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The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia



The Asia Foundation

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India

At a glance



National civil war
Absent



Communal/ideological conflict
High



National political conflict
Low



Local political and electoral conflict
Medium



Transnational terrorism
Medium



Local resource conflict
High



Separatism and autonomy
Decreasing from high to medium high



Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

India is a stable democracy with regular and largely peaceful elections at the national and state levels. In the decades since independence, the Indian state has grappled with an increasingly complex set of conflicts at the national and subnational levels. These conflicts range from subnational secessionist and ethnic movements to armed conflict and violence in certain regions. There are increasing concerns about transnational terrorism. The rapid development of the economy over the past decade has sparked localized conflicts over natural resources such as land, water, and forests. Gender-based violence and crimes against women are a serious concern, and a number of high-profile rapes have generated domestic and international uproar. Given the country's religious and ethnic diversity, concerns over communal violence and religious intolerance remain omnipresent.

National level**National civil war**

Not present in India since independence.

**National political conflict**

Elections are the main arena for political competition in India. Public discontent towards government is occasionally expressed through demonstrations, but these rarely involve mass violence.

**Transnational terrorism**

Most transnational terrorism in India relates to its conflict with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Even incidents outside J&K are often coordinated or facilitated by Kashmir-based groups and Pakistani intelligence. Militant movements to free J&K from India gained ground after the 1987 state assembly election. Dissatisfaction over election irregularities and perceived illegitimate government led to unrest across Kashmir, which transformed into mass mobilizations against India, and many young protesters joined insurgent groups such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM).

The rise of militarism in Kashmir in the late 1980s coincided with the end of the Soviet-Afghan war in 1989. This allowed Pakistani intelligence to divert the support it had been giving to the Afghan mujahideen to the Kashmiri insurgents. Through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, Pakistan began to provide arms and training to militants inside and outside Kashmir. To sideline JKLF, an armed movement formed in 1977 to fight for Kashmir's independence, Pakistan created and assisted several armed groups from 1989 on that had a different goal: to join

17 **19**
active and inactive
terrorist groups
in Jammu and Kashmir

J&K with Pakistan. Many groups operating in J&K have bases in Pakistan and coordinate with each other; they also have ties with international jihadi organizations and transnational crime groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HuJI), and Lashkar-e-Omar (LeO). Some, such as LeT, HuM, and LeO, are believed to have links with al-Qaeda. According to the South Asia Terrorist Portal (SATP), there are at least 17 active and 19 inactive terrorist/extremist groups in J&K.¹

Outside Jammu and Kashmir, LeT, JeM, and HuJI have collaborated with India-based jihadi groups such as the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and India Mujahideen (IM). SATP records show that since 2000, most terrorist attacks outside J&K with a known perpetrator have been attributed to SIMI (15 incidents) and IM (10 incidents). At least nine incidents involved LeT, including in Mumbai, where serial bomb blasts in 2003 and 2006 killed 52 and 200 civilians, respectively, and multiple attacks in 2008 left 195 dead.² Bangladesh-based jihadi groups such as the Asif Reza Commando Force (ARCF) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) also take part in some of SIMI and IM's operations. Communal violence against Muslims (discussed below) contributed to the emergence and growth of SIMI and IM.³

The number of incidents and deaths has significantly declined since 2006. However, the security situation in the Kashmir Valley⁴ experienced a setback in late July 2016 following the killing of militant leader Burhan Wani of HM. Unrest instigated by separatists broke out throughout Kashmir. A curfew was imposed several times, with the turmoil lasting for five months. In the first month, telephone and Internet services were suspended in the Valley. Clashes between protesters and security forces claimed at least 94 lives. More than 13,000 were injured, and 1,100 had their eyes hit by pellet guns used by authorities.

Amid the turmoil, unknown militants attacked an Indian army base in Uri on September 18, 2016, killing 19 officers.⁵ The government suspected JeM, and on September 29 launched a raid against a terrorist base in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, straining India-Pakistan relations further. Tensions in the Valley are still simmering.

