

**Sweeping crackdown on Muslims  
in the context of 'I Love  
Muhammad' campaign**

Submission of information to UN Special Procedures

*Submission made to the UN Special Procedures regarding the  
sweeping crackdown against Muslims in September-October 2025,  
particularly in Uttar Pradesh, for peacefully expressing the slogan 'I  
Love Muhammad'*

Submission Ref. # t2iq36l8

**SOUTHASIA  
JUSTICE  
CAMPAIGN**

[southasiajusticecampaign.org](https://southasiajusticecampaign.org)

20 October, 2025

## Incident description

Between early September and early October 2025, authorities in India—particularly in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — carried out a sweeping crackdown against Muslims for peacefully expressing the slogan ‘I Love Muhammad’. What began as a local display of devotion rapidly drew police action and triggered arrests, raids, home demolitions and other punitive measures across multiple states. By 10 October, at least 111 people had been arrested nationwide (87 in Uttar Pradesh, 17 in Gujarat, 7 in Uttarakhand), including minors. Police used baton-charges, tear gas and public humiliation; two men were shot in the legs during an alleged ‘half encounter’. District authorities launched demolition and sealing drives against Muslim-owned homes and businesses, while a two-day internet shutdown was imposed in Bareilly and opposition politicians were restricted or placed under house arrest. Public statements by senior officials, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, endorsed the crackdown and warned protestors they would be ‘beaten like in Bareilly’ and given a ‘ticket to hell’. Collectively, these measures criminalised peaceful religious expression, curtailed freedom of assembly and imposed collective punishment on a vulnerable minority.

The events began on 4 September 2025 in Kanpur’s Mohalla Saiyad Nagar (near Jafar Wali Gali), where local Muslims installed an illuminated ‘I Love Muhammad’ board ahead of the Prophet’s birthday (Eid Milad-un-Nabi). A similar cloth banner the previous year had reportedly drawn no objections. After some Hindu residents protested it as a ‘new practice’, police intervened and the board was removed and relocated. On 10 September, Rawatpur police station registered a First Information Report (FIR) naming nine residents and 10–15 unidentified persons, referencing incidents on 4–5 September (including the board’s relocation and, on 5 September, unidentified youths allegedly tearing Hindu posters) and citing offences of promoting enmity and outraging religious feelings.

Posters, placards and social media posts with the I love Mohammad slogan appeared, the following days, in districts of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring states, as Muslims reiterated the message in response to the Kanpur police action. On 6 September, police in Firozabad reportedly arrested 30 Muslim youths, including minors, during a Milad Nabi procession for allegedly straying from the designated route. Publicly available videos showed boys being forced to hold their ears in apology. Families later reported additional night-time detentions; lawyers confirmed some detainees were minors.

Meanwhile, Hindu nationalist groups organised counter-campaigns: in Varanasi, Hindu religious leaders staged a public demonstration during the evening Ganga Aarti as a symbolic reply; in Lucknow, posters such as ‘I Love Mahadev’, ‘I Love Yogi’ and ‘I Love Bulldozer’ were put up by members of the BJP’s youth wing, with ‘bulldozer’ widely associated with punitive demolitions targeting Muslims.

Responding to what they viewed as criminalisation of constitutionally protected religious expression, Muslim groups organised peaceful protests. In Bareilly, cleric Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan called for a post-Friday prayer march on 26 September urging withdrawal of the Kanpur FIRs. Authorities denied permission and imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita. Defying the restrictions, hundreds gathered peacefully near Islamia Ground; police dispersed them with baton-charges, tear gas and mass detentions. A three-day internet shutdown followed across the district.

By the following week, Bareilly police had registered at least ten FIRs, naming a few organisers and listing thousands of unidentified participants. At least 82 arrests were confirmed statewide, including Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan and several associates, two of whom were shot in the legs during an alleged ‘half encounter’. Residents reported late-night raids in Muslim neighbourhoods

detaining young men and students—some reportedly minors—with families denied information on detainees' whereabouts or access to FIR copies.

During the same period, Bareilly authorities launched demolition and sealing drives across Old City, Noumahla and Rohli Tola areas, targeting homes and businesses linked to those accused. The total number of demolitions is unknown. Relatives appealed for a halt and for information on missing family members; markets in Muslim-concentrated localities shuttered amid fear. On 4 October, at least five more arrests were reported in Meerut.

Outside Uttar Pradesh, a similar pattern emerged: in Kashipur (Uttarakhand), seven arrests and around 500 named in connection with a 21 September procession; in Godhra (Gujarat), at least 17 arrests; and in Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra), 30 protesters detained after clashes linked to the same campaign. One civil society report put the total number of arrests nationwide at 265, as of 8 October.

