

With Modi's support, BJP governments waging bulldozer campaign of state lawlessness and terror targeting Muslims

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Using blatantly unconstitutional and outright thuggish methods akin to those the Israeli Zionist regime routinely employs against Palestinians, BJP-ruled states and municipalities across India are illegally bulldozing the homes and shops of Muslims they have targeted for retribution.

This campaign of state lawlessness and terror is being spearheaded by the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India's most populous state, and its chief minister Yogi Adityanath. Adityanath—who was under criminal indictment for inciting violent attacks on Muslims when India's prime minister and BJP supremo, Narendra Modi, made him UP chief minister—revels in his new nickname of "Bulldozer Baba."

On the orders of BJP led-governments, homes and shops owned by Muslims are being demolished without due process, and invariably with little to no warning. The authorities suddenly paste a notice that this or that portion of a building was constructed illegally and will be demolished forthwith, despite it being in existence for decades. Then a day later, bulldozers, accompanied by a huge contingent of police, arrive and in a few hours there is only a pile of rubble.

The homes and shops of prominent Muslims who have spoken out against the Modi government and the BJP's continual anti-Muslim incitement and provocations are being targeted. So too are those of Muslim protesters, frequently under the pretext that they threw stones at police. The BJP-led North Delhi Municipal Corporation mounted a so-called "anti-encroachment" drive in April, supposedly targeting illegally built houses and shops—all Muslim-owned—just days after a communal clash during a religious procession provoked by Hindu far-right activists.

In a recent and especially egregious case of state terrorism, municipal authorities in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad), acting under the direction of UP Chief Minister Adityanath, demolished the home of Mohammad Javed, a leading figure in the Muslim-led Welfare Party of India.

The notice to demolish the home was served to Javed despite the fact that it was owned by his wife, Parveen Fatima. She had inherited it from her father more than two decades ago. Subsequently, the house was expanded and two more floors

were added. The notice declared that some parts of the expansion were "illegal," despite the fact that the authorities had never previously complained about it. The notice announcing the house would be demolished the next day was pasted on the wall of the house only around 10 p.m. on Saturday, June 11. The following day, a bulldozer and a phalanx of police wearing riot gear descended upon the house, and within a few hours, reduced it and all of its contents to rubble. The municipal authorities did not even give the family time to collect the most minimal belongings, such as photos, let alone furniture, utensils and appliances.

The UP authorities have accused Javed of being the "mastermind" of protests that erupted in Prayagraj and numerous other towns across north India on Friday, June 10. The protests were in opposition to the insulting remarks made against Islam by senior BJP officials in late May in what was a transparent case of communal incitement. The remarks sparked an international outcry from some 20 countries, many of which summoned Indian diplomatic representatives to hand them strong protest notes.

Javed appears to have been singled out because his daughter, Afreen Fatima, is a prominent anti-government activist who organized mass protests in December 2019 and the first months of 2020 against the Modi government's anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act. At the time, Afreen was a prominent student leader at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) where she was pursuing graduate studies. Along with others at JNU, Afreen organized demonstrations that helped spark an India-wide movement that saw millions across India take to the streets to protest against the CAA, pushing the BJP government for a time onto the backfoot.

The UP police responded to the June 10 protests with state violence, beating protesters and arresting hundreds. The BJP-led authorities also demolished the homes of two protesters whom they accused of throwing stones at the rampaging UP police.

Adityanath's media adviser tweeted a photo of a bulldozer on Saturday, the day after the protests, brazenly adding: "Unruly elements remember, every Friday is followed by a Saturday."

Such brutish invective constantly pours from the mouths of top BJP officials. In kicking off the campaign for India's 2019 general election, Amit Shah, the home minister and Modi's chief henchman, made bloodthirsty comments referring to desperate refugees from Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma) as "termites." "Infiltrators are like termites in the soil of Bengal," he thundered. "A Bharatiya Janata Party government will pick up infiltrators one by one and throw them into the Bay of Bengal."