Table 1. Trends in terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir

Year	Number of incidents	Security forces killed	Civilians killed	Terrorists killed
2005	1,990	189	557	917
2006	1,667	151	389	591
2007	1,092	110	158	472
2008	708	75	91	339
2009	499	79	71	239
2010	488	69	47	232
2011	340	33	31	100
2012	220	38	11	50
2013	170	53	15	67
2014	222	47	28	110
2015	208	39	17	108
2016	322	82	15	150
Total	7,926	965	1,430	3,375

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2013–14 and 2016–17*⁶

Subnational level



Separatism and autonomy

Independent India combines regions with different cultural identities and political histories, such as tribal regions in the Northeast and more than 500 princely states. Several armed and unarmed movements have demanded independence and autonomy. Tamil Nadu also saw many separatist groups from the late 1980s, when the Indian Peace-keeping Force was sent to Sri Lanka after the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord. The accord aimed to end the war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Some Tamils in Tamil Nadu supported the LTTE. Groups based in the state who had advocated for an independent Tamil Nadu, like the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army and the Tamil National Retrieval Troops, became inactive in the mid-2000s. The Khalistan movement, which aimed for the independence of Sikh Punjab, turned militant in the 1980s. A bloody operation against insurgents inside the revered Golden Temple complex in 1984 led to at least 1,000 deaths.⁷ The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards led to anti-Sikh riots that killed at least 3,000.⁸

There are multiple demands for independence and autonomy in the Northeast. SATP lists 149 active and inactive insurgent groups in its seven states.⁹ More than two-thirds are based and operate in Assam and Manipur. Their objectives vary, and include secession (e.g., NSCN, NDFB, ULFA, NLFT, KCP, GNLA), separate ethnic states (e.g., KLO, Karbi People's Liberation Tiger in Assam), tribal autonomy (e.g., HNLC, early Hmar People's Convention–Democracy), and protection of the rights and identities of religious and ethnic communities (e.g., Adivasi Cobra Forces and Muslim United Liberation Tigers in Assam, People United Liberal Front in Manipur, PREPAK, ATTF). The militant groups that the Ministry of Home Affairs considers to pose a major threat are shown in table 2.¹⁰

Table 2. Insurgent groups in India

Assam	• United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) • National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) • Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)
Manipur	• People's Liberation Army (PLA) • United National Liberation Front (UNLF) • People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) • Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) • Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) • Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF) • Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) • Coordination Committee (CorCom) (conglomerate of six Valley-based underground outfits)
Meghalaya	• Hynniewtre National Liberation Council (HNLC) • Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA)
Tripura	• All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) • National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)
Nagaland	• National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Isak-Muivah (NSCN–IM) • National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang (NSCN–K) • National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khole-Kitovi (NSCN–KK)

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2014–15*

149

insurgent groups

in 7

northeastern states

Along with counterinsurgency, the central government has responded by granting statehood, union territory, and autonomous areas. These approaches have yielded only limited success, however, due to ethnic complexity in the region. State demarcations do not correspond to the territories demanded by tribes. Naga tribes, for example, are spread across Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, and parts of western Myanmar, which makes the goal of a united Greater Nagalim unattainable. Smaller tribes and ethnic and religious minorities within these states feel their interests and territorial claims are ignored by the predominant tribes or groups in power. This has led to the emergence of many armed groups and movements for ethnic unity and autonomy in every state in the Northeast. Sixteen autonomous administrative divisions were created to ease tensions in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. However, militant secessionist movements persist in some divisions in Assam and Meghalaya. This continued militancy generally reflects the failure of these autonomous divisions to respond to the demands of dominant tribes for protection of their lands and resources from outsiders.

Rivalry within and among tribal or ethnic armed groups competing for control of territory and resources encourages other groups to take up arms to protect their interests and their communities. These intertribal conflicts include the Nagas vs. the Kukis in Manipur, and the Bodo vs. the Adivasi, Kamtapur, and Muslim Bengali in Assam. Due to an absence of government administration, armed groups fight to establish parallel states that impose laws and raise money through extortion. Peace talks have caused new factions to emerge over internal disagreements. In several cases, factions dominated by particular tribes are competing to represent the interests of their ethnic group, as in the case of the Nagas' NSCN. In other cases, such as the conflict between the NDFB and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force, the groups represent different religious communities.