**Media reports and other publicly available documentation relating to the crackdown on Muslims participating in or otherwise associated with the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign, September-October 2025**

**News reports:**

- 14 October, 2025 – Al Jazeera – [‘Why is India prosecuting Muslims who said ‘I Love Muhammad’](#)
- 4 October, 2025 – The Hindu – [‘5 arrested for putting up ‘I love Muhammad’ poster in Uttar Pradesh’s Meerut’](#)
- 2 October, 2025 – The Indian Express – [‘More arrests, ‘encounter’: Bareilly on edge, houses locked, families fearful’](#)
- 29 September, 2025 – The Indian Express – [‘Will give tickets to hell if one thinks of raising Gazwa-e-Hind slogan, warns Yogi after protest in Bareilly’](#)
- 29 September, 2025 – India Today – [‘Clashes over ‘I love Muhammad’ rangoli in Maharashtra’s Ahilyanagar; 30 detained’](#)
- 28 September, 2025 – Maktoob – [‘Posters of “I Love Mahadev, Yogi, Bulldozer” surface at Varanasi amid arrests of Muslims over “I Love Muhammad” campaign’](#)
- 27 September, 2025 – News18 – [‘I Love Muhammad’ Movement Triggers Row In UP And Beyond: Violence In Bareilly, Mau, Baghpat & Gandhinagar’](#)
- 26 September, 2025 – The Indian Express – [‘At centre of first ‘I Love Mohammad’ FIR, residents of Kanpur neighbourhood say: ‘Displayed banner last year too, what is our crime?’](#)
- 26 September, 2025 – Maktoob – [‘UP: Bareilly gripped with tension as police crack down on ‘I Love Muhammad’ protest led by Ittehad-e-Millat Council’](#)
- 26 September, 2025 – The Hindustan Gazette – [‘21 FIRs Filed Against Over 1300 Muslims, 38 Arrested Over ‘I Love Muhammed’ Protests: APCR’](#)
- 24 September, 2025 – The Indian Express – [‘I love Mohammad’: Poster heat spreads from UP to Uttarakhand, police use facial recognition to crack down on protesters’](#)
- 23 September, 2025 – OB News – [‘Protest over ‘I Love Muhammad’ signboards in Gujarat; 17 held, 88 booked’](#)
- 22 September, 2025 – Hindustan Times – [‘Ruckus during ‘I Love Muhammad’ procession in Uttarakhand, seven arrested’](#)
- 5 August, 2024 – New Lines Magazine – [‘Extrajudicial Killings May Be Frequent in India’s Most Populous State’](#)

**Civil society documentation:**

- 8 October, 2025 - Association for Protection of Civil Rights – [‘I Love Muhammad’ Protests in Bareilly: A Fact-Finding Report into Collective Punishment and Criminalising Faith’](#)



**Reference:** t2iq3618

**Date:** Monday, October 20, 2025

**Type:** Human rights violation

**Original:** English

**Consent:** The nature of the allegation is such that consent cannot be obtained, e.g. the victim(s) is/are dead or has/have been subject to an enforced disappearance

### Related mandates

---

- arbitrary Detention
- freedom of peaceful assembly and of association
- religion or belief
- minority issues
- torture

### Victims

---

**Name:** Muslims in India participating in the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign

**Type:** Group

**Description of the group/community (including, if relevant, number of members; number of women, men, girls and boys; indicate the group/community leader(s); other facts):**

Muslims in India are a religious minority numbering approximately 210 million people, constituting about 15 per cent of the national population. They are ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse, living across all regions of the country and belonging to a wide range of socio-economic classes. What unites them is their common Islamic faith and identity, which has increasingly become the basis for social exclusion and state targeting in recent years. The present submission concerns Muslims who publicly or online expressed peaceful religious affirmation through the slogan 'I Love Muhammad' during September–October 2025. Participants included men, women, and children taking part in religious processions, poster campaigns and online expressions of faith.

**Ethnic, religious, social or other background of the group/community members:** Muslim community in India, a constitutionally recognised religious minority.

**Affiliation or activity of group/community:** Other

Religious expression and peaceful assembly linked to Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations and the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign.

**Occupation of group/community members:** Varied – including students, traders, labourers, clerics, and ordinary residents of affected districts.

