



A Report By Bebaak Collective

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND TARGETING MUSLIMS DURING RAM NAVAMI FESTIVALS IN AURANGABAD AND JALGAON, MAHARASHTRA

APRIL-2023



A Report by Bebaak Collective

**Communal Violence and Targeting Muslims during
Ram Navami Festivals in Aurangabad and Jalgaon,**

Maharashtra

April 2023

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the members of CPI, corporators, lawyers, social workers, local journalists, all the women and members from the community who supported us with our fact-finding work in Aurangabad, Ohar and Paldhi.

Bebaak Collective ('Voices of the Fearless') was founded in 2013 as an informal association of grassroots activists to advocate for the rights of Muslim women and community. It is a platform for engaging with feminist thought and practice, human rights issues, and the anti-discrimination struggle.
Email: bebaakcollective@gmail.com

Table Of Contents

Acknowledgement	2
Table Of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Sequence of Events	6
Aurangabad	6
Ohar, A village near Aurangabad.....	12
Paldhi, A village in Jalgaon.....	15
Key Findings of the Report	17
The Renaming of Aurangabad:	17
A Recurring Pattern of these Riots:.....	18
The Role of the Police:	18
Violence against Muslim women and the Impact on Mental Health:	19
Recommendations:	22

Introduction

The decades of hostility against minority communities indicate a fundamental crisis in a democracy like India. Religious polarisation and communal instigation have not only remained a tool of various political parties to secure electoral votes but have also become a continuous mechanism by the ruling state. Several historical moments of communal tensions and anti-Muslim violence have shaped the fabric of India's present conscience.

In the past few years, the violence against minority communities has continued unabated. Its legitimization on different pretexts, such as 'love jihad', cow slaughter, population growth among Muslims, and other instances of rooted islamophobia, is on the rise.¹

In this discourse of exclusionary and majoritarian nationalism, citizenship status to the Muslim community has been withering. The diverse Hindu religious festivals are extremely weaponized, becoming a show of majoritarian dominance and aggression. In the past few years, the festival of Ram Navami and the Hanuman Jayanti is marred with communal tensions and arson across different parts of India. A report, 'Routes of Wrath' edited by lawyer Chander Uday Singh and other groups of lawyers, highlights how these religious festivals and processions inflict violence against Muslims with a systematic pattern of provoking, destruction, and state impunity to the perpetrators.²

The Maha Vikas Aghadi led by Uddhav Thackeray on the last day of its cabinet decided to rename Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar and Osmanabad as Dharashiv. The Shinde-Fadnavis led state government also approved the renaming of Aurangabad as Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Osmanabad as Dharashiv. The politics of renaming of the cities through which these political parties have visioned its political prominence and electoral power have resulted in the site of ethnic conflict and violence.

¹Saldanha, Alison. (2017, Dec 8). *Cow-Related Hate Crimes Peaked in 2017, 86% of Those Killed Muslim*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/203103/cow-vigilantism-violence-2017-muslims-hate-crime/?fromNewsdog=1>

² Uday Singh, C. & Citizens and Lawyers Initiative. (2023). ROUTES OF WRATH WEAPONIZING RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS : COMMUNAL VIOLENCE DURING RAM NAVAMI AND HANUMAN JAYANTI APRIL 2022. *Live Law*. https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/routes-of-wrath-report-2023-2-465217.pdf

The roots of communal hatred against Muslims found their field with the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. During the festival of Ganeshotsav, public transport buses had banners that said ‘*आपले सरकार आले... हिंदू सणांवरचे विघ्न टळले - The trouble on Hindu festivals is lifted, now that our rule is here*’. Such overt campaigns by the state government have fuelled divisive narratives and communal tensions.

On 13th December 2022, the Maharashtra state government passed a government resolution to establish an Interfaith marriage-family committee. The Committee is authorized to monitor, review, and counsel Interfaith couples. While releasing this GR, Maharashtra’s Women and Child Welfare minister Managalprabat Lodha claimed over 1 lakh cases of “love jihad” while the number of inter-faith marriages is within a few thousand. The seemingly protective measure for interfaith couples follows the pretext of ‘love jihad’ and violates the constitutional rights of the Muslim community.

