

Unchecked Anti-Minority Hate Speech and Violence in India since [AL IND 5/2024](#)

1. Introduction

In an allegation letter in September 2024, three Special Procedures mandate-holders¹ had highlighted reports of ‘rising communal tensions and instances of hate speech in India against Muslim minorities, resulting in hostility, discrimination and potential physical violence,’ which they noted, appeared to be ‘incited by Indian political leaders,’ including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had referred to Muslims as ‘infiltrators’ and other pejoratives during India’s 2024 General Election.² The letter further warned: *‘Considering the communally and politically charged context in India, the official position, popular following and apparent impunity enjoyed by PM Modi and other high-ranking public officials (speaker), his direct mention of Muslims together with references to demeaning, stereotypical and untrue remarks as well as widely-known conspiracy theories associated with them (content and form), and their seeming intention to wilfully advocate and engage in hateful statements inciting to discrimination, hostility or violence (intent), the speech in question is likely to lead to further hostility, discrimination and potentially violence (likelihood of harm) against India’s Muslims.’*

Till date, the Indian government has not responded to the allegation letter. Despite the mandate-holders noting that the speeches appeared to prima facie fulfil the threshold for internationally prohibited advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence, PM Modi—and other senior public officials highlighted in the letter, like India’s Home Minister Amit Shah, and the state Chief Ministers of Assam and Uttar Pradesh, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Yogi Adityanath, respectively—have, so far, not been the subjects of formal investigation or criminal prosecution by India’s domestic authorities. Indeed, each of these leaders has continued to use pejorative, demeaning and dehumanising language in reference to Muslims, using the same terms and terminology as highlighted by the UN mandate-holders: at a speech on India’s Independence Day on 15 August 2025, Modi once again [accused](#) ‘infiltrators’ of targeting India’s youth, women, and tribals, and announced a ‘high powered demographic mission’ to tackle the ‘serious crisis.’ On the same day in Assam, Chief Minister Sarma—who had previously remarked at an election campaign rally in Jharkhand in October 2024 that [‘we must set fire against infiltrators’](#)—also remarked that his state was facing various forms of ‘jihad’ from an ‘unknown community’, characterising it as [‘a battle for our very existence.’](#) [Shah](#), India’s Home Minister and [Adityanath](#), Uttar Pradesh CM, too have made recent references to Muslims as ‘infiltrators’ and other pejoratives. Alongside, other, mid and local-level BJP politicians who have openly incited violence against Muslims have recently been elevated to ministerial positions in state governments in [Delhi](#) and [Maharashtra](#), illustrating how involvement in anti-Muslim hate speech and violence consolidates political standing within the ruling party.

Other trends and patterns highlighted in the allegation letter too have continued unabated: at election rallies (such as those in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh in November 2024, Delhi in February 2025, and the ongoing election campaign in Bihar) and other events in public settings, senior ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and influential religious figures have continued to invoke unfounded Islamophobic conspiracy theories such as ‘love jihad,’ ‘land jihad,’ religious conversions and illegal immigration, as fear-mongering tactics, and issued direct calls for violence and boycotts against Muslims. India Hate Lab [documented](#) 1165 such in-person

¹ Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

² AL IND 5/2024

hate speech events in 2024, a 74% increase compared to 2023. Of these, 98.5% targeted Muslims, and 85.4% were also live-streamed or shared online. In 2025, major spikes in anti-Muslim hate speech—and violence—have been recorded in the aftermath of the April 22 atrocities by armed groups in Kashmir (64 in-person hate speech events were [reported](#) in the 10 days following the attack), the ongoing xenophobic expulsion / deportation targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims and Rohingya refugees (18 hate speech rallies and 9 instances of targeted violence were [reported](#) in Assam alone between 19 and 30 July), religious observances (such as the [Hindu Kumbh Mela](#) in January 2025, and [Holi](#) and [Ramadan](#) in March), and other local conflagrations. Between January 2024 and June 2025, SAJC has also documented 31 targeted killings of Muslims in apparent religiously-motivated hate crimes, over 400 instances of similarly motivated assault, and recurring episodes of mass violence in over a dozen states across India.³ The incendiary rhetoric flagged by the UN experts is thus, clearly, hardening and increasingly normalised. And the likely harm they warned of is actively materialising across the country.

The rest of this note is structured as follows: Section 2 analyses the political and ideological infrastructure that generates anti-Muslim hate speech, focusing on senior BJP leaders, affiliated organisations, and aligned Hindu religious figures. Section 3 examines how these narratives are amplified through India’s broadcast, print, and digital media ecosystems. Section 4 documents the concrete impacts of this hate speech in terms of violence, discrimination, and dehumanisation. Section 5 evaluates India’s domestic accountability framework, highlighting gaps in law, enforcement, and judicial oversight. A catalogue of selected recent (post AL-IND 5/2024) hate speeches by major BJP leaders is attached as Annexure.