---

### Submitted by

---

**Name:** South Asia Justice Campaign

**Type:** Group

**Email:** sajcampaign@proton.me

**Describe the activities of the group/community, civil society or other entity:**

SAJC is a platform of individuals and groups committed to furthering justice, peace and harmony in South Asia. SAJC raises issues concerning justice and the rights of vulnerable groups, and works to bring South Asian communities together to foster peace, understanding and wellbeing.

### Disclosure

---

**Does the alleged victim(s) or group/community agree to have their name(s) disclosed in a letter that may be sent to the Government, or others, such as intergovernmental organisations including United Nations entities, businesses, military or security companies?**

No - No – The victims are members of the Muslim community in India as a whole, specifically those targeted in connection with the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign. As such, no individual victim can be identified to obtain consent. The information presented in this submission has been collated using publicly available media and civil society reports.

**Does the alleged victim(s) agree to have their name(s) appear in a public report to the Human Rights Council?**

No - N/A – The victims are members of the Muslim community in India as a whole, specifically those targeted in connection with the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign. As such, no individual victim can be identified to obtain consent. The information presented in this submission has been

**Please confirm that the victim, or the victim's family, or the victim's legal representative is in agreement that the case can be dealt with through the regular procedure of the Working Group**

No

**The identity and the details of the victim's case can be communicated to the Government concerned**

No

**The identity of the victim can be published in the communications report to the UN Human Rights Council**

No

## Case details

---

**Country where the incident allegedly occurred/is occurring/might occur:** India

**District:** Primarily Uttar Pradesh state (Kanpur, Bareilly, Meerut districts), with related incidents in Gujarat (Godhra), Uttarakhand (Kashipur), and Maharashtra (Ahilyanagar).

**Please provide a short chronological summary of the incident: what happened; when (date/time); who was involved?**

Between early September and early October 2025, authorities in India—particularly in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) carried out a sweeping crackdown against Muslims for peacefully expressing the slogan ‘I Love Muhammad’. What began as a local display of devotion rapidly drew police action and triggered arrests, raids, home demolitions and other punitive measures across multiple states. By 10 Oct, at least 111 people had been arrested nationwide (87 in UP, 17 in Gujarat, 7 in Uttarakhand), including minors. Police used baton-charges, tear gas and public humiliation; two men were shot in the legs during an alleged ‘half encounter’. District authorities launched demolition and sealing drives against Muslim-owned homes and businesses, while a two-day internet shutdown was imposed in Bareilly and opposition politicians were restricted or placed under house arrest. Public statements by senior officials, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, endorsed the crackdown and warned protestors they would be ‘beaten like in Bareilly’ and given a ‘ticket to hell’.

The events began on 4 September 2025 in Kanpur’s Mohalla Saiyad Nagar (near Jafar Wali Gali), where local Muslims installed an illuminated ‘I Love Muhammad’ board ahead of the Prophet’s birthday (Eid Milad-un-Nabi). A similar cloth banner the previous year had reportedly drawn no objections. After some Hindu residents protested it as a ‘new practice’, police intervened and the board was removed and relocated. On 10 September, Rawatpur police station registered a First Information Report (FIR) naming nine residents and 10–15 unidentified persons, referencing incidents on 4–5 September (including the board’s relocation and, on 5 September, unidentified youths allegedly tearing Hindu posters) and citing offences of promoting enmity and outraging religious feelings.

Posters, placards and social media posts with the I love Mohammad slogan appeared, the following days, in districts of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring states, as Muslims reiterated the message in response to the Kanpur police action. On 6 September, police in Firozabad reportedly arrested 30 Muslim youths, including minors, during a Milad Nabi procession for allegedly straying from the designated route. Publicly available videos showed boys being forced to hold their ears in apology. Families later reported additional night-time detentions; lawyers confirmed some detainees were minors.

Responding to what they viewed as criminalisation of constitutionally protected religious expression, Muslim groups organised peaceful protests. In Bareilly, cleric Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan called for a post-Friday prayer march on 26 September urging withdrawal of the Kanpur FIRs. Authorities denied permission and imposed prohibitory orders on assembly. Defying the restrictions, hundreds gathered peacefully near Islamia Ground; police dispersed them with baton-charges, tear gas and mass detentions.

By the following week, Bareilly police had registered at least ten FIRs, naming a few organisers and listing thousands of unidentified participants. At least 82 arrests were confirmed statewide, including Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan and associates, two of whom were shot in the legs during an alleged ‘half encounter’. Residents reported late-night raids in Muslim neighbourhoods detaining young men and students—some reportedly minors—with families denied information on detainees’ whereabouts or access to FIR copies. Parallely, Bareilly authorities launched demolition and sealing drives in multiple areas, targeting homes and businesses linked to those accused.