Later, the right-wing forces organized ‘*Hindu Jan Aakrosh Morcha*’ - many public rallies in different parts of Maharashtra where several speeches were made against alleged ‘love jihad’ and ‘land jihad’ and calls for an economic boycott against the Muslim Community were made. The continuous rallies of ‘*Hindu Jan Aakrosh Morcha*’ has been constructing the Muslim as an ‘other’.

Hate speeches were given by leaders of organizations like the Hindu Sakal Samaj, Bajrang Dal, ABVP, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and right-wing vigilantes like Kajal Shingla ‘Hindustani’ and T. Raja who called to physical violence against Muslims and the destruction of the ‘*dargah*’ and ‘*kabristan*’. The Hindutva groups called for the open isolation of Muslims, asking people not to indulge in any economic exchange with Muslim hawkers and businesses.

Slogans such as ‘*टोपिवाली बैठे हैं, सब के सब आतंकवादी हैं - People clad in a skull cap, these all are terrorists*’, ‘*हम भाई भाई कभी नहीं बनेंगे - we will never be brothers*’, ‘*कोरोना की तरह जिहादी भी वायरस हैं - Like Corona, these Jihadis are also the virus*’ and the kind of language that is used in these rallies have spewed hate and this hatred was reflected in the agitations during the Ram Navami violence. Although, FIR was filed against these groups because of the intervention by the Supreme Court but none person was arrested for making such speeches. The arrests of such

vigilantes and active actions by the police administration could have controlled the violence to some extent.

This year also, many parts of Maharashtra such as Nandurbar, Ahmednagar, Nanded, Jalgaon, Aurangabad and Malvani in Mumbai witnessed violence at the end of March. These tensions were mainly triggered during the Ram Navami and contemporaneous Ramzan festivals. However, the media coverage regarding this violence hardly brought the narratives of victims' families and the survivors and played a role in a partisan way.

Bebaak Collective felt the need to delve deeper into these communal tensions and an atmosphere of hatred affecting the lives of Muslim community in Maharashtra. The fact-finding team visited Aurangabad, Ohar, and Jalgaon in mid-April.

The report has used both primary and secondary sources. We primarily spoke to different women groups and women survivors of the violence. The impact of far-ranging violence on a particular community and the stories of struggles for justice often go unacknowledged. This report is an attempt to highlight this erasure.

Sequence of Events

Aurangabad

The fact-finding team visited Kiradpura, Aurangabad, on 16th April 2023.

On the eve of Ram Navami on 29th April, communal violence between Hindus and Muslims broke out in the Kiradpura area of Aurangabad. According to several news reports, a mob of 500-600 people set fire to police vehicles and triggered violence outside the Ram Mandir in Kiradpura.³

According to the FIR filed by the police, on 30th April at around 1:00 am, some clashes between Hindus and Muslims were triggered due to a motorcycle collision in front of Ram Mandir in

³ Express News Service. (2023, March 30). Maharashtra: Clashes in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, police vehicles set on fire, pelted with stones. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/aurangabad-sambhaji-nagar-clash-8527506/>

Kiradpura. Later, when police tried to control the mob, police vehicles, and other government properties were set on fire, and stones were pelted. RCP officials broke the tear gas canisters and did live rounds of firing. According to this FIR, most people in the crowd were Muslims. A 52-year-old Muslim man who died in these shootings was also alleged to be a part of that mob.

Kiradpura area stretches from the Azaad Chowk, with Rahmaniya colony to the Roshan Gate. It is a Muslim-dominated area, and Ram Mandir is situated within this lane of Azad Chowk to Roshan Gate.



Ram Mandir in Kiradpura Lane

The team organized a meeting with the Muslim women living in Kiradpura and Rahmaniya Colony. It is often the case that women are considered to be at the receiving end of such violence as victims. They are seen to be worst affected by any communal tension or riots. And, even then, no news reporters, civil organizations and or any Minister went to meet the victims' families.