Ethnic militancy in the Northeast also targets Bengali Muslim immigrants. Indigenous groups feel their identity, land, and livelihoods are threatened by the influx of refugees who arrived during the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971 and subsequent illegal immigration. Bengali Muslim immigrants often acquire the right to vote and to receive public services by securing fraudulent identification. In Assam, protests and riots against Muslim migrants have become common since the late 1970s. The 1983 Nellie massacre in central Assam was triggered by Indira Gandhi's decision to give 4 million Bengali immigrants the right to vote. Tensions are high in the Bodoland Territorial Area District, which borders Bangladesh. The Bodo population accounts for just 29 percent of the district, and they are hostile to other communities because they fear losing their ancestral land and political power. Different factions of the NDFB have been responsible for fatal attacks against Adivasis, Bihari migrants, and Bengali Muslim immigrants.¹¹ These fears were behind the ethnic clashes in 2012, which left 77 people dead,¹² and a series of NDFB attacks against Muslim immigrants in May 2014. In Tripura, one of the causes of the insurgency was opposition to unrestricted migration from Bangladesh. This violence has led, in turn, to the formation of Muslim militant groups. Transnational jihadi groups are also present in the region.

Overall, insurgent activities in the Northeast have declined in recent years. There are several factors. The Indian government has conducted peace talks with several major and minor militant groups. Significant improvement in counterinsurgency cooperation with Bangladesh and Myanmar has made it harder for militants to hide, train, and smuggle arms. Many insurgent groups have degenerated into criminal and terrorist gangs that engage in extortion, abduction, and other illicit activities.

Table 3. Numbers of militants, security forces, and civilians killed in insurgencies in the Northeast

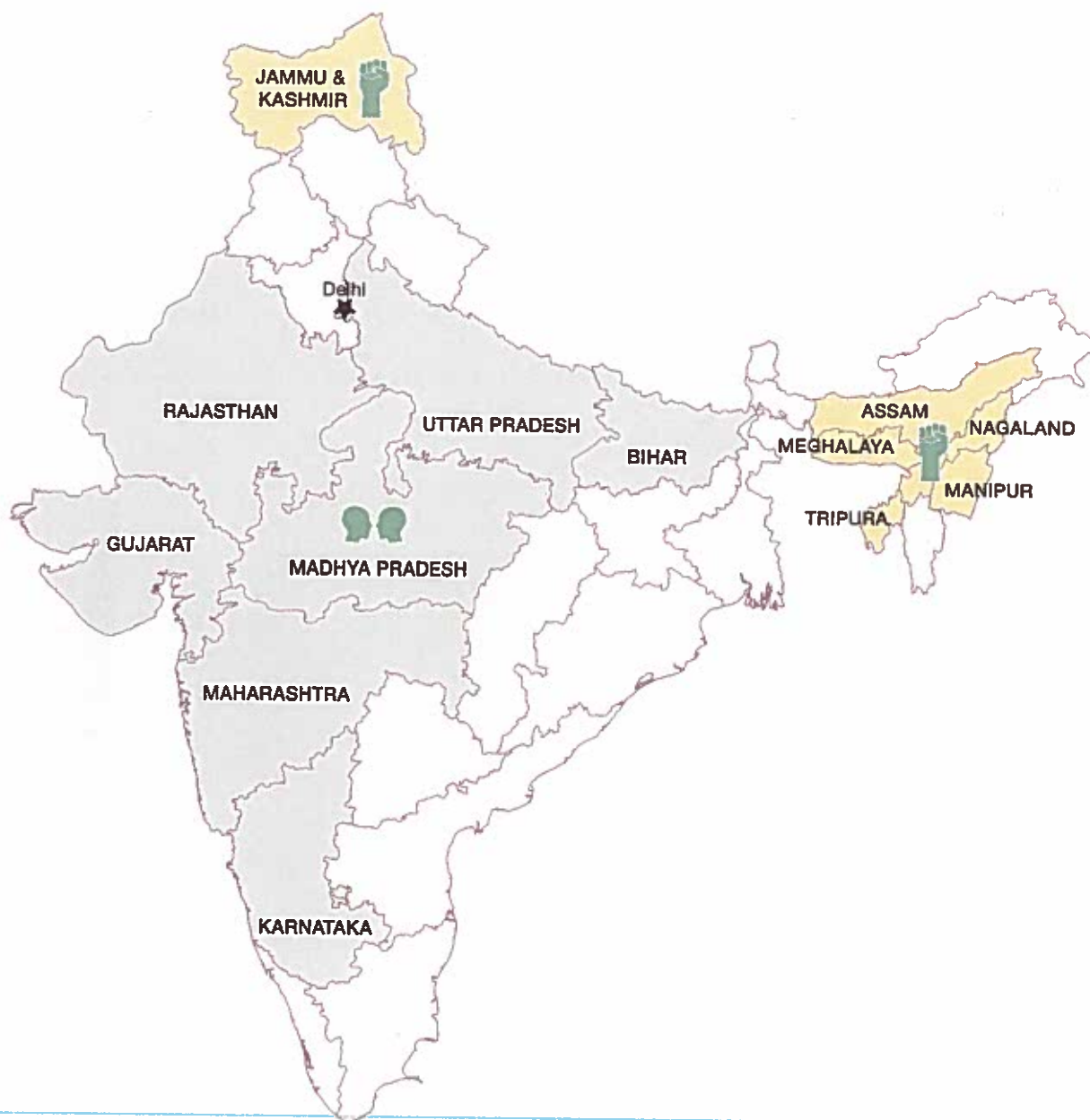
Year	Arunachal	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Tripura
2009	22	368	436	9	1	31	10
2010	13	174	147	18	0	5	4
2011	27	78	64	31	0	15	1
2012	19	91	94	53	0	74	2
2013	10	92	58	58	0	42	1
2014	11	274	47	65	0	13	3
2015	9	58	80	44	3	47	0
2016	9	84	31	23	0	5	0

