

INDIA: Hate Crimes Against Minorities Continue As Prime Minister Calls To End Fear And Discrimination

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Hate crimes against minorities continue in India as Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls to end fear and discrimination.

After winning the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections with a thumping majority, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a gathering of newly-elected ministers and BJP members, setting the tone for the work to be done in the next five years.

Set to take oath as the prime minister of the country for the second term on May 30, Modi made a strong reference to the condition of the minorities and government's role to uplift them.

He said minorities have been made to live in fear and treated as a vote bank.

While his speech pleased many across the country, with a section applauding Modi for inclusive politics, the ground reality remains the same and more often than not, disturbing.

Muslim couple, youth thrashed in Madhya Pradesh

On May 22, the day before counting of votes, three Muslims, including a couple, were beaten up by cow vigilantes in Madhya Pradesh. Self-proclaimed gau rakshaks thrashed them after getting a tip-off that a Muslim couple and one other youth, travelling in an auto, were carrying beef in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh.

The video of the incident, which went viral on social media, showed goons descending on the youths with sticks as onlookers stood by. They also forced the youth to chant "Jai Shree Ram" slogans while forcing one of the youths to beat the woman who was accompanying them.

While at least five people have been arrested in connection with the crime, the police also arrested victims for allegedly carrying red meat.

This wasn't the only incident which took place right after the elections concluded.

Muslim youth beaten up in Gurgaon for wearing skull cap

On May 26, a 25-year-old Muslim man was assaulted in Gurgaon by four unidentified youths for wearing traditional skull cap. The victim, a native of Bihar, was beaten by the attackers.

"The accused threatened me, saying wearing cap was not allowed in the area. They removed my cap and slapped me, while asking me to chant Bharat Mata ki Jai," Alam said in the FIR, lodged at the city police station, reported PTI.

"As I followed their instruction and chanted Bharat Mata ki Jai, they asked me to chant Jai Sri Ram which I refused. At this, the youths picked up a baton from the roadside and began mercilessly beating me. They hit me at my legs and back," he added.

Alam was returning home after offering namaz in a mosque.

The police are looking out to nab the accused.

Cricketer-turned-politician, Gautam Gambhir, who won Lok Sabha elections from East Delhi seat, came out strongly against the attack called for exemplary action in a tweet this morning, asserting that "we are a secular nation".

Jharkhand Adivasi Professor arrested for FB post written in 2017

On May 25, an Adivasi professor was arrested over a Facebook post where he mentioned the right to eat beef. He was attending a cultural function near Sakchi with some friends and staying at a hotel when police came and arrested him.

Jeetrai Hansda, a professor at the Government School and College for Women, Sakchi, in Jharkhand was arrested on Saturday, after a complaint was filed against him in June 2017 based on a Facebook post he had written.

The lawyer, who was handling his case, on condition of anonymity, told HuffPost India, that he suspected the arrest was made after the elections were over so that the BJP did not anger the Adivasis and lose their votes before the polls.

Priya Sathi, mujhe koi batayega ki Jamshedpur main beef kahan milega. Main beef party dena chahata hun (Dear friends, will anybody inform me where in Jamshedpur beef is available. I want to organise a beef party), he wrote on his Facebook page.

Last year, on May 29, Hansda had posted: Tribals do eat beef while performing last rites and during various festivals. Just because of a law banning cow slaughter, why should we stop our tradition of having beef and follow Hindu tradition.

It will be an end to tribal existence and we would not accept this. We raise objection over such law by the government. I would like to inform that we also eat national bird of the country peacock. If tribals too belong to India, the lawmakers should stop making such law to save tribal tradition and identity.

Gau rakshaks vandalise dairy alleging cow slaughter

On May 26, a group of self-styled gau rakshaks entered a dairy in Raipur, Chhattisgarh and accused people in the shop of cow slaughter and the sale of beef. They assaulted them and vandalised the shop.

Next day, at least 50 men belonging to BJP-affiliate Bajrang Dal alleged that the dairy owner Qureshi be arrested on cow slaughter charges, reported Indian Express. They alleged that they found bones behind the shop. However, police officers said there is no such evidence.

With BJP coming back to power with stonking majority, the spirits of such fringe outfits have emboldened. The minorities have been attacked continuously over their religion, food choice and caste.

In Gujarat, a mob of 200-300 upper caste people allegedly attacked the house of a Dalit couple in Mahuvad village on Vadodra, after the husband allegedly put up a Facebook post saying that the government does not permit the village temple to be used for Dalit wedding ceremonies.

The Dalit woman filed a police complaint and got an FIR registered against 11 people and mob of 200-300 people for attacking her house, pelting stones and thrashing her husband.

Minorities living in fear

There has been a significant increase in hate crimes against Muslims in recent years. Some fear the world's largest democracy is becoming dangerously intolerant of the minorities living in the country.

In the entire election campaign, the BJP rode high on Hindu nationalism and national security following the Balakot airstrike post Pulwama attack in February 2019.Â Â

The Guardian editorial on the victory of Narendra Modi had noted that the mandate is "changing India for the worse."• Stressing that "it stands for the flagrant social dominance of the upper castes of Hindu society, pro-corporate economic growth, cultural conservatism, intensified misogyny, and a firm grip on the instruments of state power. The landslide win for Mr Modi will see India's soul lost to a dark politics " one that views almost all 195 million Indian Muslims as second-class citizens."•

The state of affairs does not seem to improve anytime soon unless law and order situation in the country is tightened and minorities are also treated as citizens of India, like anyone else. The change must start from the top and not from the grassroots level, where top leaders of the ruling government come out in support of minorities and ensure attackers be prosecuted immediately.

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