[**Are Muslims the only victims?**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1714426/are-muslims-the-only-victims)

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FIVE Muslim men went to meet the head of the Hindu revivalist RSS. The idea behind the visit was wrapped in the cliché that there’s no alternative to dialogue. The group had extraordinary members. It comprised a former lieutenant governor of Delhi, a former chief election commissioner, a former army general, a leading hotelier and an Urdu-language journalist. They all evidently came back impressed with Mohan Bhagwat’s punctuality, his gentle demeanour, and his ability to hear them out patiently. Now they want to meet Prime Minster Modi.

They gave Bhagwat a book with details of how the Muslim population in India was now growing at a far slower rate than previously claimed. The visitors briefed the RSS chief about the fallacy that Muslims practise polygamy in a big way. They thought that the RSS chief was unaware of the widely shared facts. He in turn said the cow was a most sensitive issue for Hindus and suggested that Muslims should voluntarily give up consuming beef in states that had refused to ban its slaughter. The recalcitrant states include at least two where the BJP is in power. The visitors apparently endorsed the suggestion to usher communal cordiality.

While the five sages were purportedly trying to protect their community from daily humiliation and assaults from Hindutva, consider the four Hindus and a Sikh — though they would probably protest being limited to their religious identity — who were fighting to retrieve democratic spaces for not only India’s largest minority community but also the smaller ones and, of course, for all the rights guaranteed by the constitution to all citizens equally. Of the five, four are eminent former judges, their team crowned by a woman judge. The fifth member is a well-regarded former home secretary of India.

Civil society activists persuaded them to head a citizens’ committee to probe the deadly anti-Muslim [violence that engulfed](https://www.dawn.com/news/1537378) northeast Delhi in early 2020. This was around the time when Delhi had become the hub of a nationwide movement led by women against the Modi government’s newly unveiled citizenship laws. The laws claimed to extend Indian citizenship to everyone in trouble with their states in the neighbouring countries. Muslims were pointedly excluded. This selectivity violated India’s constitution and also undermined Muslims in the neighbouring countries who faced harassment by their Muslim governments, not unlike the Hindus targeted and jailed in India for opposing Hindutva policies.

How did they dance their way into the BJP and how do they feel about being there in an era of lynching, public flogging and daily humiliation of fellow Muslims?

The Delhi violence coincided with president [Trump’s visit to India](https://www.dawn.com/news/1536508) and took place in brazen contempt of all Covid-19 protocols. Tens of thousands gathered to see him at a packed stadium in Gujarat in Prime Minister Modi’s company.

The committee’s report offers a straightforward conclusion its members arrived at. Titled Uncertain Justice — A Citizens Committee Report on the North East Delhi Violence 2020, it deserves a separate detailed discussion. The media largely buried the conclusions, naturally. However, there has been a highlighting of the month-old meeting between the Muslim men and Mr Bhagwat. Did the RSS reveal its meeting with the five men to time it with the government’s ban on a Muslim group that works with low-caste Hindus and Dalits? It’s called the People’s Front of India. Turns out that the journalist [arrested](https://www.dawn.com/news/1604867) as a terrorist in Uttar Pradesh when he was travelling to report the horrific gang rape and murder of a Dalit girl two years ago, belonged to the PFI, now a banned group.

Any Dalit-Muslim bonding is always a potent challenge for Hindutva. Former UP chief minister Mayawati welded it to win several elections. PFI has had its share of notoriety too, including the gruesome chopping of the hand of a Christian teacher in Kerala for alleged blasphemy against Islam. Suffice it to say that Hindutva’s rage in Delhi may not have been unrelated to the solidarity the Muslim [women-led protests](https://www.dawn.com/news/1529374) received from every religious group in 2020.

Many Muslim groups, including the influential Jamiatul Ulema-i-Hind are perceived as being soft on Hindutva. Both are opposed to the social and cultural mingling of Hindus and Muslims. Both oppose enlightened education for their communities. Before the visit of the five men to the [RSS chief](https://www.dawn.com/news/1230592), there were five other prominent Muslims, either members of the BJP or handpicked by Mr Modi for key assignments. One is a governor of a crucial opposition-ruled state. Another is a former governor of a key state. The remaining three have been ministers in BJP ministries, including in the Modi cabinet.

The point is, did the five visitors ever consider seeking out the fellow Muslims for tips as BJP insiders? One of them is the author of a mostly adulatory book on Nehru, and two others were great fans of Indira Gandhi and became beneficiaries of her affection. They were feted initially as Congress stars. How did they dance their way into the BJP and how do they feel about being there in an era of lynching, public flogging and daily humiliation of fellow Muslims? Standard Muslim links or myths about beef eating, polygamy and demographic calculations have surely been shared with the BJP and the RSS by them? What was the response? How do they feel about the release of the 11 rapists and killers from Gujarat on Independence Day?

There was once a Kumaramangalam thesis. It advocated that leftists join the Congress government to help keep Indira Gandhi to left of centre. She agreed to the alliance and carried out the nationalisation of banks and abolished privy purses of erstwhile Indian royalty to prove the point. Is this what the few Muslims, Dalits, Christians, the tribespeople and Sikhs in the Hindutva fold are seeking to do?

There’s a useful book by Bryan Rigg for all concerned to thumb through. It’s called Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military.

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