Source: Prepared based on Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2014–15* and *2016–17*¹³



Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Before the 1990s, communal Hindu-Muslim riots occurred locally, mostly in towns with a large Muslim population. Local political-economic rivalries between communities were generally the trigger. Casualties per incident varied from none to more than 2,000 fatalities.¹⁴ Communal conflicts worsened in the 1990s when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to consolidate its support by using a Hindu nationalist discourse. It focused on rebuilding Hindu sites destroyed during the Mughal Empire. A flashpoint was the campaign to rebuild Ramjanmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, on the site of the nearly 500-year-old Babri Masjid mosque. From September to October 1990, the BJP and other Hindu nationalist parties organized a march across India in protest. There were riots along the path of the march,



including approximately 1,400 incidents in Gujarat alone. Almost 900 Muslims were killed in the related violence in Bihar. The campaign culminated at the end of 1992 with the demolition of Babri Masjid and other mosques in Ayodhya by supporters of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP, a religious organization), the Shiv Sena Party, and the BJP. The demolition instigated Muslim-Hindu violence in Mumbai. Clashes lasted until the end of January 1993, killing more than 900 people, mostly Muslims. The Muslim underworld don Dawood Ibrahim retaliated with coordinated bombings in March, killing 350 and injuring 1,200 in one day.¹⁵

The 2002 Gujarat riots were sparked by the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from Ayodhya to Godhra. Fifty-eight were killed, triggering revenge killings of Muslims in Gujarat.¹⁶ Violence lasted for three months. Narendra Modi, then BJP chief minister of the state (and now India's president), was believed by many to be complicit, as security forces did little to curb the massacre. A government inquiry revealed that 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus had been killed, around 2,500 people had been injured, and at least 223 were reported missing.¹⁷ There have also recently been small-scale, Hindu-Christian clashes caused by forced conversions.