2. **The political and ideological infrastructure**

The production and proliferation of anti-Muslim hate speech is sustained by a broader political and ideological architecture. This section examines how senior leaders of the ruling BJP, affiliated Hindu nationalist organisations, and religious figures play a central role in shaping and legitimising hostile narratives. Together, these actors provide the ideological framing and political sanction that normalise hate speech and incitement, casting Muslims as threats to national security, and cloaking calls for exclusion or violence within the language of patriotism and self-defence.

- a. **Ruling party leadership:** As mentioned previously, the leadership of the ruling BJP plays a central role in setting the tone and direction of public discourse. Rooted in an exclusionary ideology (*Hindutva*, or Hindu nationalism) that casts Muslims—and Christians—as outsiders or internal enemies, the rhetoric of senior leaders provides the narrative frame through which lower-level party figures, affiliated organisations, and media channels mobilise hostility. The recurrent tropes used by BJP leaders and other Hindu affiliates are drawn directly from these ideological constructs, which frame minorities not as fellow citizens but as existential threats.

While the Prime Minister, Home Minister, and state Chief Ministers use recurring tropes of ‘infiltration,’ ‘jihad,’ and demographic threat, it is often mid- and local-level BJP politicians who give these narratives their most dangerous expression. Figures such as Kapil Mishra in Delhi, T. Raja Singh in Telangana, and Nitesh Rane in Maharashtra have, for years, repeatedly engaged in open incitement, with speeches urging violence or openly calling for the boycott of Muslims. Rather than facing sanction, many have been actively rewarded: in February 2025, Mishra—who in February 2020 had led crowds with

³ See quarterly editions of our India Persecution Tracker [here](#).

the slogan ‘[goli maaro saalo ko](#)’ (‘shoot the traitors’) at the onset of anti-Muslim mass violence in Delhi—was [appointed](#) a minister in the Delhi government, while Rane—who has repeatedly referred to Muslims as ‘[green snakes](#)’ and called for them ‘[to be shot](#)’, and [offered a bounty](#) for the tongue of a Muslim parliamentarian—was similarly [elevated](#) to a ministerial post in Maharashtra in December 2024. Such promotions illustrate how incendiary rhetoric and even involvement in violence do not disqualify but instead consolidates political standing within the ruling party.

- b. RSS and affiliated organisations:** Alongside the BJP’s own leadership, other Hindu nationalist groups and networks too play a central role in sustaining the ecosystem of hate. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) functions as the ideological core of this network, with the BJP serving as its political wing and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its youth wing Bajrang Dal (BD) being other crucial arms. Across this family of organisations (the Sangh Parivar, or the RSS Family) Leaders of these affiliates have been at the forefront of calls for violence against Muslims, while local cadres organise public rallies and campaigns that institutionalise ‘everyday communalism’ and act as shock troops during episodes of targeted violence.

Also prominent are unaffiliated but ideologically aligned religious figures such as extremist Hindu priests Yati Narsinghanand, Swami Prabhodanand Giri and Bajrang Muni Das, who also continue to organise public events marked by open calls for violence and boycotts against Muslims. Most prominently, at *dharam sansad* events organised in Uttarakhand 2021, such leaders had made open calls to undertake ‘[a cleanliness drive](#)’ against Muslims and [kill ‘at least 2 million of them’](#), and for the [rape and impregnation](#) of Muslim women. While there has been some limited judicial intervention against such events⁴, these individuals continue to operate freely, are invited to address large gatherings, and are further legitimised through their visible interactions. For instance, Narsinghanand—who has made multiple open calls for the genocide of Muslims—was [reportedly](#) seen walking along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath at a public event to mark the Hindu Kumbh festival in January 2025.

3. **Propaganda and disinformation: media and digital ecosystem**

The hostile narratives generated by political and ideological actors are amplified through India’s broadcast, print, and digital media ecosystems, which now serve as the primary vehicles for the spread and normalisation of anti-Muslim hate speech.

- a. Partisan broadcast media networks:** Indian broadcast media—particularly Hindi and English news channels—have played a central role in disseminating hate speech and disinformation. News anchors and presenters routinely platform or echo incendiary claims, framing Muslims as ‘jihadis,’ ‘traitors,’ or demographic threats, and portraying Muslims as collectively responsible for acts of violence or terrorism. In the wake of the April 2025 Kashmir atrocities, for instance, India’s leading television channels framed the tragedy primarily as an assault on Hindus, downplayed evidence of Muslim civilians who aided victims, and aired slogans such as ‘[#WeWantRevenge](#)’ and calls for a ‘final solution’ in Kashmir—explicitly echoing exterminationist Holocaust-era rhetoric. During the subsequent India–Pakistan military hostilities, these channels [circulated a torrent](#) of unverified, exaggerated, and often demonstrably [false claims](#), leading one observer to

⁴ See section 4 of this note.

note that India's television news ecosystem had become 'like Frankenstein's monster—completely out of control'.

