processions took place in Howrah’s Sankrail where an armed procession was undertaken from Manikpur to Rajganj. While no violent incidents occurred the police said that the necessary legal clearances were not taken, and the organizers would have to pay the brunt for this.⁸²⁹

⁸²³ Mohammad, A. (11 April 2022). Provocative Slogans, Music In Front Of Mosques: Ram Navami Processions Result In Violence In Several States. The Cognate Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://thecognate.com/provocative-slogans-music-in-front-of-mosques-ram-navami-processions-result-in-violence-in-several-states/>

⁸²⁴ Digital, TV9 Bangla (11 April 2022). হাতে তলোয়ার, সঙ্গে জয় শ্রীরাম ধ্বনি! সকাল থেকেই বর্ণাঢ্য শোভাযাত্রায় রাম নবমী পালন বিজেপির. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://tv9bangla.com/west-bengal/howrah/howrah-rama-navami-ram-navami-celebration-in-howrah-542390.html>

⁸²⁵ Hindustan Times (11 April 2022) Violence in 2 Ram Navami processions in West Bengal; 30 arrested: Police. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/violence-in-2-ram-navami-processions-in-west-bengal-30-arrested-police-101649690477412.html>

⁸²⁶ Staff, S. (11 April 2022). Two killed, several injured as violence breaks out on Ram Navami in at least five states. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://scroll.in/latest/1021555/one-killed-several-injured-as-violence-breaks-out-on-ram-navami-in-multiple-states>

⁸²⁷ Quint, T. (11 April 2022). Violence in 7 States on Ram Navami: One Dead in Gujarat, One in Jharkhand. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/ram-navami-violence-multiple-states-2022-several-injured-violence-arson>

⁸²⁸ Sabrang India (11 April 2022) Communal confrontations mar Ram Navami celebrations in five states | SabrangIndia. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/communal-confrontations-mar-ram-navami-celebrations-five-states>

⁸²⁹ Zee 24 Ghanta (9 April 2022) Howrah Sankrail: রামনবমী উপলক্ষে অস্ত্র হাতে নিয়ে মিছিল! পুলিশ বাহিনীর সামনেই

Howrah

In South Howrah, in the Fazirpur area, near the GE College, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had taken out a rally. This procession was armed. While men were seen brandishing swords while women carried 'trishuls'. This procession was supposed to be headed to Howrah Ghat however, when they reached the PM Basti area, it devolved into stone-pelting.⁸³⁰ The PM Basti area is primarily a Muslim minority neighbourhood characterised by poor living and housing conditions.⁸³¹ It has been alleged that the violence erupted in response to a provocative speech replete with anti-minority slogans was given by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.⁸³² This has led to at least 10 people including police officials sustained injuries. Public property was vandalized, stones were pelted, and police bikes were seen to be set on fire.⁸³³⁸³⁴ "We resorted to baton charge and dispersed the troublemakers. The injured people were taken a local hospital for treatment. The rapid action force was deployed, and part of the road was blocked to bring the situation under control," said the police officer⁸³⁵.

In another rally in Howrah's Shalimar area, the group entered into minority neighbourhoods where shopping for Ramadan's celebration were underway in full swing. Here too, the procession raised anti muslim slogans, making targeted instigations. This led to disagreements and dissensions between the two groups.⁸³⁶

Bankura:

A similar situation took place in Bankura's Manchantala, area near Nungola and Subhas Road. Here the procession was halted by the police who were predicting the law-and-order situation to worsen if it continued into the neighbouring minority area, given the kind of anti-Muslim incitement that was being conducted. The roads were thus barricaded accordingly. However, as the rally progressed, some members of the armed procession flouted these instructions and

অস্ত্র হাতে মিছিল. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNcgsKZQo9E>

⁸³⁰ Birtharia A. (11 April 2022) Vandalism in Bengal on Ram Navami, stones were thrown at procession. *NewsTrack* Retrieved 7 July 2022, from <https://english.newstracklive.com/news/video-ram-navami-in-bengal-ruckus-in-bankura-stones-thrown-on-procession-in-howrah-many-injured-mc23-nu612-ta334-1222374-1.html>

⁸³¹ Gibson, L. (2012). 'Please don't bring her back': Firing research assistants and respecting Muslim women's agency in Howrah. *Sites: A Journal Of Social Anthropology And Cultural Studies*, 9(2), 114-141. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/8032924/From_crisis_to_epiphany_What_firing_a_research_assistant_helped_me_appreciate_about_agency_and_Muslim_women_in_Howrah_West_Bengal_India

⁸³² NewsClick. (11 April 2022). Bengal: Situation Tense in Howrah, Bankura After Instigation by VHP-led Ram Navami Rallies Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/bengal-situation-tense-howrah-bankura-following-instigation-VHP-led-ram-navami-rallies>

⁸³³ Sweety Kumari (11 April 2022) 'Provocative' speech at rally triggers tension in Howrah. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/provocative-speech-at-rally-triggers-tension-in-howrah-7863153/>

⁸³⁴ The Wall (10 April 2022) Ramnavami: রামনবমীর মিছিল ঘিরে পক্ষের! ব্যাপক উত্তেজনা হাওড়ায়, জ. (2022). Ramnavami: রামনবমীর মিছিল ঘিরে ইটবৃষ্টি দু'পক্ষের! ব্যাপক উত্তেজনা হাওড়ায়, জারি কার্ফু. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.thewall.in/news/ramnavami-rally-clash-in-howrah/>

⁸³⁵ Hindustan Times (11 April 2022) Violence in 2 Ram Navami processions in West Bengal; 30 arrested: Police. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/violence-in-2-ram-navami-processions-in-west-bengal-30-arrested-police-101649690477412.html>

⁸³⁶ NewsClick. (11 April 2022). Bengal: Situation Tense in Howrah, Bankura After Instigation by VHP-led Ram Navami Rallies Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.newsclick.in/bengal-situation-tense-howrah-bankura-following-instigation-VHP-led-ram-navami-rallies>

decided to continue in their route. It has been alleged that as the police tried to stop the procession, some started pelting stones. Tensions escalated when the rally reached in front of the mosque near the Manchantala petrol pump.⁸³⁷ Here the procession regrouped into smaller numbers and vandalised local shops, establishments, and parked motor bikes.⁸³⁸ Some journalists too were injured in the stone pelting.

Role and Response by State Actors

Howrah

In Howrah, the police resorted to using lathi charge to control the armed processions and dismiss the crowd. Curfew was imposed across the region. The police alerted the residents and requested them to exercise restraint while posting on social media, warning citizens against spreading fake news. “We are making efforts for maintaining peace in the city. All are requested to show utmost restraint and discretion while posting anything on social media. They should abstain from spreading rumours about the Shibpur rally. Do not post anything which could disturb social harmony as one could be prosecuted under law,” Howrah city police posted on their official social media page.

Despite 17 arrests in Howrah⁸³⁹, the police maintained that the insinuation of the violence was not communal, and no serious injuries were noted. However, the stone pelting did result in broken heads in need of stitches, several people needed hospitalization. The RAF had to be deployed to control the mob.

The political responses to this have been varied. The Chief Minister of the State, Mamata Banerjee engaged in strategic denialism of the events, as a couple of days later she went on to say that not even one unfortunate event took place claiming that Bengal has no history of violence during festivals.⁸⁴⁰ This of course, is untrue. Other TMC spokespersons like Derek O'Brien and Mahua Moitra, however came out in strong condemnation of the Ram Navami violence. The leader of the opposition, Suvendu Adhikari accused the police and the Trinamool congress as hand in glove perpetrators of the violence unleashed against Ram Bhakts, who are losing their right to be able to celebrate their religion safely. “*In Shibpur, Howrah, on the occasion of Shri Ram Navami, when Ram devotees took out a procession, the constable and officer of Howrah Police thrashed them with sticks,*” he tweeted.⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁷ Falguni Banerjee (11 April 2022). Ram Navami Bankura March Turns Violent | Kolkata News - Times of India. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/ram-navami-bankura-march-turns-violent/articleshow/90767632.cms>

⁸³⁸ Newstag India (11 April 2022) Clashes broke out during Ram Navami procession in Bankura Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKRzyTCer3U&t=300s>

⁸³⁹ The Federal (21 April 2022) 10 days of hate: Unprecedented sectarian violence since Ram Navami day. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://thefederal.com/news/ten-days-of-hate-hanuman-jayanti-ram-navami-marred-by-sectarian-violence/>

⁸⁴⁰ Hindustan Times (11 April 2022) Violence in 2 Ram Navami processions in West Bengal; 30 arrested: Police. (2022). Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/violence-in-2-ram-navami-processions-in-west-bengal-30-arrested-police-101649690477412.html>

⁸⁴¹ NewsX (11 April 2022) Ram Navami Procession Attacked In WB's Howrah | Vehicles Set On Fire, Shops Damaged. Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDNRNZQETH8>

“None of the men suffered any serious injury. The situation was quickly controlled. We have rounded up several people. The arrest figures will be compiled in the evening,” C Sudhakar, the commissioner of Howrah city police as reported by HT officials.