Meeting with local women from Rahmaniya Colony and Kiradpura Lane

A politically outspoken women and a social worker from the Muslim community and from the same area, facilitated the meeting. According to the statements from the social worker and the Muslim women residing in this area to the fact-finding team, around 74 young Muslim boys were arrested under MCR. Out of these, 7 of them were juveniles.



A Lane in Rahmaniya Colony

Rahmaniya Colony is a government-gazetted slum colony. It is a dense Muslim- populated area. Most people residing here come from a relatively poor socio-economic background with occupations like labourers, daily wage workers, and plumbers. Police raids started happening at a rampant speed in this area. The officials were storming into the houses, abusing the locals, and arresting their young children.

Many of the young boys arrested from this area are labourers and wage workers. Some were returning from their respective work; some were returning from the mosque after offering *Namaz*, and police, without informing, took them under arrest. Police personnel clicked their pictures without their consent. They traced the phone calls of that night and arrested them on that basis as well. The children trying to save others during that night were also marked as rioters and were arrested.

Police arrested two siblings, of around 14 and 17 years old, from the same family. The juveniles were sent to the Child Rehabilitation Centres and the adults to the Harsul Jail.

An atmosphere of uncertainty and fear pervaded the residents' minds of the Kiradpura and Rahamaniya colonies. These women explained how they were scared that their innocent children would be arrested because of their religious identity and that they live in this Muslim-dominated area. Many have sent their children out of the city for their safety. Many young boys fled their homes, leaving their families behind to escape such brutality after the tensions. The everyday routine got severely affected as their source of income has been disrupted. No one is there to get any income; they stopped leaving their homes.

Statement given by the Muslim woman resident of Rahmaniya colony

“It was Sunday when they took him, and they said if you don’t submit your child, we will come and pick you” - These are the comments by police to the Muslim women resident when they barged into her house after the violence.

On 7th April, Police arrested Shaikh Azar, a 22-year-old man, after he was returning from offering *Namaz*. At first, Police only asked him to come for questioning, but they arrested him and beat him up in jail.

She narrates that on the eve of Ram Navami, her son went just to give *Taraveeh's* Namaz and to get some milk. Her family has lived in the Rahmaniya colony for four months. They have rented the place. Shaikh Azar works as a labourer and makes around Rs. 3000 weekly. Since he has been in jail, the family's income has been disrupted. The family was not informed about which sections of IPC Police arrested their elder son.

They are allowed to meet them once a week. Azar's mother narrated that the Police are not even allowing basic things like toothpaste, soap, and clothes to change and keeping them aside in jail.

Statement given by a Muslim woman residing in Badam Gali

Sabina Bibi's⁴ son is a fish seller. He earns around 200-500 rupees daily for working 7-8 hours daily. Police took him in for questioning, but then he also got arrested. His younger brother then went to the police to request his bail as he has a small child and family at home. Police then arrested the younger brother and released the elder brother.

Statement given by a Muslim girl residing in Badam Gali

Hina⁵ is the youngest child in her house. Police took her father and her two elder brothers, Sohail, 22-years-old and Javed, 17 years old, for questioning and then arrested both her brothers. She narrated that her elder brother was in some distant area from Kiradpura, and her younger brother was also out on the eve of Ram Navami. Her father had called them to know about their whereabouts as he saw some stampede and tension. They live in a rented place in Badam Gali, which is very near to the Kiradpura area.

Statement given by the family of Muniruddin (Victim of Police Firing in Kiradpura)

The flames of hatred brought a real tragedy in the lives of Muniruddin's family.

Sheikh Muniruddin, a 52-year-old man, used to live in the rental space in the Faiz building in Kiradpura Lane with his family. Faiz building is situated opposite the Ram mandir in Kiradpura

⁴ Name changed for confidentiality

⁵ Name changed for confidentiality

Lane. On the night of 29th April, Muniruddin, the person asking the crowd to return to their place, was shot dead.

“हमको तो यह भी नहीं मालूम मेरे भाई को कौन मारा, वो तो बेकसूर था - We don't even know who killed him; he was innocent.”