Earlier episodes followed similar patterns: In March 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, broadcast networks across the country falsely portrayed Muslims as engaging in 'corona-jihad' and wilfully spreading the virus. These included an hour-long broadcast by Zee News' Sudhir Chaudhary detailing 12 different ways in which India's Muslims are engaged in 'jihad'. (In March 2025, Chaudhary was appointed chief editor of DD News, India's state broadcaster.) Similarly, in November 2021, News18 India's Aman Chopra aired an [hour-long programme](#) accusing India's Muslims of engaging in 'spit jihad,' an unfounded conspiracy theory alleging that Muslims deliberately spit into food consumed by Hindus. In December 2024, after Yati Narsinghanand's call for another *dharam* sansad was denied permission by local authorities (following court intervention)⁵, he was platformed by Sudarshan News' owner and chief editor [Suresh Chavhanke](#), himself a prolific hate speech offender.

While television remains dominant, print media—particularly Hindi-language mass circulation dailies like *Dainik Jagran*, *Amar Ujala*, *Hindustan*, and *Sandesh*—has also played a key role in spreading misleading or inflammatory stories that reflect official talking points or Hindu nationalist conspiracy theories. These patterns mirror the broader trend across broadcast media: uncritical reproduction of ruling party's communal rhetoric, selective reporting, and the use of language that stokes fear and hatred towards Muslims.⁶

This pattern of hate amplification by media networks has been enabled by broader structural changes in India's media landscape. A Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report in 2019 [noted](#) that the production and distribution of media content is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, and that many leading outlets are controlled by individuals with direct political ties to the BJP, or by corporate conglomerates aligned with the ruling party. A particularly telling example is [Republic TV](#), co-founded by a businessman and central Minister. Arnab Goswami, a news anchor who is also the managing director and chief editor of the Republic network, frequently attacks critics of the BJP and has been [reportedly](#) caught touting his access to the Prime Minister's office and to other senior BJP ministers. Republic TV has, since its inception in 2017, consistently been the most-watched English-language news channel in the country. In 2022, NDTV, seen by many as India's last major independent TV broadcaster, was subject to a hostile takeover by a conglomerate led by Gautam Adani—[described](#) by RSF as marking 'the end of pluralism in India's leading media'. These ownership structures, combined with limited regulatory oversight, help explain why hate speech by ruling party figures is rarely questioned or fact-checked—and often platformed without challenge.

These examples are only illustrative, with pro-BJP and anti-minority actors now enjoying near-total dominance of India's media networks, and continuing to broadcast slow-burn hate campaigns on an almost-daily basis. Scholars have [noted](#) that such coverage serves three functions for the BJP government and the larger BJP ecosystem: the spreading and normalisation of hateful conspiracies that target minorities, particularly Muslims;

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For a detailed report on the lack of inclusivity in Indian print news media coverage, see '[Inclusiveness in Indian Media Coverage](#)' (Vinod K. Jose, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Nov. 2024)

distracting the public from wider political and economic issues; and justifying the BJP government's discriminatory policies and actions against minorities.

- b. **Domination of social media networks by pro-BJP actors:** Parallel to the rise of television news, India has also seen a sharp rise in access to internet services. Online social networking platforms such as Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), Google (YouTube), and X (formerly known as Twitter), all of which have hundreds of millions of Indian users, have also become important channels through which hate speech and incitement are circulated

While all major Indian political parties now have dedicated social media operations, the BJP's 'IT Cell' has been [reported](#) to be the most sophisticated, well-funded and organised. Former leaders and members of the IT Cell have been reported detailing how it deliberately stokes communal flames by [producing](#) and [disseminating](#) disinformation. The top leadership of the BJP has appeared to openly endorse such tactics. In 2019, Amit Shah [boasted](#) about the presence of over 3 million people on its WhatsApp groups, and the party's capability to 'spread any message among people, whether sour or sweet, real or fake'. BJP-led and BJP-linked accounts have contributed to an explosion of anti-Muslim hate speech and incitement on social media. For instance, in the aftermath of the April 2025 atrocities in Kashmir, X spaces and pages [openly called](#) for the 'massacre of Muslims,' promoting conspiracy theories accusing 'every Kashmiri of complicity,' and using slurs and threats such as 'cut their heads and hang their bodies in Lal Chowk.' As with mainstream media, slogans like 'final solution' and calls for 'Israel-style' retaliation were widespread. BJP-linked pages, including at least one official state unit's page, amplified such communal propaganda. This wave of hate also included explicit incitement to sexual violence, with Hindu nationalist accounts using the occasion to target Kashmiri Muslim women, and threats of rape circulating openly on X. One widely shared post by an anonymous Hindu nationalist, initially framed as a message of support for 'threatened Kashmiri girls,' devolved into rape threats and other violent fantasies. These were not isolated comments but part of a broader trend of Islamophobic hate, targeting Muslim women as objects of conquest and humiliation.