Despite evidence of the processions being provocative and having followed the same pattern of instigation in Muslim neighbourhoods as the Ram Navami processions in other states, those in the rally and top BJP politicians have alleged that the local Muslims were the answer to the ever-important question of ‘who started the violence first’. Priyanka Sharma, the Vice President of the Bharatiya Janta Youth Wing maintained that the violence, and stone pelting in Fazirpur happened without any provocation from the rally. State BJP President, Sukanta Majumdar denounced the instances of violence, however identified the miscreants as members of the Trinamool Congress.

Bankura:

In Bankura, the violence began around 5 pm. The police were unable to control the participants of the armed rally who continued unabated for three hours. At around 8 pm, SP Dhritiman moved in with a large police contingent and dispersed the mob using lathi charge and tear gas. However, Union Minister of State for Education, Dr Subhas Sarkar, whose car was hit with stones, emphasized political motivations against the procession itself. “Stones were pelted on the Ram Navami procession in Bankura. It was done politically. They pelted stones at my car. I appeal to the police to identify and arrest the accused,” he said.⁸⁴² Eighteen people have been arrested with regards to the incident. Yet another victim was the Assistant Superintendent of Police of Bankura, Vivek Verma. Here too the Rapid Action Force was deployed. The police used lathi charge and tear gas to discharge the procession. “Three policemen were injured. We resorted to baton charge and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the crowd. Seven revellers were arrested from the spot,” said a district police officer who did not want to be named.⁸⁴³

Media Portrayal

Most organizations portrayed these events as clashes between two communities, some highlighting the explosion of weapons at Ram Navami and the particularly disturbing images of children brandishing the same. The coverage of Ram Navami in Bengal however, failed to bring out voices from the public. No first-person accounts of members who were either injured or arrested could be found. Channels descriptively reported the armed processions and the eventual resulting violence. The main voices that surfaced were statements by the police and politicians, and the impact of the communalism on the average citizen went unnoticed.

For Republic Bangla, Republic Bharat,⁸⁴⁴ the narrative was different. They argued that the Ram Navami Violence showcased the dwindling right of the Hindu Majority to practise their religion.

⁸⁴² Kousik Datta (11 April 2022) *রামনবমীতে ছয় রাজ্যে তুমুল উত্তেজনা! ঝাড়খণ্ড, গুজরাট, মধ্যপ্রদেশ ও বাংলায় হামলা! মৃত এক*. *Banglahunt*. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://banglahunt.com/viral-video-ram-navami-violence-in-6-states-stone-pelting-on-shobha-yatra-kd/>

⁸⁴³ *Hindustan Times* (11 April 2022) *Violence in 2 Ram Navami processions in West Bengal; 30 arrested: Police*. Retrieved 30 June 2022, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/violence-in-2-ram-navami-processions-in-west-bengal-30-arrested-police-101649690477412.html>

⁸⁴⁴ *Republic Bangla LIVE With Arnab Goswami | LIVE News | LIVE TV 24x7 | India News |* (11 April 2022). Retrieved 3 July 2022, from <https://bangla.republicworld.com/livetv.html>

In their Prime-Time debate by Arnab Goswami aired on the 11th of March he emphasized that processions were ‘attacked out of nowhere’, and these strings of incidents were a direct attack on Hindus, who are deigned to a live a life in terror in their own land. He went on to argue that the ‘masked men’ were a testament to the orchestrated violence by ‘anti national elements.’ Yet again, unlike other news media that reported violence, it appeared that Republic TV had “uncovered truth” and identified the religion of the stone pelters despite not revealing any facts about the alleged perpetrators.

12. STATES THAT SAW COMMUNAL PROVOCATION AND LOW-GRADE VIOLENCE

12.1 Karnataka

Background

Karnataka has become a hotspot for communal violence and abuse inflicted by Hindutva groups. In recent months the state has seen several hate campaigns against Muslims, as Hindutva leaders and activists have attempted to fuel animosity between communities amidst highly polarising political narratives around the state government's push to ban Hijab in schools and Halal meat during the holy month of Ramzan.⁸⁴⁵ On February 5, the Karnataka government banned clothes that “disturb equality, integrity and public order” in educational institutions, and on March 15, the Karnataka High Court upheld the government order and ruled that wearing hijab was not essential to Islam.⁸⁴⁶ BJP legislators also supported bans by right-wing groups against the sale of Halal meat. In May 2022 it became the ninth state in India to pass a law against religious conversion related to marriage – known as the draconian ‘Love jihad laws’.⁸⁴⁷

In March 2022, videos from two places in Kolar – Hussaini Makan Masjid and Hazrat Shah Qalandar Dargah – showed up online, depicting visuals from a cycle rally reportedly organised by BJP MP Tejasvi Surya from Bengaluru to Kolar.⁸⁴⁸ It showed participants of the rally in saffron scarves, dancing at the gates of Masjids and Dargahs in Kolar to songs saying *Jai Shree Ram*.⁸⁴⁹ A truck with a DJ playing songs glorifying Hindutva was leading the procession, which took place despite Section 144 being imposed in Kolar since the previous week when a local BJP MP removed green flags (that were painted since 75 years) from an iconic clock tower owned by Muslims.

In April, in the days leading up to Ram Navami, there were several attacks on the rights of Muslims in the state. Posters calling for a ban on Muslim traders during a Hindu fair were spotted

⁸⁴⁵ The Wire Staff. (17 April 2022). Hubballi Tense After Muslim Mob Turned Violent at Police Station Over Hindutva WhatsApp Post. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/hubballi-muslim-mobs-protests-outside-police-station-over-hindutva-whatsapp-post-sec-144-imposed> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁴⁶ Scroll Staff. (15 March 2022). Karnataka High Court upholds hijab ban, says it is not essential to Islam. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/1019520/karnataka-hc-upholds-hijab-ban-says-it-is-not-essential-to-islam> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁴⁷ Joshi B. (17 May 2022). Anti-conversion ordinance becomes law in Karnataka as Governor gives nod. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/top-karnataka-stories/anti-conversion-ordinance-becomes-law-in-karnataka-as-governor-gives-nod-1110049.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁴⁸ Sofi U. (29 March 2022). BJP Rally Dances To ‘Jai Shree Ram’ Outside Mosque, Dargah in Karnataka’s Kolar Amid Sec 144. *India Ahead*. Retrieved from <https://indiaaheadnews.com/karnataka/bjp-rally-dances-to-jai-shree-ram-outside-mosque-dargarh-in-karnatakas-kolar-amid-sec-144-194712/>

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid

in the Chikkmangalur district.⁸⁵⁰ Amidst rising communal tensions, another set of banners calling for the economic boycott of Muslims during a 12-day religious fest was put up in Aldur village of the district.⁸⁵¹ Hindu organisations in Karnataka planned a campaign to ban Muslim mango traders and sculptors from making idols of Hindu Gods. Pushcarts of Muslim fruit vendors were vandalised outside a Hanuman temple in Dharwad. A video surfaced on Twitter, showed members of a Hindutva outfit called Hindu Jagarana Vedike (HJV) campaigning to boycott Muslim auto drivers.

Finally, within the same month, Karnataka saw communal violence and instigation on both Ram Navami and, a week later, on Hanuman Jayanti.

Sequence of Events

On Ram Navami:

According to a Karnataka police official, despite several attempts to prevent it, on Ram Navami, processions organised by Hindutva organisations deliberately tried to and in some cases successfully turned up in front of mosques when the Muslim community broke their fast in the evening and had gathered there.⁸⁵² There were several processions with loud DJ sets blaring songs with communally provocative lyrics, played especially in front of masjids in several places, in some instances during evening prayers in the ongoing month of Ramzan including Masjid E Qadri Chaman in Kalaburagi and Osmania Masjid in Raichur.