Muniruddin was requesting the mob to return but fearing that the mob would storm into the building, he locked the entrances of the Faiz building from inside with the Chairman of the building for their safety. At the time of the police firing, the electricity of the building went off. On that eve, the residents of the Faiz building were terrified. Most of them had locked themselves inside the building. Later, his sons came and tried to open the door but did not have the keys, hence could not unlock the doors. By the time they could break the lock, Munir had lost much of the blood. Both his sons took him to MGM Hospital in a two-wheeler where later he was announced dead.

After Muniruddin's death during the Kiradpura tensions, his family moved to his mother's place in Rengtippura. The fact-finding team had taken several follow ups, however, the family has not filed any FIR till date.

Statement given by the eye-witness living in Faiz Complex

One of the eyewitnesses, narrates this incident that happened around 1.00 am to 4.00 am.

She narrated that on 30th April, at around 1.00 am, there were futile attempts by the police to disperse the crowd. Two Maulanas also announced maintaining law and order from the Police Jeep, but since there was hardly any police protection, they got injured.

During the Ram Navami celebrations, the communities have peacefully celebrated their festivals in this area in the past few years. On one side of the lane, there used to be Ram Navami Celebration, and on the other side, the market used to be lit with Iftar shops. This time, there was some sloganeering outside the temple.

She narrated how those people who gave slogans of 'Jai Shree Ram' and incited violence in the area are nowhere in the police's chargesheets. According to her, the crowd was not from the Kiradpura area. They were all wearing masks and hoodies, and everyone was wearing similar caps. Unlike the news reports claimed, it was hardly a crowd of around 50 people, not 500-600. She

claimed that these were all people from outside and not from Kiradpura as she had never seen those people in that area.

Statement by MP Imtiaz Jaleel

We approached Imtiaz Jaleel, Member of Parliament of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Aurangabad, to discuss the state of the issues. He informed us that he visited Ram Mandir the very night when the clashes began. He stayed inside the Ram Mandir and ensured that the mob did not harm anything within its premises. He stated that if he had not gone to Ram Mandir that night, the Mosques and Muslim communities all over India would have faced its repercussions. He also stated that the Police never reached out to him to inform him about the clashes. It was the locals who informed him about the tensions in Kiradpura. When he checked with the Police, the officials told him that the situation was under control.

The fact-finding team visited Harsul Jail to meet the families of those who were accused of being rioters. It was heartrending to witness a sea of people waiting to meet their family members, children.



Women waiting at Harsul Jail to meet their family members

Ohar, A village near Aurangabad

The violence on Ram Navami did not even spare the serene village of Ohar, around 10-12 km from Aurangabad.

According to the 2021 census, Ohar has a population of 2631 constituting the caste Hindus, Muslims, people from scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes.⁶

We visited Ohar village through some of our contacts, who informed us about similar tensions here. As we approached Tipu Sultan Chowk, we saw a police van parked outside the village's temple. Some police officials were also sitting outside. It seemed desolate and calm, but it hid another story of communal hatred.



Tipu Sultan Chowk in Ohar Village

We met a group of Muslim women from Ohar Village. These women witnessed their village distraught after the Ram Navami celebrations.

The women narrated that on 31st March, some caste Hindus organized a procession outside the mosque with loud music and provocative lyrics related to Aurangzeb, the so-called new name Chattrapati Sambhajinagar calling for violence against Muslims. This procession also tore apart the 'Tipu Sultan' poster at the village entrance. Some of the Muslim men asked them to stop the DJ, but they refused to do so. The next morning at around 8.30 am, when most of them were

⁶ *Ohar Village Population - Aurangabad - Aurangabad, Maharashtra.* (n.d.).

<https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/548767-ohar-maharashtra.html#:~:text=The%20Ohar%20village%20has%20population,as%20per%20Population%20Census%202011.>

sleeping after the *Sehri*, and no one was anticipating the tensions. But tensions were triggered, and it was believed that this tension would be resolved within the village by having discussions with each other like in the past few years.

However, there was stone pelting from both sides. Hindu women were also in the clashes. They were also pelting stones and attacking the men from the Muslim community. These women narrated that they were people from outside in the crowd, so they started calling the police, but there was no response from that end. Many men mishandled Muslim women in these clashes. Many people from the Muslim community got injured. One of the Muslim women who runs a small shop in the village got stabbed around the neck by a Hindu man. Several women received stitches and sutures after suffering serious wounds and were poorly injured.