Civil society groups have also documented in detail how Hindu extremist groups tailor their social media content to maximise reach and engagement, and how all social media platforms fail to enforce their own community guidelines and act against hate speech and incitement. A November 2024 report by India Hate Lab [analysed](#) over a 1000 Instagram accounts run by 'cow vigilantes' who shared video content of themselves engaging in physical violence against Muslims and others transporting cattle. Despite 167 of these posts being reported for guideline violations, Instagram did not remove any. Another February 2025 report on hate content across platforms [found](#) a 98.4% inaction rate by platforms. Earlier, in February 2024, ahead of India's General Election, another study [found](#) that Facebook had approved a series of AI-manipulated political advertisements that openly incited religious violence against Muslims.

In 2019, researchers at London School of Economics had [highlighted](#) the 'trans-medial' nature of this messaging, and noted how the synchronicity of hate content between mainstream media and social media has resulted in a mutually reinforcing mechanism, where even Indians who may want to verify some hateful disinformation they encounter on social media would find confirmation for the same on mainstream media. Conversely, the preponderance of hateful, sensationalist and stereotypical content on mainstream media means that the content on social media is more likely to be believed and shared further. As noted previously, the tone and tenor of

such messaging has hardened further in subsequent years, creating a febrile environment in which hate speech is readily translated into real-world harm.

4. **Impact of hate speech**

The continued proliferation of hate speech documented above has not remained confined to expression but has generated tangible harms. In particular, the persistent advocacy of hatred against Muslims has contributed to an environment in which violence, discrimination, and dehumanisation are not only tolerated but actively encouraged. This section examines three interrelated dimensions of impact: violence, discrimination, and the broader normalisation of hostility and dehumanisation.

- a. Incitement to violence:** The most direct impact of hate speech has been its translation into episodes of targeted violence. Spikes in incendiary rhetoric have frequently coincided with outbreaks of targeted mass violence. Such outbreaks are often mischaracterised as ‘riots’ in the public discourse, but are in fact usually episodes of orchestrated violence, typically led by Hindu nationalist groups.⁷ While casualty levels have varied, common patterns that have recurred include a high level of prior planning, the severity, duration and one-sided nature of the violence, and the complicity—by omission or commission—of state authorities. Recent examples include targeted mass violence in Delhi in February 2020, resulting in 40 Muslims being killed (out of 52 in total), after a BJP-led hate campaign that portrayed them as ‘traitors’ and ‘anti-nationals’. As noted previously, one of the key Hindu nationalist rallying cries during this period was the slogan ‘*desh ke gaddaro, goli maaro saalon ko*’ (shoot dead the traitors to the nation), popularised by BJP leader Kapil Mishra, and also echoed by central minister Anurag Thakur.⁸ Similar anti-Muslim mobilisation in Haryana’s Nuh district in July 2023, fuelled by weeks of online incitement, culminated in ‘riots’ that left at least six dead, dozens injured, and widespread destruction of homes and mosques. In Manipur, where anti-Christian and anti-Kuki rhetoric had been intensifying since early 2023, hate speech by local politicians was a central factor in the wave of violence that erupted in May of that year, resulting in over 250 deaths.

Persistent anti-Muslim hate and incitement is also likely to have contributed to recurring patterns of violent, religiously-motivated hate crimes against Muslims and other minorities. As UN mandate-holders noted in a July 2025 allegation letter, over 300 such instances of killings—including at least 31 since January 2024—have been reported since May 2014, with many allegedly perpetrated by extremist Hindu groups often associated with ‘cow vigilantism’.⁹ In recent months, civil society groups have documented sharp spikes in hate speech around specific flashpoints: 64 in-person anti-Muslim hate speech events were recorded across the country in the 10 days following the April 2025 terror attack in Kashmir, and 18 hate speech events were reported in Assam between 19 and 30 July, amid a xenophobic campaign targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims. In both instances, these surges in hate speech were accompanied by corresponding spikes in violence: at least 30 attacks on Kashmiri Muslims were reported nationwide during the second

⁷ Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (University of Washington Press 2005).

⁸ See Human Rights Watch, “‘[Shoot the Traitors](#)’: Discrimination Against Muslims Under India’s New Citizenship Policy” (2020)

⁹ [AL IND 6/2025](#)

quarter of 2025, while at least 9 attacks targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims were recorded in Assam during the last two weeks of July.¹⁰

