

Modi government bans all expressions of solidarity with Palestine in Indian-held Kashmir

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India's US-aligned, Narendra Modi-led, far-right government is using violence and intimidation to prevent any and all expressions of support for the Palestinians of Gaza in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

India's only Muslim-majority state until the Modi government illegally stripped it of its semi-autonomous status and reduced it to a central-government controlled Union Territory, Indian-held Kashmir has for decades suffered under brutal state repression enforced by half-a-million security forces.

Throughout Israel's now seven-week long genocidal assault on the Palestinians of Gaza, Modi and his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government have gone to great lengths to demonstrate their staunch support for Netanyahu's far-right regime and the Israel Defence Forces. This includes joining with the imperialist powers in voting against a ceasefire at the UN General Assembly.

Meanwhile, pro-Palestinian protests within India have repeatedly been subject to violent police attack and vilified by BJP spokesmen and their fascistic *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalist) allies.

In Indian-held Kashmir this repression is, however, of a qualitatively different kind. All expressions of opposition to the imperialist-backed genocidal assault, including demonstrations, meetings and vigils, are subject to a de facto ban. This blanket ban has also been extended to religious gatherings, with Friday prayers at Srinagar's Grand Mosque suspended by government order for fear the question of Palestine could be raised. Elsewhere, as the Associated Press reported last month, government officials have privately warned Kashmir's Imams (the preachers who lead Friday prayers) to make no mention in their sermons of the slaughter of the Palestinians of Gaza.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has previously explained, the Indian government and ruling class' alignment with Israel in its war on the Palestinians is the outcome, first and foremost, of their reactionary "global strategic" alliance with US imperialism. Under the now decade-old Modi government, India has been transformed into a frontline state in Washington's military-strategic offensive against China. India

has thrown open its military bases and ports for use by the US military for resupply and repair, and vastly expanded its bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral strategic ties with the US and its principal Asia-Pacific treaty allies, Japan and Australia. In August, the Modi government let it be known that at Washington's request it had instructed India's military to determine what support New Delhi would provide the Pentagon if and when a US-China war erupts.

As part of its anti-China war alliance with Washington, India has also begun to cooperate more closely with Washington in the Middle East, including through the I2-U2 (India-Israel-United Arab Emirates-US) alliance.

Underscoring its readiness to ally with US imperialism in perpetrating the most monstrous crimes, the Modi government welcomed US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin—two of the key architects of Washington's all-out military, diplomatic and economic support for Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza—to New Delhi on November 9-10 for a 2+2 meeting with their Indian counterparts.

India long presented itself on the world stage as a leading supporter of the Palestinian people. In November 1947, it voted against the plan to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states (United Nations Resolution 181) and was the first non-Arab state to recognise the PLO.

Two further factors account for the Modi government's very public repudiation of this stance. First, the close military-security ties New Delhi has forged with Jerusalem; and secondly, the political-ideological affinity between the BJP and its Hindu supremacist allies with the Zionist regime, including their common religious-exclusivism, animosity to Muslims and propensity for violence and criminality.

Modi was among the first world leaders to join Netanyahu to denounce the Oct. 7 uprising against the 17-year-long Israeli blockade of Gaza and its ongoing dispossession and repression of the Palestinians of the West Bank as "terrorism." Three days later, Modi took to the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to announce that the "People of India stand firmly with Israel in this difficult hour. India strongly and unequivocally

condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.”

Far from the “people of India standing firmly” with the Zionist regime in besieging, bombarding and slaughtering the Palestinians, there is deep-rooted sympathy and support for their struggle among India’s workers and toilers.

This is especially true in Kashmir, where some 13 million people have for decades lived under the iron heels of de facto military rule, with their movements controlled by 500,000 heavily armed Indian troops.

After the Indian government crudely rigged the 1987 Jammu and Kashmir state assembly elections and brutally suppressed the ensuing mass protests, an armed insurgency developed. New Delhi, citing arch-rival Pakistan’s support for the Islamist wing of the insurgency, responded by militarizing Kashmir.

Over the past three decades, Indian security forces have committed extra-judicial executions, torture, rape and other atrocities to intimidate the population at large and repress Kashmiris who have dared to challenge India’s rule. Many of the victims have come from those, like journalists and human rights activists, who have sought to expose Indian state criminality.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society at least 70,000 Kashmiris have been killed by the Indian security forces and over 8,000 have been “disappeared”.

In August 2019, the newly re-elected Modi government realized one of the longstanding ambitions of the Hindu right when it stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special status under Article 370 of the Indian constitution, a blatantly unconstitutional move, and dissolved the elected state government. India’s only Muslim-majority region is now under permanent central government rule.

At the time of Article 370’s abrogation, the Consul General of New York called for the adoption of the “Israeli model of governance”, i.e. unrestrained brutality, in Indian-administered Kashmir.

The Modi government has increasingly done just that, including by imposing collective punishments and giving security forces even freer rein. And not just in Kashmir. In BJP-governed states such as Uttar Pradesh, which is ruled over by the thuggish Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Haryana, mass bulldozer demolitions of Muslim homes and businesses have been used to terrorize Muslims.

The brutish, authoritarian character of the Modi government was again on display this week, when seven university students in Kashmir were arrested on terrorism charges for celebrating Australia’s victory over India in the deciding World Cup cricket match. Under the catch-all Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), these students could be held indefinitely without charge.

The Modi government’s authoritarian ban on any expressions of sympathy in Kashmir for the Palestinians is clearly in flagrant violation of constitutionally protected fundamental rights. But India’s Supreme Court—which has countenanced

one BJP government anti-democratic act and communal outrage after another, including the 2019 constitutional coup against Kashmir and the government’s building of a Hindu temple on the site of the razed Babri Masjid—is completely silent.

The Modi regime has assiduously cultivated close relations with the Zionist regime. In July 2017 Modi became the first Indian prime minister to make a state visit to Israel. Netanyahu rolled out the red carpet for this Hindu supremacist, who as Gujarat’s chief minister instigated and presided over the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom. He described the burgeoning relations between Israel and India as a “marriage made in heaven.” The relationship was subsequently elevated by Modi and Netanyahu into a “strategic partnership.”

Since 2015, one year after the Modi regime came to power, more than 40 percent of Israel’s total arms exports have been to India. The two regimes have also intensified their cooperation in fighting “terrorism” and in cybersecurity. The latter term is a code word for the widespread spying the Modi government has resorted to against any and all opponents of its vile Hindu-supremacist policies. It has used the Israeli-made Pegasus spyware to infect the cell phones of political activists, opposition politicians and journalists in order to monitor them.

The Modi government’s full-throated support for Israeli genocide has mobilized the Hindu-extremist groups the BJP depends upon to terrorize Muslims, Christians and other minorities and communally polarize impoverished populations. Members of these groups have churned out enormous volumes of anti-Palestinian online atrocity propaganda. Others, as was confirmed by Israel’s ambassador to India, Naor Gilon, have volunteered to fight for Israel.

In comments to Al Jazeera, Delhi University Professor Apoorvanand said he was not surprised by the enthusiastic support for Israel from the fascistic Hindu-extremist groups allied with the BJP. In the late 1930s, after the Nuremburg laws and the Kristallnacht pogrom, V.D. Savarkar, the principal ideologue of Hindutva and the leader of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha a precursor of the BJP, advocated that Hindus treat Muslims as Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime treated the Jews.



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