An injured woman

Around 30 people who were arrested were Muslims from the village. These families also submitted the suggestion form at the collector's office against the change in the name of the city Aurangabad to Chatrapati Sambhajinagar.

These women, whose family members got arrested, still ask why the police came half an hour late to the site. Why did the Police arrest the majority of the Muslims from the village?

The incidents of such brutal assault, stabbing in the neck, being manhandled, and facing abusive slurs have impacted these women's lives. It is such a shame that the violence these women faced

did not make it to any newspaper, and what happened to them remained within the bounds of that village.

Paldhi, A village in Jalgaon

The daily dose of communal hatred is engulfing every *Mohalla*, every town, and those who are living in this nation. Around 14 km from Jalgaon, a small town Paldhi witnessed similar patterns of communal tensions that broke out on the night of 28th April. We visited Paldhi and met women who shared their experiences; they recounted the horrors of the night of 28th April.



The Mosque in Paldhi

People were offering *Taraveeh*'s Namaz while a 'Dindi' – a religious procession of the caste Hindu community passed through Paldhi playing loud music in front of the Mosque. The police were also accompanying the procession, yet there was some brawl between the two groups over the loud music in front of the mosque. Soon, it led to stone pelting.

But even more terrible was what followed.

Paldhi is a Muslim-dominated area. Many Muslim-owned shops were razed down, and for most of them, it was the only source of livelihood.⁷ With such hatred and animosity, the rioters could not leave the cemetery and broke the cemetery board.

⁷ Shaikh, Z. (2023, April 5). Communal violence in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district after row over music being played in front of mosque. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/communal-violence-maharashtras-row-over-music-played-mosque-8526246/>

These women in Paldhi described how the Police attacked them after the violence. Police stormed their houses, broke the doors, dragged the residents, and gave abusive slurs to Muslim women resisting their entry. The police, in a drunken state and donning civil clothes, entered to search for lethal weapons in the houses of farmers and laborers. All these houses of the Muslim community are either charred or damaged.



The damaged doors of Muslim residents due to the Police crackdown

Police dragged several Muslim youths out of their homes at midnight. These family members were in a state of immense despair while narrating these incidents. They have not slept for days.

A survivor of the 1992 riots in Paldhi recounted the horrible incident of a Hindu mob killing a Muslim man. The 1992 riots were permanently etched in the memory of a 70-year-old woman who did not step out of her house after this recent violence in her area. Each of these incidents made them conscious of their Muslim identity and brought flashbacks of loss and pain.



A damaged entrance of a Kabristan and ruins after the clashes in Paldhi

Key Findings of the Report

The Renaming of Aurangabad:

Aurangabad has witnessed the horrors of communal riots over the years. The decision by the states cabinet to rename the city of Aurangabad as Sambhajnagar further escalated the communal tensions. On 19th March, there were rallies conducted by the Hindu right-wing groups in Aurangabad to support the renaming of Aurangabad to Shambhajnagar. In these rallies, MLA T Raja Singh and several other Hindu religious leaders made hate speeches supporting the renaming of the city and vilified Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor which were followed by the destruction of public property in Aurangabad.

The AIMIM conducted protest demonstrations against the renaming of the city and many other groups of non-Muslims, industrialists, and businesses also opposed this move of the state.

The Muslim in the Ohar village also showed their resentment about the renaming of this city by submitting letter to oppose the name change because of which the villagers had to face such consequences and violence.

The renaming of the city has remained a tactic by the government to garner and polarize the Hindu vote bank in the name of Islamophobia and terrorism. The consequences of such polarization of

Hindu youth by renaming the city were crucial in manifesting the communal violence during the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti in Aurangabad.

A Recurring Pattern of these Riots:

The Hindutva forces are on a rampage and bent on inciting communal tensions and unleashing hatred and violence on innocent people. There is undoubtedly a broader recurring pattern.