- b. **Incitement to discrimination:** Beyond direct violence, persistent hate speech has also legitimised discriminatory treatment of Muslims in law, policy, and everyday life. Rhetoric portraying Muslims as ‘infiltrators,’ ‘jihadis,’ ‘rioters,’ ‘traitors’ and ‘terrorists’ have been invoked by political leaders to justify measures such as ‘bulldozer’ evictions of Muslim homes and businesses in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat (and other BJP-governed states); ongoing forced evictions, arrests and deportations of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and nationwide; recent measures targeting Muslim restaurant-employees and giving credence to the ‘spit jihad’ conspiracy theory in [Uttar Pradesh](#) and [Uttarakhand](#); the ongoing targeting of Islamic schools in [Uttar Pradesh](#), [Uttarakhand](#) and [Assam](#); and ongoing state-led and state-supported [campaigns](#) targeting Muslim places of worship across the country. Alongside, as noted previously, Hindu extremist groups have [escalated calls](#) for the social and economic boycott of Muslims, including often through physical attacks and vandalism.
- c. **Hostility and dehumanisation:** Recent evidence also shows how hate speech and incitement have likely contributed to the steady erosion of the social standing of Muslims and other minorities, embedding hostility into the mainstream. As noted previously, rather than being treated as equal citizens, Muslims are routinely framed in political discourse as alien, disloyal, and undeserving of state protection. These portrayals go beyond exclusion—they are often dehumanising, casting Muslims as dangerous, less deserving of dignity, and even sub-human. This framing strips Muslims of empathy and moral worth in the public imagination, reducing violence against them to something excusable or even desirable. Such tropes are resonating at the societal level: a [nationwide survey](#) published in late 2024 found that nearly a third of Hindus doubted Muslims’ patriotism, and almost half believed Muslims to be ‘unnecessarily appeased or pampered.’ These attitudes reflect how derogatory stereotypes have translated from political rhetoric into popular belief. The effect is to diminish empathy and moral concern towards minorities, normalising their exclusion from full citizenship and legitimising discriminatory treatment.

5. **Domestic accountability**

While India’s constitutional and legal framework does place some limits on hate speech, these are undermined by glaring substantive and procedural deficiencies, and by the consistent failure of key domestic institutions to enforce them. In particular, the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Supreme Court have increasingly failed to respond meaningfully to rising hate speech and incitement, especially when perpetrators are politically powerful or aligned with the ruling dispensation. This section examines the ECI’s inaction in the face of documented religious incitement, the Supreme Court’s recent interventions and growing reluctance to enforce its own rulings, and the underlying legal and regulatory gaps that continue to enable selective, politicised enforcement.

- a. **Recent inaction of the Election Commission of India:** The voluntary Model Code of Conduct (MCC), enforced by the Election Commission of India (ECI), prohibits appeals to

¹⁰ See ‘[Data Reveals Rising Hate and Violence Against Bengali-Origin Muslims in Assam](#)’ and ‘[64 Anti-Muslim Hate Speech Events Recorded in 10 Days Post Pahalgam Attack](#)’ (India Hate Lab); and ‘[India Persecution Tracker – Q2 2025: Torture and Ill-Treatment by Non-State Actors](#)’ (South Asia Justice Campaign)

communal sentiment during campaigning, while the Representation of the People Act, 1951, criminalises such conduct as ‘corrupt practices’ and ‘electoral offences’. Amid communal fearmongering led by PM Modi during the 2024 General Election, the ECI [disclosed](#) that it had ‘deliberate decided... not to touch’ the top two leaders in each main party (the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress). It has continued to fail to act against senior ruling-party figures for incendiary religious rhetoric during subsequent state elections in 2024 and 2025. The ECI’s refusal to act on documented hate speeches, including during nationally televised speeches, serves as further evidence of a pattern of impunity that signals to voters and political actors alike that communal incitement will not invite institutional consequences.

- b. Recent Supreme Court interventions, and poor enforcement:** Amid the growing preponderance of hate speeches in India, including those involving calls for genocide by popular Hindu religious figures at public events across the country¹¹, the Indian Supreme Court (SC) in October 2022 directed authorities in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand to take proactive action against hate speech, regardless of formal complaints being filed.¹² These directions were later extended nationwide in April 2023.¹³ Other SC rulings in recent years too have emphasised the State’s duty to proactively act against hate speech: for instance, in [Tehseen Poonawalla](#)¹⁴ (2018), the Court had issued binding directions to prevent, remedy, and punish incidents of lynchings and mob violence. These had included preventive measures such as monitoring social media for inflammatory content and registering First Information Reports (FIRs) against those disseminating ‘irresponsible and incendiary’ content.

Despite these interventions, there has been little tangible change in either the incidence of hate speech or the willingness of state authorities to act. Troublingly, the SC itself has shown a growing reluctance to meaningfully oversee the enforcement of its own directives. For instance, in December 2024, after extremist Hindu cleric Yati Narsinghanand—who had previously issued open calls for genocide against Muslims at a *dharam sansad*¹⁵ in 2021—announced a similar event in Uttarakhand, the SC [refused](#) to entertain a contempt plea against state authorities for failing to take suo motu action, instead directing petitioners to the High Court. It was only after the Uttarakhand High Court intervened that the event was denied permission, although Narsinghanand was nevertheless platformed by Sudarshan News around the same time, and faced no punitive consequences. Similarly, during the 2024 General Election, the SC [declined](#) to hear petitions seeking action against Prime Minister Modi for his hate speeches targeting Muslims. And in February 2025, the SC [dismissed](#) a petition seeking enforcement of its own *Tehseen Poonawalla* (2018) guidelines, noting that it could not ‘micro-manage’ their implementation.