Incidents of communal violence fluctuate, with official records showing 580 riots in 2011, 668 in 2012, 823 in 2013, 644 in 2014, 751 in 2015, and 703 in 2016.¹⁸ Communal violence mostly occurs in the northern states, with Uttar Pradesh experiencing the largest number of incidents (155) in 2015, followed by Maharashtra with 105, Karnataka with 105, Madhya Pradesh with 92, Bihar with 71, Rajasthan with 65, and Gujarat with 55.¹⁹

Table 4. Naxal violence, by state (2011–2016)

State	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	54	9	67	13	36	11	18	4	35	8	17	6
Bihar	316	63	166	44	177	69	163	32	110	17	129	28
Chhattis-garh	465	204	370	109	355	111	328	111	466	101	395	107
Jharkhand	517	182	480	163	387	152	384	103	310	56	323	85
Madhya Pradesh	8	0	11	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	12	2
Maharash-tra	109	54	134	41	71	19	70	28	55	18	73	23
Odisha	192	53	171	45	101	35	103	26	92	28	86	27
Telangana	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	14	5	11	2	7	0
Uttar Pradesh	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Bengal	92	45	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	6	1	8	0	7	0	7	0	10	0	6	0
Total	1,760	611	1,415	415	1,136	397	1,090	309	1,089	230	1,048	278

[401]*

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2016–17*

*All numbers are taken from the Ministry report. Erroneous totals are corrected in brackets.

703 cases of communal violence in 2016

The Naxal/Maoist movement originated in 1967 in a violent peasant uprising over land reforms in Naxalbari village in West Bengal. It uses guerrilla warfare against security forces to overthrow what it perceives to be a semicolonial, semifeudal system that oppresses and exploits the masses.²⁰ The insurgency ebbed and flowed during the 1970s and 1980s, but became stronger in 2004 when the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War—commonly known as the People's War Group (PWG)—joined forces with the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI). Violence significantly increased, and the Naxal threat became a greater security concern for policymakers than the insurgencies in J&K and the Northeast.²¹ Whereas the Naxal movement in 2003 was active in only 55 districts in eight states, the Ministry of Home Affairs reported in 2014 that it was present in 20 states. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar have the highest numbers of Naxal incidents. The movement recently expanded to Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.

Weak state presence, poverty, and grievances related to natural resource management, particularly mining, help the Naxal movement recruit and secure community support. Naxal cadres are mostly tribal or low caste. The insurgency is present in districts with high poverty and low literacy rates.²² According to Oxford University's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2010), more than 400 million Indians living below the poverty line are in states severely affected by Naxal violence.²³ Naxalites have exploited local anger at underdevelopment and offered to help protect communities' rights to water, forests, and land. Mining is fueling the conflict by increasing support for the Maoists' anticapitalist and anti-foreign-investment discourse. The insurgents are also reported to have stolen explosives from mines and extorted mining companies.

Local level



Local political conflict and electoral violence

Violence is a regular feature of Indian elections and local politics. Politicians mobilize support and votes along ethnic, religious, or caste lines. During campaigns, polling days, and afterwards, there are sporadic incidents of communal violence, clashes between supporters of competing parties, intimidation, threats, and assault or killing of voters, candidates, and election officials. Generally there is more violence where political competition is tight.

Other forms of violence already discussed often intensify around elections. For example, Maoist and other antigovernment rebel groups target election officials and polling booths to contest the state's legitimacy. Communal violence caused by Bodo ethnic armed groups attacking Bengali Muslims and other tribal Adivasi groups also took place during elections in 1983, 1996, and 2014. For example, a series of attacks against Muslims during the 2014 lower house election killed 43 people.²⁴

It is difficult to know how prevalent violence is, as there is no monitoring, and there are no publicly available official statistics on election incidents. Yet reports of violence are common during electoral periods. Other violence during the April–May 2014 national election included rebel ambushes in Kashmir and Jharkhand that killed four paramilitary soldiers and three election officials,²⁵ and Maoist attacks in Chhattisgarh that killed 14 officers.²⁶ Municipal elections are also violent. There were 70 poll-related clashes reported to the Election Commission during the April 2015 Kolkata Municipal Corporation election.²⁷