Outside UP, a similar pattern emerged: in Kashipur (Uttarakhand), seven arrests in connection with a 21 Sept procession; in Godhra (Gujarat), at least 17 arrests; and in Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra), 30 detained. A civil society report placed the number of nationwide arrests at 265.

**Are there witnesses to the incident?** Don't know

**Is there evidence or substantiating information concerning the incident?** Don't know

**Does the alleged victim believe she/he was targeted due to her/his** Engagement in human rights, trade union, political, religious activities or other types of activities, Political or other opinion or beliefs, Religious background

**Has the incident been reported to the relevant authorities?** Yes

**Please include details of any complaints filed or any other action taken by the alleged victim(s) or anyone else on their behalf?**

Senior officials have publicly justified the crackdown as necessary for law and order. No investigations or reparations have been initiated for the unlawful arrests, injuries, or demolitions.

**Has the Government taken action to prevent or investigate the incident, punish the perpetrators, or ensure compensation to the alleged victim(s)?** No

**Is this case under consideration by any other international or regional body?** Don't know

**arbitrary Detention**

---

**Date of arrest**

04/09/2025

**Approximate date?**

No

**Place of arrest**

Primarily in Uttar Pradesh (Kanpur, Bareilly, Firozabad, Meerut); also in Gujarat (Godhra), Uttarakhand (Kashipur) and Maharashtra (Ahilyanagar).

**What reasons were given for the arrest?**

Police alleged 'promotion of enmity', 'public-order disturbance', or violation of restrictions on religious processions. Many were detained for peaceful public displays or online posts stating 'I Love Muhammad'.

**What was the legal basis for the arrest?**

Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on promoting enmity and outraging religious feelings, and local public-order provisions under the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). These provisions were applied far beyond their lawful scope and used to criminalise constitutionally protected expression.

**Date of detention arrest**

04/09/2025

**Approximate date**

Yes

**Duration of the detention**

Varied; most detainees were held for days without charge or access to lawyers.

**Not known / approximate**

Yes

**Place(s) of detention (indicate any transfer and the current place of detention)**

Not known

**Reasons given for the detention**

Police alleged 'promotion of enmity', 'public-order disturbance', or violation of restrictions on religious processions. Many were detained for peaceful public displays or online posts stating 'I Love Muhammad'.

**Legal basis for the detention**

Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on promoting enmity and outraging religious feelings, and local public-order provisions under the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). These provisions were applied far beyond their lawful scope and used to criminalise constitutionally protected expression.

**What are the reasons why you believe the deprivation of liberty is arbitrary?**

Arrests were carried out solely for peacefully expressing a religious belief or protesting the earlier arrests. They lacked individualised justification, were discriminatory on religious grounds, and failed to meet necessity and proportionality tests under international law. They are also a violation of FoRB right.

**Are the reasons for the deprivation of liberty authorized by the law?**

No

**If yes, please elaborate**

The cited legal provisions—primarily sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita concerning 'promoting enmity' and 'outraging religious feelings'—were misapplied to penalise peaceful affirmation of faith. These provisions do not criminalise expressions such as 'I Love Muhammad'. Their use to arrest, detain and charge Muslims for non-violent, devotional speech constitutes arbitrary and discriminatory deprivation of liberty.

**Are the reasons for the deprivation of liberty linked to the exercise by the victim of her/his human rights or fundamental freedoms?**

Yes

**If yes, please elaborate**

Yes. The arrests and detentions were directly linked to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights protected under international law—specifically, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18 ICCPR), the right to freedom of expression (Article 19 ICCPR), and the right to peaceful assembly (Article 21 ICCPR). Individuals were detained solely for affirming their faith through the phrase 'I Love Muhammad' or for protesting the earlier arrests, actions that fall squarely within the scope of protected religious and expressive activity.

**If applicable, do you know if the right to a fair trial has been respected? (for example : the right to defend yourself and the right to legal assistance; the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law; the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law; the right when charged with a criminal offence to be informed of the nature and cause of criminal charges brought against them; etc.)**

No

**If yes please elaborate**

No. According to available information, many detainees were denied timely access to legal counsel or information on the nature of the charges against them. Families were not informed of the place of detention or given copies of the First Information Reports (FIRs). Some of those arrested were minors. In several instances, police employed coercive tactics, including public humiliation and the shooting of two detainees in the legs during alleged 'half encounters'.