- c. Current legal framework and selective enforcement:** India continues to lack a specialised hate speech law, or even a clear statutory definition of ‘hate speech,’ and existing legal frameworks remain inadequate.

¹¹ At these events, which began to escalate in late-2021, Hindu religious leaders had made open calls to undertake ‘a [cleanliness drive](#)’ against Muslims and [kill ‘at least 2 million of them’](#), and for the [rape and impregnation](#) of Muslim women.

¹² [Shaheen Abdulla vs. Union of India & Others](#)

¹³ [Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay vs. Union of India & Others](#)

¹⁴ See para 40 of judgement [here](#).

¹⁵ Hindu religious assembly.

Constitutionally, the right to freedom of speech and expression is subject to ‘reasonable restrictions,’ including on grounds such as public order, decency or morality, defamation, and incitement to an offence. The new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC) with effect from July 2024, retains the core provisions long used to address hate speech—such as those dealing with promotion of ‘enmity between different groups on the grounds of religion,’ ‘imputations and assertions prejudicial to national integration,’ and ‘outraging religious feelings’—while also including ‘electronic communication’ (an undefined term) as a mode of commission, without any substantive reform. Notably, the government ignored recommendations of the Law Commission¹⁶ to introduce new offences such as incitement to hatred and provocation of violence.¹⁷ In the digital domain, the Information Technology Act, 2000— together with its 2009 Blocking Rules and 2021 Intermediary Rules—grants the government broad powers to demand content takedown and user traceability, often with little transparency or judicial oversight.¹⁸ In October 2024, the government [introduced](#) a dedicated digital platform for it to issue notices to social media companies.

These provisions have long been—and continue to be—selectively weaponised by authorities to target legitimate speech by journalists, activists, and political figures, while influential figures inciting hatred and violence continue to routinely escape meaningful scrutiny. For instance, after a Muslim man was lynched in July 2024, police in Uttar Pradesh [invoked](#) BNS provisions against multiple individuals—including two journalists—who reported details of the incident on social media. During the May 2025 India-Pakistan military conflict, the government [issued](#) thousands of takedown orders targeting content by independent journalists, while anti-Muslim hate speech and disinformation flourished parallelly, unchecked on [social media](#) and on [broadcast television networks](#).

Television and broadcast media are formally constrained by the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, which, via its Programme and Advertising Codes, prohibit programmes that, inter alia, ‘attack religions or communities’ or ‘promote communal attitudes.’ The News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA), a private self-regulatory body¹⁹, has issued some recent orders against major channels over shows broadcasting Islamophobic narratives.²⁰ However, its sanctioning powers are limited to token fines or advisories, and it lacks any statutory authority to ensure compliance, rendering it largely ineffective as a deterrent against hate speech in broadcast media.

In sum, India’s domestic legal and institutional framework has proven manifestly inadequate in preventing or responding to hate speech and incitement. While constitutional and statutory provisions offer a notional basis for action, enforcement remains deeply politicised, selective, and ineffective. Regulatory bodies routinely fail to act against ruling party figures, and even the judiciary has increasingly abdicated its oversight role. Rather than serving as a check on incitement, key institutions have enabled an environment of impunity in which hate speech flourishes without consequence.

¹⁶ An official body headed by a retired judge whose function is to advise the government on legal reform.

¹⁷ See a more detailed comparative analysis of hate speech-related provisions in the BNS and the IPC [here](#); SAJC’s detailed submission of information to Special Procedures on India’s new criminal laws is available [here](#).

¹⁸ SP mandate-holders had analysed this framework in detail in [OL IND 8/2021](#).

¹⁹ The NBDSA has its own non-statutory standards such as the [Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards](#); [Specific Guidelines for Anchors Conducting Programmes](#), and [Guidelines to Prevent Communal Crime in Reporting Crime](#).

²⁰ For example, see news coverage of a June 2025 NBDSA order regarding anti-Muslim content broadcast by Times Now Navbharat [here](#), and of a February 2023 order regarding similar content broadcast by News18 [here](#).