Local conflict over resources and community rights

In India, land is scarce. With 329 people per square kilometer, changes in land use often result in large-scale displacement. Since independence, development initiatives have displaced many Indians. Prior to the 1980s, when economic development was still state led, the government coercively acquired land for roads, dams, and industry. Since liberalization in the late 1980s, land has been transferred to private entities for power projects, mines, economic zones, and other infrastructure as part of public-private partnerships. The majority of people who have been displaced are still waiting for compensation. The aboriginal tribal communities known as Adivasi are particularly affected, because their livelihood depends on access to their land. Most land conflicts take place in mineral-rich and forested areas of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Assam where Adivasis live.²⁸ These conflicts significantly contribute to support for the Naxalite movement.

A recent survey recorded 252 conflicts over land, in 165 of India's 664 districts, in 2013–2014.²⁹ When the government amended the Land Acquisition Act of 2013 to remove a clause on consent and social impact assessment, more than 7,000 people from 15 states demonstrated in New Delhi in March 2015. Local protests against public or private enterprises generally lead to clashes with state security forces and arrests of activists.



Urban crime and violence

The number of violent crimes (crimes against the body, property, public safety, and women) slightly increased from 2009 to 2015.³⁰ The rate in 2015 was 26.7 per 100,000 people. When nonviolent crimes are included, average crime rates are significantly higher in megacities (defined by the Government of India as cities with more than one million people). In 2015, there were 420.7 crimes per 100,000 people in megacities, compared to 234.2 per 100,000 nationally. Among the megacities, Delhi had the highest number of major crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery: 464, 1,893, and 6,766 cases, respectively.³¹ The homicide rate has fluctuated over the last ten years and was 3.2 per 100,000 in 2014, having declined from 4.5 in the year 2000.

Criminal gangs are active in smuggling, money laundering, illegal gambling, counterfeiting, contract killing, and extortion. During the 1990s, money laundering, or *hawala*, accounted for more than USD 6.25 billion per year.³² Since the 1970s, the Indian government has periodically cracked down on criminal groups, especially in Mumbai, where targeted killings by criminal groups were common during the 1980s and 1990s. Major figures such as Dawood Ibrahim fled the country during the 1980s and remotely coordinated operations such as the 1993 Mumbai

Almost 400,000 women and girls abducted in the past decade

bombings discussed above. Maharashtra state's Control of Organised Crime Act, issued in 1999, drove most organized crime groups in Mumbai underground. While gang violence has subsided, criminal groups continue to carry out illicit activities and extort businesses, especially in Mumbai's real estate sector. Those with an international network often cooperate with transnational terrorist and insurgent groups.

Criminal gangs have close ties with politicians. Seventeen percent of candidates in the 2014 national election had criminal charges pending, including serious crimes like murder, rape, and extortion. One study shows that candidates with a criminal background perform better in elections.³³ The best-known gangster-turned-politician is Arun Gawli, who formed his own political party, Akhil Bharatiya Sena, and was elected to the state legislature in 2004.



Domestic and gender-based violence

Domestic and gender-based violence are prevalent in India due to traditional social practices and the low status of women. Child marriage and sati (widowed women committing suicide on their husband's funeral pyre) are illegal, but both practices, especially the first, continue. The tradition of the bride's family paying a dowry leads to female feticide, female infanticide, and dowry deaths (women murdered or driven to suicide in the attempt to extort a higher dowry). While official statistics show low rates of feticide and infanticide,³⁴ these crimes are likely underreported. The 2011 census revealed a child sex ratio of 914 girls per 1,000 boys,³⁵ in marked contrast to the global ratio of 1,300 girls per 1,000 boys.³⁶ Between 2009 and 2013, there were an average of 8,342 dowry deaths per year.³⁷

The most common crime against women is torture by a husband or his relatives (38.4 percent), followed in frequency by abduction, physical harassment, and rape. Official statistics for 2012 through 2016 show an increase in these crimes. This can be interpreted in two ways: either measures to protect women are not effective, or more women are reporting crimes following years of gender-violence activism.

