



Coalition Against Genocide

Appendix

Mr. Modi and the Gujarat Carnage: A Brief Explanation

On Feb 27, 2002, a train carrying Hindu activists caught fire in the Gujarat city of Godhra, following an altercation between some Hindu passengers and a largely Muslim crowd at the railway station. Fifty-nine train passengers died in this tragic accident, the cause of which remains undetermined till date. Detailed forensic investigations have since undeniably proved that the train could not have been set to from the outside. However, the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and his party (Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP) blamed the deaths on Muslims. The very same evening, Mr Modi convened a meeting where the senior-most police officials were ordered to not do anything to contain the "*Hindu reaction*."¹ Since then, Mr Modi and his colleagues in the BJP have justified the ensuing carnage as a *spontaneous* reaction to the Godhra incident.

The reality, however, is very different and is best summed up by the following report from Human Rights Watch: "What happened in Gujarat [in February-March 2002] was not a spontaneous uprising, it was a carefully orchestrated attack against Muslims. The attacks were planned in advance and organized with extensive participation of the police and state government officials."² These conclusions have been echoed by numerous other human rights organizations and civil liberties groups. As for the perpetrators, HRW concluded: "The groups most directly involved in the violence against Muslims include the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP), the Bajrang Dal, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that heads the Gujarat state government. Collectively, they are known as the sangh parivar, or family of Hindu nationalist organizations."

All this is public knowledge in India. Not just human rights organizations, but the perpetrators themselves have owned up to their acts and threatened to replicate the Gujarat "experiment" elsewhere in India³. Tribals in Gujarat are being threatened with questions like, "Would you like to live as Hindus or die like Christians?"⁴ and Father Cedric Prakash, a 51-year-old Jesuit priest based in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), opines that Christians could be the next targets of the sangh parivar. Given the past instances of organized violence against Christians⁵, such fears are very real indeed.

As regards the Gujarat pogrom, Narendra Modi is culpable at several levels. Not only was he delinquent in his duties as head of the Gujarat state, but he also effectively de-mobilized the state apparatus and gave a free hand to his ideological brethren (from the sangh parivar) to carry out the killings. Furthermore, after the killings, his government has played an active role in shielding the culprits and harassing the survivors, witnesses and social justice groups. In a scathing indictment of Mr Modi, the Indian Supreme Court pronounced: "The modern day Neros (a reference to the

¹ Report of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal,
<http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2002/novdec02/police.html>

² <http://hrw.org/press/2002/04/gujarat.htm>

³ http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/5905_120559,0008.htm

⁴ <http://www.sabrang.com/gujarat/23oct02.htm>

⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/press/1999/sep/christians.htm>



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Gujarat Government) were looking elsewhere when Best Bakery and innocent children and women were burning, and were probably deliberating how the perpetrators of the crime can be saved or protected.⁶ The Supreme Court also castigated the Gujarat government for shielding the guilty and ordered the re-opening of 2,000-odd riot cases that had been closed in a hurry. Perceiving danger to the victims and witnesses, the Court -- in an unprecedented move -- also shifted some cases outside Gujarat.

Almost three years have passed since the pogrom, and the religious and cultural minorities in Gujarat continue to live in fear. Last month, Amnesty International charged that "lack of progress in bringing rapists to justice in Gujarat adds insult to victims' injury" and that "the gross failure of the local police and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Gujarat state government to protect Muslims -- especially women and girls -- and the refusal of the central government to censure the state government in Gujarat is inexcusable."⁷ It goes without saying that any legitimization of Mr Modi and his brand of politics is also inexcusable.

⁶ <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2111/stories/20040604003029700.htm>

⁷ <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/india/document.do?id=3A507EBFEB241A3485256F960057005B>