ANNEXURE: Selected list of anti-Muslim hate speeches by senior Indian political leaders since UN Special Procedures' September 2024 allegation letter (AL IND 5/2024)

Name of leader	Date and location	Details
Narendra Modi (Prime Minister of India)	15 September, 2024 (Jamshedpur, Jharkhand (Santhal Pargana region))	<p>At a public election rally in Jamshedpur ahead of state-level elections in Jharkhand, Modi claimed that 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' and 'Rohingyas' were 'taking over positions in panchayats' in Santhal Pargana, accusing them of marrying Adivasi women to seize land and influence local politics. He alleged that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) party was 'standing with Bangladeshis and Rohingyas' and that 'appeasement' had become its agenda due to the 'ghost of Congress.'</p> <p>Sources: news coverage (Maktoob), video</p>
	4 November, 2024 (Garhwa and Chaibasa, Jharkhand)	<p>At back-to-back rallies in Jharkhand, Modi alleged that the opposition JMM-Congress-RJD electoral coalition was a '<i>ghuspaiithiya gathbandhan</i>' (infiltrators' alliance) that was 'settling Bangladeshi infiltrators all over the state' to secure votes. He claimed 'infiltration has entered the system' and accused the state government of denying this in court despite mounting threats to tribal communities. Modi warned that these 'intruders' were taking away people's 'food, daughters and land' and promised that a BJP government would enact legislation to 'return land grabbed by infiltrators'. He also claimed that Congress planned to 'snatch' reservations from tribal communities and give them to its 'vote bank'.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Indian Express)</p>
	13 November, 2024 (Sarath, Jharkhand)	<p>At a rally in Sarath during the Jharkhand Assembly elections, Modi accused the Hemant Soren-led state government of 'aiding infiltrators' and 'preparing documents overnight' to turn Bangladeshi nationals into permanent residents. He claimed that tribal daughters were 'cheated in the name of marriage' and their land and jobs were being 'snatched' by 'intruders', warning of a 'big conspiracy to change the identity of Jharkhand'. He alleged that the JMM-Congress government had 'stolen' tribal resources for 'favourite people' and was eroding the rights of tribals. Rights groups later described these claims as part of a recurring Islamophobic narrative portraying Muslims and migrants as demographic and cultural threats to Adivasi communities.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (The Hindu)</p>
	15 August, 2025 (Red Fort, Delhi)	<p>In his national Independence Day address, Modi alleged that 'a deliberate conspiracy' was underway to alter the country's demography. He claimed that 'infiltrators are snatching away the livelihoods of our youth', 'targeting our sisters and daughters', and 'seizing land' by misleading tribal communities. Framing this as a national security crisis, he announced the creation of a High-Power Demography Mission to address the threat.</p> <p>Source: official transcript</p>
Amit Shah (Home Minister of India)	20 September, 2024 (Sahibganj, Jharkhand)	<p>At a campaign rally in poll-bound Jharkhand, Union Home Minister Amit Shah repeated claims of large-scale 'infiltration' by Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims. He vowed that, if the BJP came to power, it would 'free' the state of such 'infiltrators' and 'hang them upside down'. He alleged that the demography of districts such as Pakur was changing because of this 'infiltration' and asked the crowd whether Jharkhand 'belonged to Adivasis or to Rohingya and Bangladeshi infiltrators'.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Scroll)</p>
	27 September, 2025 (Bihar – multiple locations including Araria, Kosi, Purnea, Bhagalpur)	<p>At a series of rallies across Bihar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah pledged that a future NDA government would expel all 'infiltrators' from the state. He claimed that 'not a single genuine voter in Kosi or Seemanchal has lost their vote' under the revised electoral rolls, asserting that only 'illegal entrants' had been removed. He said the election was about 'driving out infiltrators from every corner of Bihar' and preventing the return of 'jungle raj'. He accused Rahul Gandhi and Lalu Prasad Yadav of wanting 'infiltrators' to retain voting rights and framed the BJP's campaign as a defence of Bihar's 'sacred land'.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (The New Indian Express)</p>