The script is to provoke a community by attacking the religious and worship spaces, specifically taking processions with loud music and provoking slogans in front of Muslim neighbourhoods and Mosques during the time of *Namaz*, inciting stone-pelting and then attacking Muslims by indiscriminate arrests and destroying their businesses and properties. These incidents of violence are not considered as hate-crimes. This communal hatred has been normalized for a long by not ensuring any justice for its victims.

The Role of the Police:

The role of the police has been highly disappointing in every case, whether in a big city like Aurangabad, a small town of Paldhi, or a rural village like Ohar. Police were nowhere seen to be taking any actions against those who incited this violence. It is infuriating and shameful that the provocateurs are always sheltered with state impunity. The arbitrary and indiscriminate arrests of Muslim youth suggest the state's complicity and apathy. The police administration has remained biased as there have been no actions taken against those persons belonging to the Hindu community who incited the violence by shouting provocative slogans.

There is no accountability from the police regarding the death of a civilian in this violence and the firing conducted in a residential area such as Kiradpura Lane. The attempts by the police to disperse the mob directly, followed by bullet firing after tear gas release, and there was no lathi-charge or water cannon as the method before resorting to open bullet firings.

The state is mandated to provide protection and monetary compensation to victims of such violence, but the police filed a chargesheet against the victim.

The police refuse to hand over the CCTV footage in front of the Ram Mandir in Kiradpura and take action according to the evidence. On the other hand, under the pretext of 40,000 calls made during the time of violence in Kiradpura, police have picked several innocents who were not even present in the vicinity. There is no accountability for the arrests of minors in this violence. In Ohar, the police administration took no immediate action despite the police being informed. In all these cases, police took hours to reach the site of violence. The media has remained silent and hence compliant by not reporting the police intimidation and brutality and the plight of Muslim women.

Violence against Muslim women and the Impact on Mental Health:

The entrenched patriarchal belief that women's bodies are the markers of the community's honour has always cast it as a site of violence. Women from marginalized backgrounds have always been subjected to sexual violence and rape in riots, pogroms, and extremist communal acts of violence.

The anti-muslim violence during the Ram Navami festivals in Kiradpura, Ohar, and Paldhi severely impacted the lives of Muslim women living in these areas. The impact of these religious extremists' violence on Muslim women and their mental health often goes unacknowledged. People have spoken about the emotional trauma they have gone through during this time.

The Muslim community has been in constant shock after witnessing such violence and hatred in their neighbourhood. The routine interaction with the police officials and visits to the jail to undergo these legal processes have resulted in burnout and loss of hope for a better future.

“हमारे दिल में बहुत खौफ है, हमारे कारोबार सब बंद हो गए, रमज़ान के दिन हैं... पुलिस का बहुत डर है— we are scared, our businesses and errands are now shut, these are the days of Ramzan and we are scared of the Police”

“मेरे जो बच्चे हैं वो अब ऐसे भागते फिरते रहते हैं— My children are running here and there.”

“हमारे आदमियों को उठाके ले गए, हम अकेले औरतें थीं, हमको डर था की पुलिस हमको उठा ले जाएगी, इसलिए हम गांव छोड़कर रिश्तेदारों के यहाँ चले गए थे— they took our men, we were all alone, we were scared that police will take us too, that's why we left our village and went to our neighbours.”

The nature of the investigation carried out by the Police administration the next day of violence humiliated Muslim women. They were intimidated and threatened to submit their family members to police for questioning. In Paldhi, the police personnel verbally abused them and gave communal and sexual slurs. Due to the Police crackdown at midnight, damaging every property of the Muslim residents, the children, and other family members are traumatized. After the police crackdown, many families started sleeping under the same roof.

The loss of social and financial security because of these riots has put enormous burdens on women from the Muslim community. This also has impacted the mental health of the women and the children. Muslim youth are compelled to change their career paths and aspirations because of biases about their Muslim identity.

“बच्चें घर के बाहर नहीं जा रहे हैं, आदमियां घर पर बैठे हुए हैं, औरतों ने क्या करना, कैसे जिंदगी पालना? – Children have stopped going outside, the men are sitting without any job, how will women sustain their family?”

