

WHY OPPOSING NARENDRA MODI IS A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUE

Women's organizations in India came together soon after the Gujarat pogrom to seek gender justice and to record the gendered violence, and its aftermath. The International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat was organized by a host of women's organizations, including Forum Against Oppression of Women, Aawaaz-e-Niswaan, Stree Sangam, Saheli, Jagori and Nirantar. The excerpts below are from this report. We are aware of the graphic nature of the quotes and instances cited; yet there is nothing worse than the fact that Modi and others responsible for these acts are still not brought to justice for the crimes against humanity. It must be remembered that Modi sanctioned, fueled, and later, justified the pogrom as a "chain of action and reaction." Much of the facts in this report are corroborated by the Amnesty International report on Gujarat, *Justice, the victim - Gujarat state fails to protect women from violence* <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa200012005>

I. HINDUTVA'S GENDER IDEOLOGY: Narendra Modi is member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a shadowy all-male organization drawing inspiration from Hitler and Mussolini that trains militia-like groups of men and indoctrinates them into ideologies of racial cleansing. The ideology of racial cleansing includes moral sanction for the rape, impregnation, and murder of non-Hindu women, and the prevention of the biological reproduction of the other race. V.D. Savarkar, their founder-hero, derides Hindu kings for not raping Muslim women in conquered areas. Note that Hindutva leaders build up hatred and fear of Muslim population growth, with the Muslim woman portrayed as reproducer of the race. This is evident in Narendra Modi's infamous comment on the Gujarat relief camps: "Relief camps are actually child-making factories. Those who keep on multiplying the population should be taught a lesson." *The Hindu*, 10 September 2002). It is a mistake, therefore to think that violence against women is spontaneous. It was planned, organized, and ensured through ideological indoctrination.

2. SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE: The gendered crimes in Gujarat 2002 can legally be described as rape, assault, causing miscarriage without women's consent, death caused by act with intent to cause miscarriage, act done with intent to prevent child being born alive. The legal definition of rape itself is too limited to cover the Gujarat violence because it only includes assault by penile penetration. It does not cover all instances of sexualized violence.

a. **RAPE AND GANG-RAPE:** Hindutva propaganda mobilized mobs through false claims that Muslim men had raped Hindu women, and incited Hindu men to rape Muslim women. A few witness testimonies:

SF, woman survivor, Ahmedabad: We were running... and we saw on the road between AA6 area and the state transport depot that many girls were stripped and being raped...I saw 4-5 girls being raped...While raping the girls, the men were shouting, har har mahadev. (RSS slogan to praise Shiva, god of destruction).

SB, woman survivor, Panchmahals: "We ran in different directions and hid in the field...I recognized two people from my village... pulling away my daughter. The screams and cries of R., S., Sh., begging for their izzat (honor) could clearly be heard. My mind was seething with fear and fury. I could do nothing to help my

daughter from being assaulted sexually and tortured to death. My daughter was like a flower, still to experience life...The monsters tore my daughter into pieces..."

- b. **OTHER FORMS OF SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE:** The acts of violence against women included inserting iron rods and swords into the vagina, cutting women open to extract the foetus, vaginal mutilation, and burning women alive after rape.

RAPE AS HINDU MASCULINE POWER: LT, an activist from Ahmedabad, reported that people saw Hindu men, including policemen, stand in line, and expose their penises to show they were taking part in the violence as "true men." In the language used by the violent male mobs, rape was directly tied to male strength. As LT said, Hindu men, exposing their penises, said, "Your men are weak, we're strong, you're not strong enough to fuck your own women." Another Ahmedabad witness, SZ, testified that a policeman led a mob in unzipping his trousers, while the crowd shouted: "Where are the terrorists? Come out now. Call your God." A VHP pamphlet published a lyric that boasted of "untying penises" and of how in Panvad village, a Muslim mother was treated to the "joys of the uncircumcised penis."

RAPE TO EMASCULATE MUSLIM MEN: The rape of Muslim women was a weapon to humiliate and to feminize Muslim men, who were described as not "real men." A young man, who had worked in a retail shop for five years, was taunted by his co-workers who said they had raped the wives of Muslims: "Will you become a terrorist or will you just stand and watch like a hirja [eunuch]?"