Himanta Biswa Sarma (Chief Minister of Assam)	27 August, 2024 (Guwahati, Assam)	<p>During a debate in the Assam Legislative Assembly on crimes against women, Chief Minister Sarma declared that he would take sides and would not let Miya Muslims take over Assam. He responded to opposition criticism by saying, 'I will take sides. What can you do about it?' and questioned why people from Lower Assam were moving to Upper Assam — implying a demographic takeover by Miya Muslims. The term Miya is widely used pejoratively to refer to Bengali-origin Muslims in Assam.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (The Hindu)</p>
	28 October, 2024 (Jharkhand)	<p>At an election rally in Jharkhand ahead of the state assembly elections, Sarma warned of an 'increasing Muslim population' allegedly driven by infiltration. He claimed Aadhaar cards were being issued to 'infiltrators' through <i>madrassas</i>, enabling demographic change in regions like Santhal Pargana. Sarma declared, 'I ignite fire against infiltrators,' likening himself to Hanuman (a Hindu mythological figure) setting Lanka on fire. He said further, 'We must set fire against infiltrators and make Jharkhand a golden land.' While stating 'not every Muslim is an infiltrator', he questioned the pace of Muslim population growth, suggesting that it could only be explained by undocumented immigration. He accused Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren of aiding infiltrators and pledged to introduce the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Jharkhand if the BJP came to power. Sarma also linked the removal of infiltrators to 'justice for women'.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Organiser)</p>
	10 December, 2024 (Jamugurihat, Assam)	<p>At a public event, Sarma claimed that indigenous Assamese are now a minority in 12 of the state's 35 districts, and urged them to learn from Israel how to 'survive as a community' despite being 'surrounded by enemies'. He invoked Israel's example of being surrounded by 'Muslim fundamentalists' and praised its resilience and military strength, calling on Assamese people to emulate this model. The speech framed Muslims in Assam as a demographic threat, drawing parallels with perceived external enemies, and justified recent delimitation measures as a way to secure political power for people of 'Assamese and Indian origin'.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Hindustan Times)</p>
	28 May, 2025 (Guwahati, Assam)	<p>At a press briefing following a cabinet meeting, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a new scheme to issue arms licences to 'indigenous' residents of districts bordering Bangladesh, including Dhubri, Nagaon, Morigaon, Barpeta, South Salmara and Goalpara. He claimed these communities were living in fear due to the presence of 'illegal Bangladeshis' and faced threats of attacks both 'from the Bangladesh side and even in their own villages'. Sarma linked the initiative to the ongoing process of detecting and deporting alleged undocumented migrants, stating that the scheme was a long-standing demand since the Assam agitation of 1979–85. He framed the policy as a form of self-defence for indigenous people now in the minority in vulnerable districts.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Hindustan Times)</p>
	19 July 2025 (Twitter/X)	<p>In a widely viewed post on Twitter/X, Sarma claimed that Hindus in Assam are becoming a 'hopeless minority' in their own land, and that this demographic shift has taken place 'over a span of just 60 years'. He wrote: 'We have lost our culture, our land, our temples. The law gives us no remedy. That's why we are desperate—not for revenge, but for survival.' Sarma framed the situation as a lawful but existential fight, warning: 'Do not stop us. Just do not stop us from fighting for what is ours. For us this is our last battle of survival.'</p> <p>Source: X</p>
	15 August, 2025 (Guwahati, Assam)	<p>In his official Independence Day speech, Sarma pledged to continue evictions on government land to 'free the state from infiltrators'. He warned that if such actions were not taken, Assamese people would lose their 'jati, mati, bheti' (identity, land and roots – often invoked in Assamese ethnonationalist rhetoric), and claimed that in 15 years, '80% of the ministers' in Assam would be 'unfamiliar'. He invoked the Hindutva conspiracy theory of 'land jihad', alleging that Muslims had changed the demography of lower and central Assam and were now targeting other regions.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Scroll)</p>

Yogi Adityanath (Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh)	26 February, 2025 (Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh)	<p>Addressing the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath denigrated Islamic religious education and invoked anti-Muslim tropes to criticise opposition parties. He stated: 'We want to make children scientists, not Mullahs and Maulvis' — using 'Mullah' and 'Maulvi' (terms for Muslim religious scholars) as slurs to suggest backwardness. He also declared: 'Kathmullas' sanskriti will not work', using a derogatory term ('kathmulla' is a derogatory term for conservative Muslims) to dismiss Muslim cultural influence as regressive. The remarks were part of a broader attack on madrassas (Islamic schools), Urdu language education, and the opposition's alleged support for Muslim identity.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Clarion)</p>
	26 March, 2025 (podcast interview)	<p>In a podcast interview, Adityanath claimed that Hindus cannot feel safe among Muslim-majority neighbourhoods, while Muslims feel safe among Hindus. Citing Bangladesh as a comparison, he said: 'A Muslim family is the safest among a hundred Hindu families. They will have the freedom to practice all their religious deeds. But can 50 Hindus be safe among 100 Muslim families? No. Bangladesh is an example. Before this, Pakistan was an example.' Adityanath claimed that 'in Uttar Pradesh, Muslims are the safest' and that communal riots had stopped under BJP rule.</p> <p>Source: news coverage (India Today)</p>
	28 September, 2025 (Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh)	<p>At a public event before the Hindu festival of Vijayadashami, Adityanath warned of severe consequences for any public disorder during festivals. Referring to recent protests by Muslims in Bareilly, he said: 'If anyone attempts to create mischief during the joy and enthusiasm of festivals, they will have to pay such a price for this mischief that future generations will remember what price has to be paid.' Invoking 'Ghazwa-e-Hind'—a prophecy in some Islamic hadiths that is referenced by some radical groups about an Islamic conquest of India—he added: 'Even imagining 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' or dreaming of it will create a path for a ticket to hell.' He warned that anyone who 'takes the law into their own hands', 'attacks a passing pedestrian', or 'pelts stones during festivals' would be given 'a one-way ticket to hell.' He cited the case of a Muslim man who allegedly disguised himself with a Hindu name to accuse 'anti-national elements' of infiltrating Balrampur. Adityanath also declared: 'Laaton ke bhoot baaton se nahi maante' (a Hindi idiom meaning 'those who don't respond to words must be beaten'). He called for public vigilance against people involved in 'love jihad, religious conversions, anti-national acts, cow slaughter, and cow smuggling.'</p> <p>Source: news coverage (Siasat)</p>