

SOUTHASIA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

Updated information on unilateral deportations and expulsions of Muslims (and Rohingya refugees) from India

(Follow-up to [AL IND 8/2025](#))

In September 2025, UN Special Procedures mandate-holders raised grave concerns regarding deportations and expulsions carried out by Indian authorities without due process following the 22 April 2025 Pahalgam attack, including the expulsion of Bengali speaking Muslims — most with valid documentation or citizenship claims — and some Rohingya refugees, to Bangladesh and Myanmar. The letter referred to allegations that nearly 1,900 people were expelled outside any legal process, and sought information on the factual and legal basis for such removals, including compliance with international human rights and refugee law obligations relating to non-refoulement, the prohibition of arbitrary expulsion, and due process in expulsion.

South Asia Justice Campaign ([SAJC](#)) wishes to bring to the notice updated and consolidated information concerning these deportations and expulsions, which indicates that the scale of removals carried out without due process in 2025 significantly exceeds the figures available at the time of the September 2025 communication. Drawing on year-wide documentation, this information points to the expulsion of over 4,000 Bengali-speaking Muslims since May 2025, including at least 2,450 from the state of Assam alone. Among those expelled were at least 140 Rohingya refugees, including around 40 individuals forced into the sea off the Myanmar coast. The information set out below is drawn from the 2025 annual round-up edition of SAJC's **India Persecution Tracker** ([IPT](#)), published on 8 January 2026. We would be pleased to provide any further information or clarification the mandate-holders may wish to seek.

Large-scale unilateral expulsions and refoulement of Bengali-speaking Muslims and Rohingya refugees after Pahalgam attack

1,880+

Muslims expelled to Bangladesh through unilateral 'pushbacks' between 7 May and 3 July 2025

2,000+

Muslims expelled to Bangladesh from Assam alone between October-December 2025; 450+ from May-August.

200+

Muslims returned to India (as of July) after Bangladeshi authorities identified them as Indian citizens

140+

Rohingya refugees forcibly expelled to Myanmar, including 40 expelled at sea

In the aftermath of the 22 April 2025 attacks in Pahalgam, Indian authorities launched a nationwide campaign of mass detentions, forced expulsions, and cross-border ‘pushbacks’ targeting Muslims, principally Bengali-speaking Muslims accused of being ‘illegal immigrants’ from Bangladesh, and Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. These actions were largely carried out without due process, frequently without formal deportation orders, and in clear violation of India’s obligations under international human rights law, including the prohibition of refoulement.

From early May, police and border authorities across multiple states—most notably **Assam**, but also Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal—detained thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslims on suspicion of being undocumented migrants. Many were transferred to ‘holding centres’ or detention facilities and subsequently ‘pushed back’ across the India-Bangladesh border, often at night and without any prior judicial determination of nationality.

While Indian government authorities are yet to release consolidated data, Bangladeshi government data [indicates](#) that 1,880 individuals were expelled by India between 7 and 3 July through at least 22 border points in multiple states. These reportedly included around 100 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, who had been inmates of the Matia ‘transit camp’ in **Assam**. A significant number of those expelled were later identified as Indian citizens – by mid-June, over 110 people were reportedly returned to India by Bangladeshi authorities. Media reports in July [indicated](#) that nearly all those subjected to these ‘pushbacks’ were Muslims, and that the number of those returned to India had reached around 200. In early 2026, **Assam** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma [claimed](#) that his state alone had expelled over 2000 ‘foreigners’ in just the last three months.

Families repeatedly [reported](#) that relatives were forcibly taken from their homes or workplaces, denied access to lawyers, and removed without notice. In several instances, deportees, including elderly women, were allegedly transported by police or the Border Security Force (BSF) to the border, handed Bangladeshi currency, and ordered to cross at gunpoint. Others were left stranded for days in ‘no man’s land’ between the two countries, without food, shelter, or medical assistance.

Despite formal diplomatic protocols requiring nationality verification and coordination with the receiving state, these expulsions were carried out unilaterally. Bangladesh’s Foreign Ministry publicly [protested](#) the practice.