The police administration in Kiradpura, Ohar, and Paldhi have enjoyed political impunity for the crackdown and violence against Muslim women. The routine violation of Muslim person's rights has aggravated feelings of isolation and immense fear among Muslim youth and women.

The Muslim women from Rahmaniya colony, Ohar village and Paldhi all speaks of injustices done by the administration. They demand justice and speaks of collective struggle and resilience during these times.

“इन्साफ होना मांगता” – “We want Justice”



Muniruddin used to sell parts of automobiles with some meager income to sustain his family. After the lockdown, their work got severely affected.

Hina's mother is a domestic worker, and her father is a plumber. Sohail and Javed were used to assist them with work.

People in Ohar and Paldhi are small-scale traders, farmers, and daily wage labourers. These families come from a marginalized working-class socio-economic background. The community living in these neighbourhoods and villages face food insecurity, job insecurity, and inaccessible healthcare services. Most of them have been laborers, and daily wage workers, who could not get their education and were forced to work at an early age. There are many families whose children and family members got arrested. Among the detained are primarily young men of around 20–30-year-olds; children 14-17 are also accused of rioting.

Most of these families do not have money to hire a lawyer to release their children. Their families do not know how to proceed with legal matters or the loss of daily earnings when these families have to visit the jail. They do not know what to say to their children when they meet them inside the prison about what the future awaits them.

A team of lawyers in Aurangabad is taking up these false cases and giving the family free counselling. Many of the Muslim youths who were framed with false claims have emerged as innocents.

People never anticipated that they would grieve for their own in the month of Ramzan. These people were robbed of their festival and were made to suffer in a most hostile way. Families got separated, *Roza- fasting* turned into visits to jail, and with every dawn of *Sehri*, they saw their hopes dwindle.

The following day, the Muslim community in Kiradpura offered *Sherbet* to those who came to celebrate Ram Navami outside Ram Mandir. After such violence, this act of offering peace seems more like the helplessness of a Muslim citizen in the face of such hate crimes.

The case of Munniruddin is what any innocent Muslim citizen must pay to live in this nation ruled by the sole agenda of hatred. After 15-16 days after the violence, there is some hustle-bustle on the Kiradpura streets, and people are returning to the market for daily necessities. The shops in Kiradpura are now open, although police officials are still patrolling this area. Many residents hope to rebuild their lives against the hatred at every step.

While finalising this report in the month of May, we are witnessing similar tensions in Trimbakeshwar in Nashik and Akola in Maharashtra.⁸ These instances of communal violence are not just limited to the festivals of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti. The steadily increasing aggression against Muslim community and attacks on their festivals, properties and everyday life implies the state's complicity in perpetuating and normalizing communal hatred.

Recommendations:

- We demand that the state take responsibility and necessary actions to ensure justice for the victims and survivors.
- It is the first and foremost responsibility of the state to maintain law and order, especially when two festivals of different religious groups are coinciding. The permission to organize religious rallies and gatherings should not be granted unconditionally.
- The police should review the chargesheet and remove Muniruddin Shaikh's name as a rioter.
- Muniruddin's family should be given monetary compensation from the state. There should be an action against the Police personnels who shot Muniruddin Shaikh.
- The state shall provide legal services to the victims and persons falsely accused of this violence. It shall ensure that monetary compensation is paid to all victims.
- The state shall ensure a quick probe into those who incited the violence by provoking slogans and playing loud music in front of the Mosques. The police should review and consider the CCTV footages from the cameras installed in Ram Mandir.

⁸ Express News Service. (2023, May 25). Akola clashes: Instagram account handler, man who complained against him held. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/akola-clashes-instagram-account-handler-complainant-held-8625372/>

- The state shall take strict actions against the police administration for sexually assaulting Muslim women in Paldhi. It shall also ensure an effective legal representation to women victims of sexual assault in this violence and a committee sensitive to dealing with and assisting juveniles accused as rioters.
- The media shall behave non-partisan way and pressurize the ruling government to take necessary actions, take accountability for its actions, and control such communal clashes.
- The civil organizations in Maharashtra shall come in solidarity and raise their voices against the rising communal polarization, conflicts, and anti-muslim violence.