On Friday, 8th April, communal tensions erupted at Mulbagal town of Karnataka's Kolar district at a Sri Rama Shobha Yatra procession. Held ahead of Ram Navami, the Rama Shobha Yatra started on Friday afternoon from Mulbagal's Shivakeshava Nagar.⁸⁵³ As it approached Jahangir Mohalla, a Muslim-majority neighbourhood at around 7:40 pm, there was reportedly a power supply interruption during stone-pelting broke out - it is not clear as to who started it. According to a different report, the procession was due to end by 5:30 but ran late and was at Jahangir Mohalla by 6:50 pm, when the violence began.⁸⁵⁴ Videos of the procession in Mulbagal, organised by Sri Ram Sene, depict the same visuals as Ram Navami processions in other states - a large crowd with saffron clothes and flags gathered in front of a mosque with loud DJ music, "Jai Shri Ram" sloganeering.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵⁰ Sharif M. (16 May 2022). Atrocities on minorities: Ram Navami turns violent across India in April. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/atrocities-on-minorities-ram-navami-turns-violent-across-india-in-april-2315432/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵¹ Ibid

⁸⁵² Bharadwaj KV Aditya. (11 April 2022). Rama Navami festivities turn platform for Hindutva organisations to flex muscles. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/rama-navami-festivities-turn-platform-for-hindutva-organisations-to-flex-muscles/article65311795.ece> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵³ Express News Service. (11 April 2022). Tension in Karnataka's Mulbagal after stones pelted at Rama Shobha Yatra, five detained. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/tension-in-karnatakas-mulbagal-after-stones-pelted-at-rama-shobha-yatra-five-detained-7861141/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵⁴ HT Correspondent. (10 April 2022). Karnataka's Kolar tense after stone pelting on procession. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/karnatakas-kolar-tense-after-stone-pelting-on-procession-101649529545239.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵⁵ Nair V. (10 April 2022). Karnataka: Hindutva mob goes berserk at Ram Navmi rally. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-hindutva-mob-goes-berserk-at-ram-navmi-rally-2306127/> [07 July 2022]

The commotion that followed included arson and vandalism – according to some reports, the windshields of two cars were damaged and a bike was set ablaze.⁸⁵⁶ Another report mentions multiple vehicles torched by the mob, after the police carried out a *lathi* (baton) charge.⁸⁵⁷ A few youths sustained minor injuries in the incident.

After the incident, many Muslim families residing in the area have alleged that they were threatened and beaten by the police. In video testimonies shared on social media, one woman said her entrance gate was broken and lights were crushed, and that the police threatened her children and husband.⁸⁵⁸ Another child, who was returning from home after reading namaz, said he was beaten up by the police. Another woman spoke of her husband being beaten by the police when he came home to meet their daughter – saying, “We were unaware of the situation, had iftar and were sitting in our homes. Suddenly 3-4 police jeeps came with the right-wing rally and attacked our houses, destroyed vehicles, [and] jumped on the rooftop. They asked every name of person passing by, [and] if it was Muslim they use to beat.”

In videos taken of the procession having turned violent, men in saffron shirts and flags can be clearly seen pelting stones on shops.⁸⁵⁹

The police imposed a curfew and Section 144 of the CrPC, and took nine people into custody. The undergoing investigation reportedly included looking at CCTV footage from the location and seizing around 30 motorcycles to identify those who were present at the location.⁸⁶⁰ Thus far the reasons for the power supply disruption during the procession are not clear, especially considering it reportedly provided cover for the violence to go on for as long as it did.⁸⁶¹ A senior police officer linked the switching off of the power supply in the circle when the procession was passing through, as aiding the mob and the escalation to violence.⁸⁶²

Elsewhere in Karnataka, on April 9th it was reported that at least 10 members of a Hindu outfit, Sriram Sene, vandalised four stalls owned by Muslim merchants at Nuggikeri Anjaneya temple premises in Dharwad.⁸⁶³ The Sene had set a deadline for the body currently managing the temple to evict Muslim merchants from the temple premises about 15 days prior to this, even

⁸⁵⁶ Express News Service. (11 April 2022). Tension in Karnataka’s Mulbagal after stones pelted at Rama Shobha Yatra, five detained. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/tension-in-karnatakas-mulbagal-after-stones-pelted-at-rama-shobha-yatra-five-detained-7861141/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵⁷ HT Correspondent. (10 April 2022). Karnataka’s Kolar tense after stone pelting on procession. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/karnatakas-kolar-tense-after-stone-pelting-on-procession-101649529545239.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵⁸ Nair V. (10 April 2022). Karnataka: Hindutva mob goes berserk at Ram Navmi rally. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-hindutva-mob-goes-berserk-at-ram-navmi-rally-2306127/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid

⁸⁶⁰ HT Correspondent. (10 April 2022). Karnataka’s Kolar tense after stone pelting on procession. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/karnatakas-kolar-tense-after-stone-pelting-on-procession-101649529545239.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁶¹ Ibid

⁸⁶² Nair V. (10 April 2022). Karnataka: Hindutva mob goes berserk at Ram Navmi rally. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-hindutva-mob-goes-berserk-at-ram-navmi-rally-2306127/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁶³ DHNS, Dharwad. (09 April 2022). Muslim merchants’ stalls in Dharwad vandalised. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/karnataka-districts/muslim-merchants-stalls-in-dharwad-vandalised-1099229.html> [07 July 2022]

threatening to stage a protest against the body for its failure to do so. However, the temple body did not fulfill this demand, and thus the violence took place.

Nabisab, a merchant, told *Deccan Herald*, “A few people ransacked my stall and threw fruits and flowers on the road. I had bought six quintals of watermelon fruits which were also destroyed. I have been running the stall for the last 15 years. Nobody ever directed me to vacate from here.” A few days prior to this, Karnataka police were accused of “delaying” registering an FIR against Chandru Moger, the coordinator of Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, who tweeted a call for boycotting Muslim fruit vendors.⁸⁶⁴

On April 11th, Monday, two students were injured in a clash during Ram Navami celebrations at the Central University of Karnataka in Kalaburagi district, PTI reported.⁸⁶⁵ The injured duo alleged that a couple of other students assaulted them on Sunday when they were performing special puja at the Lakshmi Devi temple on the university campus. According to Isha Pant, the district superintendent, “a fight broke out over some issues” between four boys named Rahul, Rahul Arya, Sadiq and another person.⁸⁶⁶

The same report also mentions “other clashes” in Kolar and Raichur – stating that at one event in Raichur, members of Sri Rama Sene celebrated Ram Navami with swords and urged people who attended the event to carry out ‘Love Kesari’ to counter ‘Love Jihad’ – a term used by right-wing groups to describe interfaith relationships, attributing them to a conspiracy by Muslim men to forcefully convert Hindu women to Islam.

On Hanuman Jayanti:

On April 17th, it was reported that the Karnataka police had arrested 46 people after a gathering “pelted stones at the Old Hubli Police Station” on Saturday night (9th April) in Hubballi, North Karnataka, resulting in the injury of 12 policemen, out of which 2 are in critical condition.⁸⁶⁷ The gathering in question was a protest against a provocative video posted on social media, with people seeking the accused be arrested.

A different report by *The Wire* mentions 40 people having been arrested, after members of the Muslim community staged a protest against insufficient action from the police regarding an individual (Abhishek Hiremath) having posted a provocative, photoshopped picture of a saffron

⁸⁶⁴ DHNS, Bengaluru. Police ‘delaying’ FIR over boycott of Muslim fruit vendors, says activist. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/city/top-bengaluru-stories/police-delaying-fir-over-boycott-of-muslim-fruit-vendors-says-activist-1099015.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁶⁵ HT Correspondent, Bengaluru. (12 April 2022). Four held in Kalaburagi over students’ clash during Ram Navami. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/bengaluru-news/four-held-in-kalaburagi-over-students-clash-during-ram-navami-101649704409064.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁶⁷ Dwarakanath N. (17 April 2022). Over 45 arrested, 12 cops injured after stones pelted at Hubli police station in Karnataka. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/karnataka/story/hubli-attack-likely-organised-says-karnataka-chief-minister-1938479-2022-04-17> [07 July 2022]

flag hoisted atop a mosque as his Whatsapp status message.⁸⁶⁸ He resides in Hubballi's Anand Nagar area, where the population of the Muslim community, is more.⁸⁶⁹

According to a senior Hubballi-based reporter with whom *The Wire* spoke, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and Popular Front of India (PFI) activists allegedly mobilised a section of the community to agitate against the police and pressed the forces into taking stricter action against the accused. This led to further tensions in the community, following which the protests turned violent.