Assam, where a BJP-led government is seeking re-election in March-April 2026, emerged as the epicentre of the post-May expulsion drive. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma celebrated the ‘pushback’ policy, invoking a February 2024 Supreme Court order (concerning only a limited number of ‘declared foreigners’), as well as the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 (a law originally enacted in response to post-Partition migration from erstwhile East Pakistan; and had been in effect for only months before being suspended), to justify these mass expulsions. In September, the Assam Cabinet approved a new Standard Operating Procedure under the 1950 Act, empowering district-level authorities to summon suspected foreigners, demand proof of citizenship, and issue expulsion orders—often within 24 hours—bypassing Assam’s Foreigners’ Tribunals altogether. In November and December, district authorities in Sonitpur and Nagaon districts were [reported](#) issuing multiple expulsion notices directing individuals declared foreigners to ‘remove themselves from India’ within 24 hours, while simultaneously ordering deletion of their names from electoral rolls,

cancellation of their Aadhar cards, and withdrawal of all state benefits. In late-August, CM Sarma had [indicated](#) that the number of individuals expelled from that state alone had surpassed 450, and that ‘[at least 35-40 people](#)’ were being ‘pushed back’ every week. In early-January 2026, Sarma claimed that his state had expelled over 2000 ‘foreigners’ in the final quarter of 2025, and that it would be possible to expel as many as 50000 a year under the new SOP.

Legal experts warned that this framework in Assam eliminates even the minimal procedural safeguards previously available under the FT system and vests sweeping quasi-judicial powers in the executive. Reports indicate that many of those targeted had pending appeals and disputed citizenship claims, while others had lived in Assam for decades.

By mid-2025, multiple detailed accounts emerged of individuals who had been expelled to Bangladesh and later returned after being identified as Indian citizens. These included elderly women, long-term residents, and individuals with documented family ties in India. Media reports documented physical abuse, intimidation, denial of food and medication, and prolonged periods of enforced disappearance. Several more such cases [surfaced publicly](#) in late November and December, after relatives traced missing family members through media footage or cross-border contacts. In [some instances](#), Indian authorities agreed to facilitate return only after court intervention and political pressure, framing repatriation as a ‘humanitarian’ concession rather than acknowledging wrongful expulsion.

Alongside the targeting of Bengali-speaking Muslims, Indian authorities also carried out forced deportations of **Rohingya refugees**, including UNHCR-registered asylum seekers, in actions amounting to refoulement.

In early May 2025, police in Delhi detained over 40 Rohingya refugees, including women, children, elderly persons, and individuals with serious medical conditions, ostensibly for biometric verification. Instead, detainees were [reportedly](#) transferred to a detention facility, denied contact with families, and within days flown by military aircraft to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Survivors and family members reported that they were subsequently blindfolded, handcuffed, placed aboard an Indian naval vessel, and forced into the sea near the Myanmar coast, with life jackets, and ordered to swim ashore.

Independent investigations corroborated these accounts. The refugees reportedly landed in Myanmar, where they faced grave risks from armed conflict, military persecution, and trafficking networks. Their current whereabouts remain uncertain.

These deportations occurred shortly after the Supreme Court dismissed an urgent plea seeking protection for Rohingya refugees, characterising the allegations as ‘[a beautifully crafted story](#)’ and declining to intervene. Subsequent hearings later in the year saw senior judges—including the Chief Justice of India—publicly [questioning](#) whether refugees or undocumented migrants were entitled to due process, food, shelter, or protection from arbitrary expulsion.

Government of India

The post-May expulsions were reportedly [triggered](#) by central government instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 2 May, directing states to expedite identification and deportation of ‘illegal immigrants.’ Subsequent reporting [suggested](#) that these instructions authorised state police units to initiate deportations without

prior diplomatic clearance, transfer detainees directly to the BSF, and carry out 'pushbacks' without FIRs or meaningful hearings.

In December 2025, the central Home Minister publicly articulated a '[detect, delete, deport](#)' policy in Parliament, explicitly linking the deportation drive to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of voter rolls in multiple states and framing 'illegal immigrants' as a demographic threat.