Communalist incitement and provocations by BJP politicians and their Hindu far-right allies have been systematically facilitated by the Indian state. The police are notorious for turning a blind eye to communalist attacks on Muslims, and often participate in them. The courts—including India's Supreme Court, which never tires of posing as a solemn defender of citizens' constitutional rights—have time and again failed to convict those guilty of fomenting communalist atrocities and sanctioned, through acts of omission and commission, one communalist outrage after another.

The current wave of demolitions are in defiance of notices the Supreme Court issued on April 21, after a spate of bulldozer demolitions in the preceding months in UP, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Delhi. But India's highest court has taken no action to enforce its own orders. The Supreme Court stood by when municipal authorities in the Delhi neighborhood of Shaheen Bagh, the center of the anti-CAA protests, bulldozed numerous shops and homes in early May in what was a transparent and patently illegal act of revenge.

Most notoriously, in a judgment issued November 9, 2019, the Indian Supreme Court legitimized the Dec. 6, 1992 razing of the 16th century *Babri Masjid* (mosque) by the BJP and its allied Hindu communal organizations—an action carried out in direct violation of the orders of India's highest court and that precipitated the worst communal violence across India since the 1947 communal partition that divided the subcontinent into an expressly Muslim Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India.

In its 2019 judgment, the Supreme Court "ordered" the Modi-led government to carry out one of its longstanding ambitions and oversee the building of a temple to the mythical Hindu god Lord Ram on the site of the razed *Babri Masjid*. In so doing, it effectively endorsed the absurd, Hindu-extremist obscurantist argument that the grounds upon which the *Babri Masjid* had stood was Lord Ram's birthplace.

In UP and Madhya Pradesh (MP), the BJP chief ministers have unleashed bulldozer terror against what they called "love Jihad," that is a reference to inter-faith relationships between Hindus and Muslims. In MP, in late April, after a Muslim boy and a local Hindu girl eloped, MP authorities razed the home of the boy's father and three of his shops.

This gangster-style political rule is being overseen by Modi and his thuggish second-in-command Amit Shah. Several BJP leaders have commented to the press that "muscular politics" is being actively promoted by Modi, Shah and the Hindu-fascist

RSS, the BJP's parent organization. There is now reportedly "an immense competition" for BJP Chief Ministers (CM) to join the "muscular CM" club, so as to get on the good side of Modi and Shah.

The lawless actions of Modi, his BJP and the Hindu supremacist right as a whole are the malignant expressions of a crisis-ridden, diseased social order. They are relentlessly whipping up communal strife in an attempt to divert mounting mass social anger, frustration and anxiety along reactionary channels, embolden their far-right followers, and divide the working class.

Over the past two years there has been a mounting wave of strikes and protests involving workers from all parts of India and cutting across all communal and caste divides. Tens of millions have taken to the streets to oppose precarious contract labour jobs, privatization, dilapidated public services and the ruling class' ruinous profits-before-lives response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BJP's communal incitement and lawlessness has caused some elements in the ruling elite to wring their hands and voice fears that the Modi government could reap a whirlwind by further communalizing and discrediting all the institutions of the state. Recently more than a dozen retired senior judges, including three former Supreme Court justices, accused Adityanath's government of "making a mockery of the Constitution." In a letter to the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, they urged the court to intervene against "violence and repression by state authorities against Muslim citizens." They further noted that "Such a brutal clampdown is an unacceptable subversion of the rule of law and a violation of the rights of citizens."

But the dominant factions of the ruling class, which over the past decade have embraced the BJP and made it their principal political instrument, consigning the Congress Party to life-support, continue to back the Modi government. Terrified of an eruption of the working class, they cling to the would-be Hindu strongman Modi and his toxic communalist BJP, calculating that it is their best means to intensify worker exploitation and aggressively assert their predatory interests on the world stage.

On Thursday, June 16, the Supreme Court, in response to a plea filed by the Jamiat-Ulama-I-Hind organization, asked the UP government to file an affidavit in three days about the recent bulldozer demolitions. Instead of condemning this whole practice of bulldozer-razing homes and shops, India's highest court sheepishly asked the UP government to ensure that no further demolitions of properties are carried out in the state without following "due process."



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