**Can you indicate if complaints were made to the administrative or judicial authorities, or remedies sought with respect to this particular case ?**

Yes

**Do you know what were their results?**

No

**If yes please elaborate**

Yes. According to media reports, complaints were filed before the Uttar Pradesh State Human Rights Commission and local courts challenging the legality of the arrests, police violence, and punitive demolitions. As of mid-October 2025, there is no public information indicating that these complaints have been heard or that any relief has been granted.

**freedom of peaceful assembly and of association****In what type of activity/ies is the alleged victim (person(s) or organization) engaged?**

The affected individuals were engaged in the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of religion, belief, and peaceful assembly. Activities included participation in processions and public displays linked to Eid Milad-un-Nabi (the Prophet's birthday), carrying or displaying posters with the devotional slogan 'I Love Muhammad', and attending peaceful marches or gatherings to protest earlier police actions. None of these activities involved incitement, violence, or unlawful assembly.

**religion or belief****Does domestic law require (re-)registration of religious associations and if yes, what is the current status of the group concerned by the submission?**

No. India's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion under Article 25, and there is no national requirement for (re-)registration of religious groups. Muslims are a nationally recognised religious minority group.

**Please indicate the denomination of the religion or belief of the alleged victim(s).**

Islam — the victims are members of India's Muslim minority community.

**Do you believe the alleged victim was specifically targeted because of her/his religious or belief? Please specify.**

Yes. The arrests and demolitions were explicitly linked to Muslims expressing or supporting the devotional phrase 'I Love Muhammad', a peaceful affirmation of Islamic belief associated with Eid Milad-un-Nabi. Authorities and ruling-party figures characterised this expression as provocative, and enforcement actions were confined to Muslim participants. The crackdown thus targeted individuals solely on the basis of their religious identity and peaceful manifestation of faith.

**torture****Please indicate where the person was seized (city, province, etc.) and location at which the torture was carried out, if known.**

Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh, India. The incidents occurred on 1 and 2 October 2025.

**Indication of the forces carrying out the torture.**

Personnel of the Uttar Pradesh Police.

**Description of the form and methods of torture used and any injury sustained as a result.**

On 1 October 2025, police shot Tazim, district president of the Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC), in the leg while attempting to arrest him for his alleged role in the 26 September protests. Police claimed he fired first and was shot 'in self-defence.' On 2 October 2025, police reported another 'encounter' in which Mohammed Idris alias Bora (50) and Iqbal alias Bundan Khan (48) were each shot in the legs before being detained. Authorities alleged they had snatched a constable's weapon and fired at officers. All three victims sustained gunshot injuries to the lower limbs while under police control.

**Were any person, such as a lawyer, relatives or friends, permitted to see the alleged victim(s) during detention? If so, how long after the arrest?**

Unknown

**What was believed to be the purpose of the torture?**

To punish and intimidate Muslim protestors and leaders associated with the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign and to deter further demonstrations. The incidents form part of a wider, well-documented pattern in Uttar Pradesh where police employ so-called 'encounters' and 'half-encounters' as a purported law-enforcement measure. Since 2017, when the BJP's Yogi Adityanath became Chief Minister, state police have reportedly killed over 238 people and injured more than 9,467 others in such operations, with Muslims comprising roughly one-third of those killed despite constituting only about 19 per cent of the state's population. Officials have defended this 'thok do' ('knock down') policy as crime control, and media reports indicate that police refer to these custodial shootings internally as 'Operation Langda' ('Lame').

**Was the alleged victim(s) examined by a doctor at any point during or after victim's ordeal? If so, when? Was the examination performed by a prison or government doctor?**

Unknown

**Was appropriate treatment received for injuries sustained as a result of the torture?**

Unknown

**Was the examination performed in a manner which would enable the doctor to detect evidence of injuries sustained as a result of the torture? Were any medical reports or certificates issued? If so, what did the reports reveal?**

Unknown

**If the alleged victim(s) died in custody, was an autopsy or forensic examination performed and which were the results?**

The victims did not die in custody

**Perpetrators****Is the identity/occupation of the alleged perpetrator(s) known? Yes**

The alleged perpetrators include the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, officers of the Uttar Pradesh Police, officials of Bareilly district administration, and other local authorities responsible for arrests, detentions, and demolitions.

**Were the alleged perpetrators State agents or believed to be State agents? Yes**

Yes — principally the Uttar Pradesh Police and district-level civil administration, operating under the Home Department of the Government of Uttar Pradesh, which is led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

**If the alleged perpetrators were State agents, were they acting in their official capacity? Yes**

Yes — all were State agents acting in their official capacity.

**Additional information**

---

A list of references is attached.



[southasiajusticecampaign.org](https://southasiajusticecampaign.org)

[India Persecution Tracker](#)