According to Hubballi-Dharwad police commissioner Labhu Ram, a group of protestors had been persuaded to disperse from the scene earlier in the evening but another group of people had gathered at the police station around midnight and went on a rampage, even as the Muslim community leaders attempted to control the flare-up. A Youth Congress leader Shahjaman Mujahid used a loudspeaker from a nearby mosque to make appeals for peace and to allow the Police to take action as per law. He also appealed to the mob not to take law into their hands.⁸⁷⁰

Role and Response of State Actors

In the recent communal conflagrations that have been flaring up in Karnataka, the BJP-led state administration is widely considered to be in agreement with, and enabling, the Hindutva aggressors and provocateurs.⁸⁷¹

On Ram Navami, in many areas, BJP legislators led *Sri Rama shobha yatras* and *rath yatras* themselves. Revenue Minister R. Ashok who organised a *Sri Rama rath yatra* in his constituency Padmanabha Nagar, that saw thousands take to the streets on Sunday, said he wanted to make Rama Navami celebrations catch up like Ganesha festivities.⁸⁷² "I have spoken to other BJP MLAs in the city. We will start such *rathayatras* in every constituency from next year," he said. Denying this was part of the political mobilisation for the upcoming Assembly polls, he said this was to mark the start of work for Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Other Ministers, including C.N. Ashwath Narayan, Byrathi Basavaraj, and Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, led similar processions in their constituencies. Mr. Joshi, leading a *shobha yatra* in Hubballi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had fulfilled his promise of resolving the Rama Janmabhoomi row and initiated the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. According to him, along with celebrating Ram Navami, people should also start "treading the path of Lord Rama" to complete the dream of building *Rama Rajya*.

⁸⁶⁸ The Wire staff. (17 April 2022). Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/hubballi-muslim-mobs-protests-outside-police-station-over-hindutva-whatsapp-post-sec-144-imposed> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁶⁹ FP explainers. (18 April 2022). Explained: The violence in Karnataka's Hubballi over a WhatsApp status. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/explained-the-violence-in-karnatakas-hubballi-over-a-whatsapp-status-10567541.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁰ The Hindu Bureau. (17 April 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/old-hubballi-tense-after-stone-pelting-over-social-media-postsection-144-imposed-till-april-20/article65328704.ece?homepage=true> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷¹ The Wire Staff. (17 April 2022). Hubballi Tense After Muslim Mob Turned Violent at Police Station Over Hindutva WhatsApp Post. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/hubballi-muslim-mobs-protests-outside-police-station-over-hindutva-whatsapp-post-sec-144-imposed> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷² Bharadwaj KV Aditya. (11 April 2022). Rama Navami festivities turn platform for Hindutva organisations to flex muscles. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/rama-navami-festivities-turn-platform-for-hindutva-organisations-to-flex-muscles/article65311795.ece> [07 July 2022]

When violence broke out in Mulbagal town, additional police forces were deployed to maintain law and order, including two platoons of the Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) and six platoons of the District Armed Reserve (DAR). However, as described in the above section, the actions of police personnel in the area after the violence speak more to police brutality towards the minority community including women and children, rather than focusing on investigating the procession's tactics of inciting violence – which possibly included disrupting the electricity supply. “We thought police is for our safeguard but it's the contrary,” said a Muslim woman whose husband was physically assaulted by the police officers despite the family being inside their home, unaware of the situation unfolding outside.⁸⁷³

Regarding the vandalism of Muslim-owned stalls in Dharwad, the police had made no arrests in the days following the incident. Hindutva groups have been running campaigns to boycott Muslim businesses and traders in Karnataka for several months, with total impunity.

In fact, the state government is far quicker to assign blame towards aggressive acts by non-Hindu actors. Regarding what happened at Hubballi, Karnataka chief minister Basavaraj Bommai called the incident an “organised attack” even though the police officials in Hubballi did not mention any possibility of the attack being planned.⁸⁷⁴ State home minister Araga Jnanendra said, “It was a pre-planned attack. The miscreants wanted to create Devara Jeevanahalli and Kadugondahalli like the incident in Hubballi.” He was referring to a previous incident in Bengaluru in 2020 when about 4,000 Muslims reportedly torched the residence of R. Akhanda Srinivas Murthy, the Congress MLA from Pulakeshi Nagar assembly constituency, and his sister over a similar social media post by one of his family members. Four people died then, three of whom were killed by police firing.

12.2 Bihar

Background

Bihar saw a sudden surge in communal violence in 2017, and it is an ongoing phenomenon – including a steady growth of Hindutva networks as well as several reports of seizure of weapons.⁸⁷⁵ For this state, 2022 was not the first year when the politicisation of festivals such as Ram Navami by saffron outfits by forcing their entry into minority community concentrated areas, shouting provocative slogans and brandishing swords, caused widespread violence. In 2018, Bihar saw a slew of anti-muslim riots on Ram Navami across several of its districts.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷³ Nair V. (10 April 2022). Karnataka: Hindutva mob goes berserk at Ram Navmi rally. *The Siasat Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.siasat.com/karnataka-hindutva-mob-goes-berserk-at-ram-navmi-rally-2306127/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁴ The Wire Staff. (17 April 2022). Hubballi Tense After Muslim Mob Turned Violent at Police Station Over Hindutva WhatsApp Post. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/hubballi-muslim-mobs-protests-outside-police-station-over-hindutva-whatsapp-post-sec-144-imposed> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁵ Alam M. (13 January 2022). Debate: Bihar Is No UP, but Not the Epitome of Communal Harmony Either. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/politics/debate-uttar-pradesh-bihar-communal-harmony> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁶ Anwar T. (29 March 2018). Bihar: Islamophobic slogans, aggressive posturing led to communal clashes in 7 districts. *Newslick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/bihar-islamophobic-slogans-aggressive-posturing-led-communal-clashes-7-districts> [07 July 2022]

Triggered in Bhagalpur on 17th March, the violence engulfed seven districts of the state including Munger, Samastipur, Siwan, Gaya, Aurangabad and Nalanda, with hundreds of shops owned by Muslims being turned to ashes and over 100 people – including policemen – suffering injuries. Aurangabad was the worst affected, with over 50 shops turned to ashes and more than 25 people were injured.

In October of the same year, Sitamarhi district in northern Bihar saw 70-year-old Zainul Ansari lynched to death by a mob in an outbreak of communal violence that began with a Durga Puja procession by the Madhuban akhara passing through Muslim-majority localities, armed and shouting incendiary, anti-Muslim slogans.⁸⁷⁷ The body was found in Muzaffarpur Sadar Hospital – identified only after internet was restored, through a viral video of the lynching – local police forced Ansari’s relatives to bury him in Muzaffarpur itself, rather than taking him back to his native village.

In 2019, an 18-year-old anti-CAA protestor, Amir Hanzla, was killed in Phulwari Sharif by Hindu extremists belonging to the Hindu Putra Sangathan.⁸⁷⁸ According to a fact-finding report by several civil society organisations, multiple incidents of violence had occurred in various parts of Phulwari Sharif, in the form of premeditated attacks by local right-wing groups.⁸⁷⁹ Another fact-finding report, from Aurangabad, described the police committing various excesses to quell the anti-CAA-NRC protests, including damaging and ransacking homes, assaulting men, women and children in their homes, and looting them of their money and jewellery.⁸⁸⁰ Many of the Muslim residents arrested were allegedly innocent, yet treated with exceptional cruelty, including altering ages of minors in order to arrest them as adults.⁸⁸¹

Sequence of Events

In Bihar’s Aurangabad district, tensions prevailed in the aftermath of violence during Ram Navami processions, which reportedly left five people injured following an argument over the route of a procession.⁸⁸² Five motorcycles were also damaged. According to Aurangabad police superintendent Kantesh Mishra, “two groups clashed” when one of them on motorcycles was trying to use a lane for the procession while another group allegedly threw stones.