Table 5. Crimes against women, by type of crime (2011–2015)

Type of crime		Year					Change from 2014 to 2015 %
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
1.	Rape	24,206	24,923	33,707	36,735	34,651	-5.7
2.	Attempt to commit rape	-	-	-	4,232	4,434	4.8
3.	Kidnapping and abduction of women	35,565	38,262	51,881	57,311	59,277	3.4
4.	Dowry death	8,618	8,233	8,083	8,455	7,634	-9.7
5.	Cruelty by husband or his relatives	99,135	106,527	118,866	122,877	113,403	7.7
6.	Assault on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty	42,968	45,351	70,739	82,235	82,422	0.2
7.	Insult to a woman's modesty	8,570	9,173	12,589	9,735	8,685	-10.8
8.	Importation of a girl from foreign country	80	59	31	13	6	-53.8
9.	Abetment of a woman's suicide	-	-	-	3,734	4,060	8.7
A.	Total Indian Penal Code crimes against women	219,142	232,528	295,896	325,327	314,575 [314,572]*	-3.3
10.	Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,436	2,563	2,579	2,070	2,424	17.1
12.	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	453	141	362	47	40	-14.9
13.	The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	6,619	9,038	10,709	10,050	9,894	-1.5 [-1.6]*
14.	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	-	-	-	426	461	8.2
B.	Total Special and Local Law crimes against women	9,508	11,742	13,650	12,593	12,819	1.8
Total (A+B)		228,650	244,270	309,546	337,922 [337,920]*	327,394 [327,391]*	-3.1

Source: Government of India, National Crime Records Bureau³⁸

*All numbers are from the NCRB. Erroneous totals are corrected in brackets.

The gang rape and death of a young medical student in December 2012 in New Delhi triggered demonstrations across India and international outrage at the low status of women and cultural practices that breed sexual violence. In traditional rural areas, several women have been gang raped as punishment for their family's wrongdoing by order of the community's senior members or the village committee.³⁹ Rapes have also occurred during communal riots, for example in the 2002 Gujarat riots and the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots.

Activists secured an amendment to the Indian penal code in 2013. Acid attacks, sexual harassment (unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal sexual behavior), voyeurism, and stalking are now criminal offences. Rape is defined as sexual assault, which covers physical contact with the genitals, anus, or breasts against another person's will and includes same-sex crimes. The

age of consent was changed from 16 to 18 years old. Marital rape continues to be legal. Reports of rape, in Delhi in particular, have sharply increased since 2013, although the conviction rate has declined.⁴⁰

Almost 400,000 women and girls have been abducted in the past decade. Abductions mostly involve rape, sexual trafficking, and forced marriage; rates are higher in northern states with the most imbalanced child sex ratios.⁴¹ In rural areas, women and girls of low castes, especially Dalits (the lowest untouchable caste), are abducted for sex by men generally of higher and dominant castes. Victims and their families generally remain silent due to shame, fear of reprisal, and police bias favoring higher castes.⁴² Open defecation increases the risk of poor women being abducted, molested, and raped.

Notes

- 1 "India—Terrorist, insurgent and extremist groups: Jammu & Kashmir," South Asia Terrorist Portal website, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/index.html>.
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- 3 Namrata Goswami, "Who is the Indian Mujahideen?" Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses website, February 3, 2009, <http://www.idsa.in/backgrounders/IndianMujahideenb5a6.html?q=print/8706>.
- 4 J&K state comprises three regions: Muslim-dominant Kashmir, Hindu-dominant Jammu, and Buddhist-dominant Ladakh. The Valley generally refers to the Kashmir region where Kashmiri people feel alienated from the rest of India.
- 5 Debabratha Mohanty, "Uri attack: BSF jawan succumb to injuries, death toll rises to 19," *Indian Express*, September 25, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/uri-attack-odia-bsf-jawan-succumbs-to-injuries-death-toll-rises-to-19/>.
- 6 Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Annual Report 2013–2014, Annual Report 2014–2015 (New Delhi: Government of India), <http://mha.nic.in/AnnualReports>.
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