

With ruling on razed mosque

# India's Supreme Court validates Hindu supremacist violence

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In a judgment pronounced Saturday, India's highest court has legitimized the violent, decades-long agitation that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its Hindu supremacist allies have mounted to raze a famous mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and erect in its stead a temple to the mythical Hindu god Lord Ram.

At the urging of the then most senior BJP leaders and in defiance of express orders from the Supreme Court, Hindu communal activists stormed the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, and demolished the centuries-old structure using axes and sledgehammers. The razing of the Babri Masjid precipitated India's most serious communal bloodletting since the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947 into an explicitly Muslim Pakistan and a mainly Hindu India. More than 2,000 people, most of them poor Muslims, were killed in communal riots and atrocities.

With its ruling Saturday, India's Supreme Court has validated the Babri Masjid's illegal destruction and sanctioned the construction of a temple dedicated to the worship of Lord Ram on its former site. Indeed, India's highest court has "ordered" the BJP government to oversee the construction of the Ram Mandir (temple).

Not surprisingly Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his BJP, and the leaders of the RSS, the shadowy Hindu nationalist organization that provides most of the BJP's leading cadre, have rejoiced at the court's ruling.

"This verdict will further increase people's faith in judicial processes," tweeted Modi.

Reaching still more revolting heights of hypocrisy, India's prime minister said of a judgment that vindicates and will further embolden the Hindu supremacist right, "It clearly illustrates everybody is equal before the law."

From the outset, the campaign mounted by the BJP, the RSS and the RSS-offshoot the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for the building of a Ram Mandir has combined religious obscurantism—as exemplified by the claim that the site of the Babri Masjid is the birthplace of the mythical God

Ram—with calculated communal political provocation. In 1990, to popularize their incendiary demand that the Babri Masjid be replaced by a Hindu temple so as to assert India's "Hindu character," that is, Hindu supremacy, BJP President L.K. Advani mounted a nationwide campaign of rallies. Advani's Ram Rath Yatra campaign incited communal violence across much of north India and culminated in an initial Oct. 1990 attempt to storm and raze the Babri Masjid.

Two years later, Advani and other senior BJP leaders organized and addressed the Dec. 6, 1992, mass rally that served as the cover for the successful attack on the Babri Masjid, in what a government commission of inquiry found to have been a "pre-planned conspiracy" involving the BJP's top leaders. While BJP-RSS-VHP activists destroyed the 16th century mosque, thousands of police stood by on the orders of Uttar Pradesh's BJP-led state government.

Since then, the BJP and RSS have continued to promote the building of the Ram Mandir as a key step in realizing their goal of transforming India into a Hindu Raj or Hindu state.

Saturday's Supreme Court judgment sets aside a 2010 Allahabad High Court ruling that divided the contested 2.77 acre site into three parts, allotting two-thirds to Hindu organizations and the final third to the Sunni (Muslim) Central Board of Wafqs. At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* rightly called the Allahabad Court's ruling "a shameful decision that legitimizes Hindu supremacist ideology and violence" (see: Indian High Court abets Hindu supremacists with Babri Masjid ruling).

The unanimous ruling issued Saturday by a five-member Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi is even more expressly tailored to the demands of the Hindu right, which resented not having been awarded title to the entire site.

The Nov. 9 Supreme Court ruling attests to the extent to which India's state institutions have become infused with Hindu communalism and India's ruling elite is breaking

with the most elementary democratic principles, and turning toward authoritarian forms of rule.

It follows closely on from the Modi government's constitutional coup against Kashmir. On Aug. 5, the BJP government illegally stripped Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), India's lone Muslim-majority state, of its unique semi-autonomous status and transformed it into two Union Territories, placing the region under permanent central government control. Anticipating mass opposition, New Delhi has placed J&K under an ongoing state-of-siege, including mass "preventive" arrests, severe restrictions on people's movements, and the denial of most cellphone and all internet access.

These actions have repeatedly been greenlighted by India's Supreme Court. As for India's opposition parties, they have taken their cue from India's corporate elite, which wants "strong measures" to assert India's great-power ambitions on the world stage and to intensify the exploitation of India's workers and toilers, and which backed Modi's assault on Kashmir.

The opposition's reaction to the Supreme Court's Ayodhya ruling has been of a like kind. The Congress Party, till recently the India bourgeoisie's preferred party of government, welcomed the Supreme Court's ruling and announced its support for the building of a Ram temple on the site of the razed Babri Masjid.

The Congress claims to be a bulwark of secularism, but in fact it has a long and notorious record of conniving with the Hindu right, including in enforcing the 1947 communal partition of South Asia. There is much evidence to suggest that Congress Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was forewarned of the 1992 attack on the Babri Masjid, but allowed it to proceed. Currently, the Congress is in backroom negotiations with the fascistic Shiv Sena, till recently the BJP's closest ally, on extending support to a potential Shiv Sena-led government in Maharashtra, India's second most populous state.

The Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist), which has been promoting the foul lie that the judiciary and the Congress Party are allies of the working class in fighting the BJP and Hindu supremacism, issued a mealy-mouthed statement signaling its support for the Supreme Court ruling. The judgment issued by India's highest court manifestly legitimizes and rewards Hindu supremacist criminality and violence. Yet the CPM Politburo statement merely terms aspects of the ruling "questionable," while reiterating its longstanding position that the Ayodhya dispute should be resolved by the courts, if a "negotiated settlement was not possible."

Given its verdict, the Supreme Court ruling could only be a legal travesty. It was concocted with a predetermined

outcome: to strengthen Modi, the BJP government and the Hindu right by delivering them an unequivocal victory in their violent, Hindu supremacist Ram Mandir agitation.

The judgment is steeped in hypocritical re-affirmations of India's secular polity and the equality of all faiths. It acknowledges that the 1992 razing of the Babri Masjid was a crime. It similarly finds that the smuggling of Ram Lalla ("baby Ram") idols into the Babri Masjid in 1949, which served as the legal pretext for local authorities working in league with the communalist Hindu Mahasabha to bar Muslim worshippers from the mosque, was a criminal act.

But none of this prevents India's highest court from unanimously issuing an obscurantist, Hindu-supremacist ruling, and—based on the spurious claim that Muslims never exercised exclusive jurisdiction over the entire site—declaring that title over the disputed land rightfully belongs to the deity Ram Lalla or infant Lord Ram!

As for India's 200 million Muslims, the Supreme Court expects them to be mollified for the "criminal" destruction of the Babri Masjid and the triumph of the BJP-RSS campaign to assert Hindu supremacy through the building of a Ram Lalla temple by the grant of five-acres at an unspecified site for a new mosque.

The Supreme Court, it must be added, is completely silent on the failure of India's state authorities—governments, courts and police—to successfully prosecute Advani or any other of the principal instigators and organizers of the Babri Masjid's demolition and the subsequent wave of communal violence that convulsed India in Dec. 1992–Jan. 1993.

Such is the state of "democratic, secular" India, and the mindset of the India's highest court in 2019!



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