⁸⁷⁷ Sajjad M. (6 November 2018). Growing Violence in Sitamarhi Testifies to New Political Untouchability of Bihar’s Muslims. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/growing-violence-in-sitamarhi-testifies-to-new-political-untouchability-of-bihars-muslims> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁸ Ray UK, Alam M. (03 January 2020). Bihar Police Arrest Hindutva Activists for Killing Teenager Who Joined Anti-CAA Protest. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/bihar-hindu-fringe-groups-teenager-killed-caa-protest> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁸⁰ Sabrang India. (30 December 2019). Fact-finding report reveals police brutality at Aurangabad and Phulwari Sharif. Retrieved from <https://www.sabrangindia.in/article/fact-finding-report-reveals-police-brutality-aurangabad-and-phulwari-sharif> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸¹ Parth MN. (27 December 2019). In Bihar’s Aurangabad, police raid Muslim households to ‘quell’ CAA unrest, alter age of minors in FIR to identify them as adults. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/in-bihars-aurangabad-police-raid-muslim-households-to-quell-caa-unrest-alter-age-of-minors-in-fir-to-identify-them-as-adults-7833171.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸² Kumar A. (12 April 2022). In Bihar’s Aurangabad, police raid Muslim households to ‘quell’ CAA unrest, alter age of minors in FIR to identify them as adults. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/patna-news/tensions-in-bihar-after-violence-during-ram-navami-processions-101649748570172.html> [07 July 2022]

On April 10th, members of a Ram Navami procession in Bihar's Muzaffarpur reportedly climbed on top of a mosque and placed a saffron flag on the structure as the rest of the procession cheered them on. Videos show the procession stopped in front of Dak Bangla Masjid in Mohammadpur village, with several members armed with swords and loud music in the background, while a few men clad in saffron can be clearly seen dancing on top of the gate of the mosque and affixing a saffron flag there.⁸⁸³

A Hindustan Times report describes saffron flags being hoisted at two religious places that day, which led to violence in Paru and Kathaiya, both in Muzaffarpur.⁸⁸⁴

According to one report by a CPIML-affiliated website, reports of violence on Ram Navami came in from Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Gaya and some other districts. It found that in Qazi Mohammadpur village, Muzaffarpur, where a saffron flag was hoisted on the mosque, the procession was not only heavily armed but that they arbitrarily changed the route fixed by the administration to enter the street where the mosque is located, and that the police patrolling party was walking with the procession even as it chanted anti-Muslim slogans. This corresponds to strategies taken by Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions in all the other states. It further mentions that on 16 April CPIML legislative party leader Mahboob Alam and Phulwari MLA Gopal Ravidas, accompanied by Insaf Manch leaders Aftab Alam and Aslam Rahmani, visited the area and found that many of the rioters' names have not been included in the FIR at the behest of local BJP MLA Raju Singh who is also the founder and patron of the Hindu Putra organization (which reportedly organised the procession). The report states that all the rioters belong to the MLA's village. The main accused Hindu Putra Block President Rishabh Thakur had not been arrested as of when this report was published.

According to the report, another incident reportedly occurred on the night of 9 April (Ram Navami) in the same District at Asavari Banjaria village, Kathaiya Thana where some Hindutva organizations hung a saffron flag on the dome of the Idgah. When the villagers saw the saffron flag the next morning they informed Kathiyan Thana, after which the Muzaffarpur SSP and other officials arrived and the flag was taken down. Further, at Ghanshyampur in Darbhanga, rioters vandalized and looted shops and property of Muslims, and at Sherghati in Gaya, a rickshaw driver Naseem Shah was beaten badly and forced to chant Jai Shri Ram.

Role and Response of State Actors

According to the scant available details about police investigations regarding the Ram Navami violence, Muzaffarpur superintendent stated that "Two separate FIRs [first information reports] have been registered under IPC [Indian Penal Code] Section 153 A [promoting enmity between religions]. We are investigating how the videos went viral, which potentially could have created communal tension."⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸³ The Wire Staff. (12 April 2022). Bihar: Saffron Flag Planted on Muzaffarpur Mosque on Ram Navami. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/bihar-saffron-flag-planted-on-muzaffarpur-mosque-on-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁴ Kumar A. (12 April 2022). Tensions in Bihar after violence during Ram Navami processions. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/patna-news/tensions-in-bihar-after-violence-during-ram-navami-processions-101649748570172.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁵ Kumar A. (12 April 2022). Tensions in Bihar after violence during Ram Navami processions. *Hindustan Times*.

12.3 Andhra Pradesh

Background

In January 2022, at least 15 people were injured in a dispute over the construction of a place of worship in the Atmakur area of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh.⁸⁸⁶ After this, BJP state president Somu Veerraju termed the YSRCP government as communal and “against the Hindus”, stating that despite local Hindus in Atmakuru opposing the construction of a masjid in their neighbourhood, it was still constructed regardless with support from the local MLA and ministers.⁸⁸⁷ The BJP leader said district BJP president Budda Srikanth Reddy and local party workers tried to oppose the ‘illegal construction’ in the middle of the houses of Hindus, but were attacked by members of the Muslim community. He alleged that the state government’s ‘Muslim and Christian appeasement policy’ was to blame. Fighting the issue of ‘Muslim appeasement’ in particular is an important theme of BJP’s campaign to build up its organisation in the state.⁸⁸⁸

On 16th April, the state saw similar tactics of communal provocation as in the rest of the country, in a Hanuman Jayanti procession taken out in Kurnool, although it did not break out into large-scale violence as in some of the other states.

Over a month later, in May, casteist violence broke out in one of 13 new districts inaugurated by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, when the Konaseema district in Amalapuram saw protestors set fire to Ministers’ houses and several vehicles over the proposed renaming of the location to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema.⁸⁸⁹ The renaming had been seen as a victory for Dalit communities – Amalapuram is a Scheduled Caste (SC) Reserved constituency.

Sequence of Events

Reports from Andhra Pradesh describe communal tensions breaking out during Hanuman Jayanti processions in Holagunda town within the Kurnool district. *The Wire* reported on 18th April that a ‘shobha yatra’ on Hanuman Jayanti, organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in Holagunda village in Kurnool district, stopped near a mosque for an unusually long time, playing loud DJ music and raising slogans such as ‘Jai Shri Ram’, which led to stone-pelting and violence by “members of two different communities” that injured three people.⁸⁹⁰ Despite being

Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/patna-news/tensions-in-bihar-after-violence-during-ram-navami-processions-101649748570172.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁶ Pandey A. (9 January 2022). 15 injured as dispute over place of worship turns violent in Andhra Pradesh’s Kurnool. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/andhra-pradesh-kurnool-violence-injured-place-of-worship-bjp-1897895-2022-01-09> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁷ Hans News Service. (11 January 2022). Ongole: Veerraju terms govt ‘communal, anti-Hindu’. *The Hans India*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehansindia.com/andhra-pradesh/ongole-veerraju-terms-govt-communal-anti-hindu-724104> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁸ Kaushika P. (02 May 2022). BJP’s Peninsular Pitch | In Andhra, Party Bets Big on Brand Modi, Pawan Kalyan’s Star Power, Rifts Among Rivals. *News18*. Retrieved from <https://www.news18.com/news/politics/bjps-peninsular-pitch-in-andhra-party-bets-on-brand-modi-pawan-kalyans-star-pull-rival-rifts-5058517.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁸⁹ Naraharietty R. (25 May 2022). Casteist Violence Over Renaming an Andhra District After Ambedkar Shows How Naming Is Political. *The Swaddle*. Retrieved from <https://theswaddle.com/casteist-violence-over-renaming-an-andhra-district-after-ambedkar-shows-how-naming-is-political/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹⁰ The Wire Staff. (18 April 2022). Andhra Pradesh: Stone Pelting During Hanuman Shobha Yatra on Saturday, 3 Injured. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/andhra-pradesh-stone-pelting-during-hanuman->

asked by the police to lower the volume of the music, organisers of the procession kept the loudspeakers on.

Other reports, such as *Hindustan Times* and *ABP Live*, state that the Hanuman Jayanti procession with loud music that led to violence crossed the mosque in Eerla Katta in Holagunda town around 6:30 pm while Iftar was being observed.^{891 892} They corroborate that the procession raised ‘Jai Shri Ram’ slogans specifically against those at the mosque, and made deliberate efforts to remain in the sensitive area regardless of police efforts to move ahead or lower the music, and also state that at least 15 people sustained minor injuries. According to a report by *The Federal*, 20 people were taken in by the police although it has no details on who they were and under what charges.⁸⁹³ According to *Hindustan Times*, the stone-pelting continued the next morning too, leading to further police deployment and that 89 people were in police custody thus far – although the police hadn’t yet registered a case.⁸⁹⁴

Visuals from the incident that have surfaced on social media show people running through a street in the town, shouting and pelting stones at one another.⁸⁹⁵ Broken glass bottles and other articles were also seen littered across the streets.