RAPE TO IMPREGNATE MUSLIM WOMEN: In many instances, rape was explicitly cited as a means to impregnate Muslim women, and to create a new generation of Hindus from Muslims. RA from Anand reported that the three men who raped her were saying, "We will make you birth a Hindu child." Rape was an act carried out as part of the RSS ideology of ethnic elimination of Muslims as a group.

POLICE ROLE: As head of the state, Narendra Modi is culpable for the immunity enjoyed by the police in perpetuating violence against women. Many witnesses from Baroda said the police hit the stomachs of pregnant Muslim women, shouting, "Kill them before they are born." In SN's account from Baroda, the District Police Commissioner, Sawani, entered a house, beat up small girls and hit women on the breasts and private parts. Pregnant women were specially targeted as policemen, like the Hindu mobs, said Muslim children should not be born. In other cases, the police simply watched the violence, and according to a lawyer from Anand, refused to record complaints, and prevented people from filing cases with a magistrate.

RAPE AND ASSAULT VICTIMS SILENCED: Women victims said many were afraid to seek comfort and support from their male relatives. There is no mechanism to address the problems of post-traumatic stress disorder, mental disturbance, depression, and lack of emotional support. Women have been forced into silence about rape and sexual violence because that is the price their community has agreed to pay in order to be allowed back into their homes, villages, and neighborhoods. The situation has been particularly difficult for young unmarried girls because making their suffering public makes it harder for them to be married. In a patriarchal system, the woman becomes a source of shame to their family and community.

One consequence of this has been the panic marriage of single girls, as in Godhra, where 150 girls were married off. Single girls are now subjected to a new conservative ideology within the Muslim community, including early marriage, restriction on mobility, withdrawal of girls from schools, colleges, and work.

LACK OF GENDERED VISION ON RELIEF: Women victims have faced discrimination in accessing what was due to them, and in gaining basic relief. Women who have never worked outside the home have become dependent on charity, or economically destitute. Widows are especially affected; in one locality, the IJJ team met a dozen women whose husbands had been killed, houses destroyed, and crops burnt, and who had no means of livelihood. Applications for widows' pensions were pending for as long as three months. Relief rations to the riot affected were so inadequate that women activists reported that women have cut back on daily diets, sometimes eating only one meal a day. Gender-based violence has not even been given the status of an "injury." Living in camps, women had no access to sexual and reproductive care. Reports by the Medico Friends Circle cited many cases of gynecological disorders resulting from trauma that remained unattended.

FEAR OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: While minority groups fear physical violence in Gujarat, women face the heightened fear of sexual attacks. Modi's supporters celebrated their election victory by telling women: "Now this is our government. We will make this whole area Hindu. All mothers of Muslims are fucked." The atmosphere of sexual violence continues in the form of threats, insults, obscene gestures, and actual attack.

OTHER ANTI-WOMEN MOVES: The Modi government's notorious achievement in Gujarat is to dismantle the Violence against Women Cells that the women's organizations had fought for many decades to establish. Instead, they started a cell to monitor inter-religious marriages.

POLICING OF INTER-COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS: Prior to and following the 2002 pogrom, the Hindutva groups had been targeting Hindu women who had married or had any relationships with Muslim men. HN, a Hindu woman married to a Muslim man in Anand district, reported that she was publicly gang-raped by men who said she would be killed if she filed a police complaint. "Police have given us the freedom to do what we want," they said. Dragged out of her home by a mob of 200-250 people, HN was carried to a dump, held down, stripped, and raped by nine men, while the mob was saying, "Cut her to pieces, don't leave her alive, we don't want her alive in the village."

HOW MODI IS RESPONSIBLE

The Concerned Citizens' Tribunal of 2002 specified the following grounds under the Indian Penal Code (sections 120B, 153, 504, 506) that indict Modi:

1. Modi is criminally responsible as an individual in a superior commanding position with knowledge or the obligation to know what was happening across the state of Gujarat, and in his failure to prevent the pogrom.
2. Modi conspired, gave wanton provocation, voiced intentional insults with intent to provoke breach of peace, and is responsible for criminal intimidation.

The IJJ also states that India is in violation of the following international laws:

1. Genocide, as defined by the Genocide Convention of 1948, and ratified by India in 1959, which includes killing members of the group, causing bodily harm, inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
2. Gujarat government is in violation of human rights treaties and conventions, including International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, Conventions on the Rights of Child, Declaration of the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief.

(Compiled by Usha Zacharias and Zeeshan Farees for the [Coalition Against Genocide](#).)