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India's Hindu Festivals Bring Increasing Anti-Muslim Violence

Authorities Should Investigate Abuses, Hold Perpetrators to Account

The Hindu festival of Ram Navami in [India](#), which this year coincided with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, was [marred by violence](#) sparked when Hindus in processions passed through Muslim neighborhoods brandishing weapons and shouting anti-Muslim slogans.

On March 30 and 31, communal violence was reported in several states. In Bihar, [a mob reportedly vandalized and set fire](#) to a prominent madrassa. The [media reported that](#) a Hindu teenager was killed in the clashes. Across the country over 100 people have been arrested and dozens injured.

India's Hindu festivals are increasingly being used by the ruling Hindu majoritarian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to rally voters, leading to an increase in violence. These mobs are emboldened by a sense of political patronage that affords them impunity. After violence in opposition-ruled West Bengal state, where authorities arrested over a dozen BJP members and supporters, the party [alleged police bias](#) and "disproportionate action."

The record shows that it is usually Muslims who are unfairly targeted by the authorities. Last April, communal clashes broke out when [processions of Hindu men](#) celebrating a religious festival shouted offensive slogans outside mosques. Instead of attempting to stop such incitement or investigate these incidents, BJP authorities in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat responded by [summarily demolishing Muslim properties](#). In October, during another Hindu festival, police in Madhya Pradesh responded to communal clashes by [demolishing the homes of three](#)

Muslim men accused of throwing stones. Police in Gujarat publicly flogged Muslim men.

The BJP governments at every level have adopted discriminatory laws and policies targeting religious minorities, and its leaders and affiliates make frequent anti-minority remarks, including inciting violence.

The global Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called the latest incidents a “vivid manifestation of mounting Islamophobia and systemic targeting of the Muslim community in India.” India’s Foreign Ministry responded by calling the OIC statement “one more example of their communal mindset and anti-India agenda.”

India wants to promote its democratic credentials to elevate its status on the international stage, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chosen to showcase his government during the rotating presidency of the Group of 20. But the growing violence against minorities and suppression of civil society carry all the hallmarks of authoritarian rule.

If India is to be a true world leader, putting an end to human rights abuses needs to be a priority.

ecoi.net description:

Violence occurs in several states as Hindus march through Muslim neighbourhoods during the Hindu festival of Ram Navami

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India

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