Role and Response of State Actors

Although the few reports available regarding the incident do state upto 89 people taken into police custody, there is no available information on whether any formal investigation was carried out after, in Holagunda. Police officials had earlier stated that some of the individuals perpetuating violence could be identified from the videos online, however it is not possible to establish the identities of those arrested.⁸⁹⁶

Bharatiya Janata Party’s Andhra Pradesh unit president Somu Veerraju demanded that stringent action be taken against those who pelted stones at the procession.⁸⁹⁷

shobha-yatra-on-saturday-3-injured [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹¹ ABP News Bureau. (17 April 2022). Andhra Pradesh: Clash Between Two Communities During Hanuman Jayanti Procession; 15 Injured, 20 Held. Retrieved from <https://news.abplive.com/andhra-pradesh/andhra-pradesh-clash-between-two-communities-during-hanuman-jayanti-procession-15-injured-20-held-1526573> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹² Apparasu SR. (18 April 2022). 15 injured in Andhra clash, 89 in custody. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/15-injured-in-andhra-clash-89-in-custody-101650221719514.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹³ The Federal. (17 April 2022). Retrieved from <https://thefederal.com/news/9-injured-in-violence-during-hanuman-jayanti-procession-in-delhi-14-arrested/> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹⁴ Apparasu SR. (18 April 2022). 15 injured in Andhra clash, 89 in custody. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/15-injured-in-andhra-clash-89-in-custody-101650221719514.html> [07 July 2022]

⁸⁹⁵ TNM Staff. (17 April 2022). Violence, stone-pelting during Hanuman Jayanthi procession in Andhra, cops deployed. *The News Minute*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/violence-stone-pelting-during-hanuman-jayanthi-procession-andhra-cops-deployed-162959>

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid

⁸⁹⁷ Apparasu SR. (18 April 2022). 15 injured in Andhra clash, 89 in custody. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/15-injured-in-andhra-clash-89-in-custody-101650221719514.html> [07 July 2022]

13. TELANGANA — WHERE PEACE PREVAILED DESPITE PROCESSIONS

The previous chapters examined how in State after State, including some under non-BJP, outwardly secular Chief Ministers, the routes permitted for Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions, and of course their timings and the freedom to halt in front of major mosques, led invariably to rioting. And in some States, the appalling loss caused by marauding mobs was followed by the brutal destruction of homes and shops by tyrannical administrations.

But this was neither inevitable nor unavoidable.

There is no way of knowing whether directions came from the Chief Minister or the Home Minister of Telangana, but judging by the strict limits imposed by different Police Commissioners on Ram Navami Shobha Yatras that were proposed to be held on April 10, 2022 in different parts of the State, it would appear that this was so. In any event, the fact is that diverse Police chiefs in different parts of the State granted procession permissions with very strict conditions designed to avoid communal clashes; and where procession organisers insisted on choosing routes that passed through communally sensitive areas, their applications were simply ignored. Interestingly, in Hyderabad the Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) delineated a single route to be followed by all processions, and refused to allow Ram Navami Shobha Yatras in different localities or passing through communally sensitive areas.

At least three organisations filed writ petitions seeking urgent interim directions against the State Government, the Director General of Police, and the heads of Police in different zones of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, as also Superintendent of Police of Nirmal District, the Dy.S.P. and the Station House Officer of Bhainsa Town. The Sri Rama Navami Utsav Committee, Rasoolpura, filed WP No. 18037 of 2022 to challenge the rejection of its application to take a Sri Rama Navami Shobha Yatra on the eve of Ram Navami from Annanagar Hanuman Mandir via Sri Ram Mandir at Jagadish Nagar Colony, to Marghdarshani Society Ground. WP No. 18044 of 2022 was filed by the Kesari Hanuman Yuva Sanghathan to challenge the refusal of the Police authorities to decide their applications of April 2 and April 7 for taking out a Shobha Yatra on the eve of Ram Navami. WP No. 17767 of 2022 was filed by the Hindu Vahini to challenge the order of the Station House Officer, Bhainsa Town, rejecting the application to perform a Shobha Yatra on a sensitive route in Bhainsa.

When these petitions were taken up for urgent hearing on April 8, 2022, the administration stood firm, and placed on record the conditions imposed by the Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), Hyderabad, in his order described as Proceedings No. L&O/LO2/0775/2022 dated 07.04.2022. Justice Lalitha Kanneganti of the Telangana High Court was equally firm, and

after hearing counsel for the parties, passed a common order specifying in meticulous detail the routes which would be permitted for Shobha Yatras in Hyderabad and in Bhainsa.⁸⁹⁸ Though the Order pronounced in Court on April 8, 2022 did not contain detailed reasons, the learned Judge rejected the plea that different Hindu organisations be permitted to conduct independent processions in their own localities, and be allowed to pass through routes of their choice. Instead, she directed that the Sri Rama Navami Utsav Committee, Rasoolpura, and the Kesari Hanuman Yuva Sangathan may join the existing route already permitted for the first organisation that had applied and obtained permission as per the Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Proceedings No. 0775/2022 dated 07.04.2022.

Leaving no room for ambiguity, the Judge specified in the Order that the Petitioners could join the existing procession or take out their own procession on the same route from Seetha Rambagh Temple to Hanuman Vyayamshala School, Sultan Bazar via Bhoiguda Kaman, Mangalghat Police Station Road, Jali Hanuman, Dhoolpet, Puranapul, Gandhi Statue, Jumerath Bazar, Chudi Bazar, Siddiamber Bazar, Shanker Sher Hotel, Gowliguda Chaman, Gurudwara, Putlibowli 'X' Road, and Koti Sultan Bazar.

With equal attention to detail, Justice Kanneganti called upon the State counsel to specify the permissible route for processions in Bhainsa Town, and, accepting the route specified by the Station House Officer, Bhainsa, she permitted the Hindu Vahini to take out a procession between 09.00 A.M. and 01.00 P.M. from Goshala Das to Hanuman Temple, Koti Devudu, Old Sona Chandini, Kuber Adda, Bus Stand, Nirmal Chowrasta and Ram Leela Maidan. The Judge also directed that all but one of the 23 conditions imposed in the Additional Commissioner's Proceedings dated 07.04.2022, would also be applicable to the Hindu Vahini in Bhainsa.⁸⁹⁹

These elementary precautions taken by the State administration and the Police authorities in Telangana, which were strongly endorsed and backed up by Justice Lalitha Kanneganti, resulted in absolute peace and harmony even though huge Ram Navami processions were taken through Hyderabad and Bhainsa.^{900, 901}

The takeaway from Telangana's handling of these religious processions is that where the administration and the courts wish to prevent communal clashes and riots even while allowing religious processions, they can. It bears mentioning that Bhainsa is a communal cauldron, which has witnessed several Hindu-Muslim riots in the past. Situated some 260 km from Hyderabad, Bhainsa suffered major communal riots emanating from a religious procession in 2008, which resulted in the loss of nine lives.⁹⁰² The High Court was informed by State counsel that communal violence took place in Bhainsa in January 2020 and again in March, 2021, resulting in damage to properties and suffering of innocents. Various other incidents were also brought to the attention of the High Court. Despite this, Justice Lalitha Kanneganti balanced the constitutional right of

⁸⁹⁸ Telangana High Court, at http://tshcstatus.nic.in/hcorders/2022/206300180372022_1.pdf

⁸⁹⁹ Telangana High Court, at http://tshcstatus.nic.in/hcorders/2022/wp/wp_18037_2022.pdf

⁹⁰⁰ The Hindu, 08.47 PM, 10 April 2022, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/rama-navami-shobha-yatra-passes-off-peacefully/article65309052.ece>

⁹⁰¹ Telangana Today, 09.55 PM, Sun-10 April 2022, at <https://telanganatoday.com/hyderabad-rama-navami-shobha-yatra-passes-off-peacefully>

⁹⁰² The Statesman, April 9, 2022, at <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/tight-security-shobha-yatra-hyderabad-bhainsa-1503058760.html>

Hindus to take out a religious procession, with the need to maintain peace and harmony in a secular nation, and allowed the procession while making it subject to stringent conditions.⁹⁰³

In the final analysis, Telangana proved that it can be done.

⁹⁰³ Telangana High Court, at http://tshcstatus.nic.in/hcorders/2022/wp/wp_18037_2022.pdf

14. INSIGHTS

Derived from the previous chapters, this section outlines the commonalities between the events that occurred in different states, and makes certain inferences based on emerging patterns across different States – with regard to the genesis of violent processions as well as the set of conditions that are cultivating communal tensions.

There are distinct and eerie patterns amongst the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions in April 2022 across all the States covered in this report. They all comprised of larger-than-usual gatherings of saffron-clad men drawing swords, waving trishuls and even (in some cases) firearms, taking deliberately mapped paths that crossed major mosques and Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods, and raising provocative slogans about the coming of a Hindu Rashtra, the conditions under which Muslims would be allowed to live in this Nation, and even justifying violence against Muslims. Many of these processions were accompanied by large flatbed trucks with concert-sized, high-decibel amplifiers and mega-speakers, on which DJs blasted hate-filled anti-Muslim music.

While in some States such as in Goa or Maharashtra, the procession organisers appear to have been satisfied with mere intimidation of members of the minority community, in others – particularly in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand – they used the garb of religious festivities to openly target, attack, and even destroy Muslim shops, handcarts, businesses, livelihoods, and even homes. States that saw the most violence are also those where Hindutva groups and extremists enjoy the highest levels of political patronage. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its proxies and fellow travelers, such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bajrang Dal, the Hindu Jagran Manch, and others have clearly played a direct and proximate role in all such states in spreading communal unrest.⁹⁰⁴

Simultaneously, in continuity with the treatment given to other recent events of communal violence that disproportionately targeted and affected the Muslim community, the events of April 2022 have also been instrumentalised to lend credibility to the notion of “*Hindu khatre mein hai*” (Hindus are in danger). Therefore, it is important to document the seemingly coordinated nature of the provocation and abuse, the one-sided media portrayal of the genesis of the violence, and the erasures of losses incurred at the hands of both mob violence and the brutality of the State’s response.

Mainstream media, politicians and commentators from the Hindu Right kept up a stream of invective suggesting that the widespread, pan-India violence in April 2022 was instigated by Muslim communities that threw stones at the processions without provocation. It is clear that news media, and particularly the mainstream television channels, played a leading role in

⁹⁰⁴ Anwar T. (13 April 2022). Ram Navami Violence: Institutionalised bid to subvert democracy. *NewsClick*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/Ram-Navami-Violence-Institutionalised-Bid-Subvert-Democracy-Mobsters-Pave-Way-Hindu-Rashtra> [09 July 2022]

manufacturing fear amongst the Hindu majority, helping to galvanise public opinion against minority communities.

This report, based entirely upon details collected and collated by compiling reportage and published materials from credible and recognised sources, demonstrates the fact that the processions themselves were the primary catalyst for the violence, in a multitude of ways.

Nature of instigation

It is not insignificant that the occasions of the birth of Hindu Gods Ram and Hanuman, marked as ‘Ram Navami’ and ‘Hanuman Jayanti’, were used for such strident political mobilisation in April 2022: both days happened to fall in the holy month of Ramzan. The processions concertedly targeted places of worship by gathering in front of Mosques and chanting anti-Muslim slogans, either at the same time as *namaz* was being offered, or at the breaking of the fast after sunset, thereby ensuring that the confrontation would coincide with the largest possible number of Muslim people being present and vulnerable.

The processions used offensive slogans and music that openly called for violence against non-Hindus and particularly the Muslim community. What are being attempted to be passed off as ‘simply religious slogans’ have in fact direct political messaging; they are calls that have accompanied mob lynchings and pogroms.

An important part of the effort put into instigating violence, is the role of the provocative and extremist media that has changed the face of Hindu festivals and celebrations. Incendiary and anti-Muslim songs have been reported from every one of these processions, and have in general become a mainstay of Hindu religious processions in recent years.

An investigation by Caravan magazine into the ‘Hindutva pop’ phenomenon and its role in galvanising Hindu youth against the Muslim community, found that in both Roorkee and Karauli, most people who took part in the Ram Navami rallies knew the provocative songs being played by heart.⁹⁰⁵ From young children to middle-aged men, they could all rattle off the names of their favourite songs and artists, which included Sandeep Acharya, Laxmi Dubey, Prem Krishnavanshi and Kanhiya Mittal.

Songs by these artists are not only popular online – referring to their millions of views on YouTube – but are also often played at temples, political rallies and cultural functions. They mark a shift within Hindu devotional music towards taking on direct political messaging, with lyrics about cow slaughter, Ram Mandir construction, Krishna Janmabhoomi, the lack of unity in Hindus. Their circulation is openly facilitated by the BJP IT cell, even when their violent lyrics get flagged by social media platforms’ content moderation systems. “When my channel got suspended, the central government came to my rescue,” said Laxmi Dubey.⁹⁰⁶ One of her songs

⁹⁰⁵ Sakunia S. (01 July 2022). Hindu Rashtra OST: The Hindutva pop singers fuelling a politics of hate. *The Caravan*. Retrieved [11 July 2022] from <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/hindutva-pop-hate>

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid

has lyrics that translate to ““We are hardcore Hindus, we will create a new history / We will enter the homes of enemies, and will cut their heads [...] / In every home the saffron flag will be seen, the rule of Ram will return / There is only one slogan, one name, victory to lord Ram, victory to lord Ram.”⁹⁰⁷

Hateful music inscribes religious bigotry into ‘culture’ as everyday life, and the presence of DJs at all of these processions contributes to this. The visuals of young men dancing to and spinning electronic music that blends the devotional and the political with liberal doses of hatred, shows the concerted nature of these strategies. The young men who participated in the Ram Navami procession in Raichur, Karnataka, for example, could have been merely participating in a festival. Yet the song they played in front of the Osmania Mosque in Raichur has a music video made up of footage of the Babri Masjid demolition.⁹⁰⁸

In Karauli, Rajasthan where communal violence broke out from 2nd April onwards, organisers of the *Nav Samvatsar Shobha Yatra* played songs such as ‘*Topi wala*’ (skullcap wearer) by Sandeep Chaturvedi.⁹⁰⁹ Its lyrics translate as “The day the Hindus wake up, the consequence will be / That the skull-cap wearer will bow down and say victory to lord Ram./ The day my blood boils, I wish to show you your place / Then I will not speak, only my sword will.” In Karauli, where only 6% of the population is Muslim, many men had this song downloaded on their phones. According to one who participated in the procession, “When we listen to the song, we feel strengthened, we get the feeling that we want to kill every single Muslim around.”⁹¹⁰ Others compared these songs to ‘Vande Mataram’ or the national song.

Tactics of mobilising the majority

The Ram Navami riots reflected the important role played by vigilante outfits and local branches of Hindu nationalist groups in building an ethnostate. Having sprouted fast across the country over recent years, it is apparent that several local Hindutva groups are focused on trying to homogenise the practices of Hinduism. These organisations and street gangs, loosely affiliated around religious preachers or local leaders, are perpetuating an atmosphere of constant, everyday terror – sometimes seemingly low-grade violence, and at other times far more destructive attacks. These processions are perhaps the most visible, visceral forms of such an assertion.

⁹⁰⁷ Iyer A. (11 April 2022). ‘The day my blood boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [11 July 2022]

⁹⁰⁸ Prakash B. (25 April 2022). Why the toxic beats of ‘Disc Jockey Hindutva’ are so dangerous for India. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1022502/how-the-toxic-beats-of-disc-jockey-hindutva-are-inspiring-violence> [11 July 2022]

⁹⁰⁹ Iyer A. (11 April 2022). ‘The day my blood boils’: How songs incited hate at a Navratri rally in Rajasthan’s Karauli. *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1021548/the-day-my-blood-boils-how-songs-incited-hate-at-a-navratri-rally-in-rajasthan-s-karauli> [11 July 2022]

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid*

In some areas, this might suggest that caste-based polarisation is being replaced by a religion-based one, by appealing to all caste groups to identify themselves as superior to non-Hindus, especially Muslims. A ground report from Jharkhand about the Ram Navami violence of 2022 states that “A section of Dalits already seem to have traded their Constitutional right to equality with feeling of superiority and power over the Muslims, but subject themselves to the traditional authority of those above them in the Hindu caste hierarchy. They control no resources save the feeling of authority over the Muslims.”⁹¹¹ In Delhi’s Jahangirpuri, the Hindutva cause represents a path to social mobility for younger generations among the lower-caste Bengali Hindus, a way to assert their credentials as part of a pan-Hindu identity against a common enemy: Muslims.⁹¹² Reports from Khargone in Madhya Pradesh reflect similar patterns and motivations. The Sakal Hindu Samaj, a collective created in 2021 to bring various caste groups under its fold to address issues concerning Hindus in Khargone, has tried to find ways to enforce the economic boycott of Muslim businesses in the district’s villages.⁹¹³

The Wire’s ground report from Khargone a few weeks after Ram Navami, details a set of changes the town went through that facilitated this rise of extremism. There has been a spike in the number of Hindu right-wing organisations – “Five years ago, only the Shiv Sena was active here,” said one local. “Today, we have the Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena, Gau Raksha Dal, Karni Sena, VHP, Sakal Hindu Samaj...in all there are about eight or nine such sansthans.”⁹¹⁴ Another important change has been a rise in economic boycotts since 2018, prior to which communal flares didn’t affect economic ties as strongly.⁹¹⁵ The boycotts started with the town’s real estate boom, when these organisations began appealing to developers not to sell houses to Muslims. The rise of social media in disseminating hate speech and misinformation, has been well documented in terms of its capacity to generate offline violence.

A fourth change is the nature of the administration’s response with bulldozers indiscriminately used as reprisals for purported obstruction of processions. This change has also allowed the numerous Hindutva groups to foment hate with more impunity.⁹¹⁶

Further, that the processions were all armed with swords, tridents, bricks and bats is testament to the politicisation of Hindu festivals and their takeover by paramilitary groups operating with impunity due to State support.

Weapons distribution has also been more openly taking place in recent years, especially in BJP-ruled states. April 2022 also saw mass events for distributing swords and tridents organised by Antarashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP) in both Gujarat and Assam, where they also announced

⁹¹¹ Engineer I. (19 April 2022). Koderma: What actually happened on Ram Navami? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/koderma-what-actually-happened-ram-navami> [07 July 2022]

⁹¹² Pandey T. (26 April 2022). Desire for pan-Hindu identity, hatred for Bangladeshis. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/features/shakha-taught-us-to-be-brave-how-children-were-drawn-into-jahangirpuri-violence/930389/>

⁹¹³ Lalwani V. (29 April 2022). In A Riot-Torn MP Town, Hindus Organise an Economic Boycott of Muslims. *Article 14*. Retrieved from <https://article-14.com/post/in-a-riot-torn-mp-town-hindus-organise-an-economic-boycott-of-muslims-626b0b188f64b> [09 July 2022]

⁹¹⁴ Rajshekhar M. (08 July 2022). More Hindu Right Groups, Polarising with Impunity: How Communal Tensions Intensified in Khargone. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/khargone-madhyapradesh-communal-tensions-boycott> [11 July 2022]

⁹¹⁵ *ibid*

⁹¹⁶ *ibid*

further such drives.⁹¹⁷ Calls for mass violence against Muslims in general have been taking place, with tacit endorsement from the authorities, in the form of Dharma Sansads and Hindu Mahapanchayats in Delhi, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.⁹¹⁸

It is clear that incendiary processions have been used to play a multi-functional role in majoritarian consolidation. They are also masquerading as a popular but extremely dangerous mode of religious expression. Although this report is focused on the processions for Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti in April 2022, and the events surrounding them, the same strategies are being invoked on smaller scales almost every month. On April 2nd, the beginning of Navratri, Uttar Pradesh's Gahmar village saw a procession called the Ram Kalash Yatra, where young Hindu men played the same inflammatory songs and planted a saffron flag on the local mosque.⁹¹⁹ Muslim residents are now in fear of going to the mosque but have not responded in any way, perhaps due to being a very small minority in the area.

Administrative response as collective punishment

While there have been earlier phases of communal violence in India, which entrenched cycles of violence, segregation and generated lasting barriers to socioeconomic mobility for Indian Muslims in particular, they did not undermine State control over society or its authority over institutions in the manner that is being seen today.

Coordination between Hindutva outfits, and the police and district administration, means combining an extreme ideological entity with the civil service. What can be observed from the 2022 Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti series of events is that the relationship between them has become institutionalised in many parts, sustaining a violently undemocratic model of governance that is anathema to the rule of law.⁹²⁰

In Khargone and Sendhwa in Madhya Pradesh, Jahangirpuri in Delhi, Himmatnagar and Khambhat in Gujarat, the district administrations and local police carried out demolition drives in the immediate aftermath of the violence, i.e., the day after Ram Navami and the day after Hanuman Jayanti. As the chapters of this Report have examined in detail, their punitive motivations were frankly admitted by either the district officials or State ministers, who made no bones about their motivations.

⁹¹⁷ SabrangIndia. (25 April 2022). How is the Assam gov't allowing Pravin Togadia's trishul distribution? *Sabrang*. Retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/how-assam-govt-allowing-pravin-togadias-trishul-distribution> [11 July 2022]

⁹¹⁸ Jha DK. (01 March 2022). Unholy Orders: The Haridwar dharma sansad is a reflection of the RSS's new strategy with sadhus. *The Caravan*. Retrieved from <https://caravanmagazine.in/commentary/haridwar-dharma-sansad-vhp-rss-hate-speech> [11 July 2022]

⁹¹⁹ Iyer A. (06 May). CCTVs recorded violence against mosques during Navratri. But are the police watching the footage? *Scroll*. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/1023257/cctvs-recorded-violence-against-mosques-during-navratri-but-are-the-police-watching-it> [11 July 2022]

⁹²⁰ Ibid

Widely recognised by lawyers, human rights defenders and experts to be arbitrary and unconstitutional, the demolition drives break the three cardinal principles of the Indian Constitution, i.e., presumption of innocence, rule of law, and separation of powers between the three wings of the government.

The demolitions mark a set of important developments in the ongoing dismantling of rule of law and religious freedom in India. One conspicuous feature has been the largely passive role of the court. Most worrisome are the long-term implications of the illegality being ascribed to Muslim settlements. In the immediate sense, the fallout is that loss of housing and livelihood has a cascading effect on all other human rights. However, through these post-procession demolition drives, the occupation of space by the Muslim community is being tagged as encroachment in the concerned States, when the major part of Indian urbanisation comprises of unauthorised construction.

Particular characteristics of Indian urbanisation, such as unclear systems of land ownership and planned illegalities, have led to a majority of homes in cities like Delhi being technically illegal or unauthorised constructions, even though they exist with tacit approval of the state.⁹²¹ People settle in unoccupied parts, governments and administrations don't do anything for years and, most often, regularise them. Many of the residents who lost their homes and livelihoods in these drives testified to receiving entitlements such as electricity or water, and many had documents determining the legitimacy of their residence.

Historically, the displacement and dispossession of minorities in India tends to be rewritten as resettlement and 'migration'. For e.g., the multiplying of places of Muslim concentration in the form of 'resettlement colonies' on the peripheries of towns and villages, in the aftermath of the Gujarat 2002 riots was termed migration by the state.⁹²²

Victims of the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti violence, and the demolition drives that followed, face several layers of barriers to rehabilitation. It includes the loss of cash, documentation, and social support systems, threats to physical safety, and economic boycotts, but it is more than state apathy – in situations of communal violence, the Indian state has a history of disrupting Muslim families' ability to rebuild and recover. This is a precarity borne particularly by women, who bear the brunt of destabilizing the family and community.

The absence of mandatory rehabilitation plans alongside the now-frequent demolitions in BJP-ruled states must be seen in the context of the fate of people displaced due to communal or ethnic violence in India constituting a major information gap, particularly for those who do not live in formal camps or resettlement areas.⁹²³

In conclusion, the available evidence corroborates statements by civil society groups, lawyers, academics and activists, that India has reached a stage of perpetual violence. In an open letter to

⁹²¹ Banerjee, C. (2022, May 18). Why cities create ghettos & politics sends bulldozers. The Times of India. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-cities-create-ghettos-politics-sends-bulldozers/articleshow/91611194.cms> [09 July 2020]

⁹²² Badigar, S. (2012). A "Normal" Anomaly: Displacement due to Communal Violence in Gujarat. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(3), 42–47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41419740> [11 July 2022]

⁹²³ New Internationalist. (04 January 2021). Displaced by a riot. Retrieved from <https://newint.org/features/2021/01/04/displaced-riot> [11 July 2022]

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more than a hundred retired senior civil servants stated that the administration of law has become the means by which the minorities, particularly the Muslim community, can be kept in a state of perpetual fear.⁹²⁴ Facilitation and support for communal frenzy is being provided at all levels of the administration – from local police and administrative officials to the highest political levels in state and central governments. The letter states, “While the actual commission of violence may be outsourced to fringe groups, there is little doubt as to how the ground for their operations is made fertile, how each of them follows a master script and shares a common ‘tool kit’ and how the propaganda machinery of a party as well as the state is made available to them to defend their actions.”⁹²⁵

⁹²⁴ The Wire staff. (26 April 2022). Your Silence in the Face of Enormous Societal Threat Is Deafening: Former Civil Servants to Modi. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/narendra-modi-civil-servants-communal-violence-silence-defeating> [11 July 2022]

⁹²⁵ Ibid



Mohammad Nadeem Shaikh, a 36-year-old resident of Gulshan Nagar, was sleeping in his residential house with his family when he heard his house being demolished. In the presence of many police officials and other functionaries, his house was being razed to the ground by a JCB. (Madhya Pradesh's Khargone, April 2022)



Salma Bi, a widowed mother of three is a resident of Sanjay Nagar in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. Salma Bi's house was among the 5 houses of Muslims burnt by a mob in Sanjay Nagar area. (April 2022)



The government demolishes the homes of Muslim residents in Sendhwa, Madhya Pradesh after the violence that spread on 10th April 2022 from the Ram Navami processions.



Shaista Khan outside her rubble house. (April 2022)

(Photos and text courtesy: MEER FAISAL)