

REPORT 2024

# HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN INDIA





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Our research, strategic partnerships, and community engagement programs are guided by the vision of a more inclusive and resilient society against all forms of hate and extremism.

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# 1. Introduction

This report documents and analyzes verified instances of in-person hate speech events in India in 2024, covering various types of mass gatherings. These include political rallies, electoral campaign events, religious processions, protest marches, demonstrations, and cultural or nationalist gatherings. In other instances, they are organized with the express objective of harassing minorities. In 2024, the Indian general election, state elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, and hate rallies triggered by exaggerated claims of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh served as key catalysts for a significant proportion of hate speech incidents.

Hate speech in India in 2024 followed an alarming trajectory, deeply intertwined with the ideological ambitions of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the broader Hindu nationalist movement. The number of hate speech incidents targeting religious minorities surged from 668 in 2023 to 1,165 in 2024, marking a staggering 74.4% increase. Dangerous speech—defined as speech that "increases the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group"—also saw a significant rise.

Patterns of hate speech in 2024 reflect both continuity and transformation in its context and content with longstanding Hindu nationalist tropes remaining dominant—such as the portrayal of Muslims and Christians as “outsiders” in Hindu India and Muslims as a threat to Hindus. Hate speeches frequently invoked the narrative of Muslims as "infiltrators," linked to thinly veiled allegations of all Indian Muslims as Bangladeshi migrants or Rohingya refugees. Hindu far-right leaders demonized Indian Muslims as parasitic and thieving, alleging that they were either wrongfully granted resources that rightfully belonged to Hindus or were stealing Hindu wealth through acts of aggression. These rhetorical shifts reinforced exclusionary narratives, further escalating anti-minority sentiment and hostility.

The fact that 2024 was a general election year in India, with polling held in seven phases between April 19 and June 1, played a crucial role in shaping the patterns of hate speech incidents compared to 2023. A notable peak in hate speech occurred in May 2024, at the height of the election process. As was the case for the entire year, political leaders from the BJP, as well as religious leaders and figures associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, and other Hindu nationalist organizations, were responsible for an overwhelming number of hate speech incidents during this period.

A notable shift in 2024, compared to 2023, was the central role played by top BJP leaders and national figures in propagating hate speech. While state-level politicians dominated the list in 2023, 2024 saw national leaders emerge as key instigators of communal rhetoric. Among the most prominent figures responsible for significant numbers of hate speech incidents were Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Telangana BJP legislator T. Raja Singh, and Maharashtra BJP legislator and Minister of Fisheries and Port Development Nitish Rane.

The dynamics of hate speech in 2024 reflected both top-down and bottom-up trends. National leaders like Modi and Shah, along with powerful regional figures such as Adityanath and Sarma, were able to reach nationwide audiences, even when their speeches were delivered in the context of local election campaigns. These high-profile hate speeches were further amplified and reinforced by an arsenal of local BJP leaders, Hindu far-right organizations, and religious figures, who spread similar rhetoric at community and grassroots levels. This interplay between top-down and bottom-up hate speech flows helped saturate political discourse with narratives that vilified and threatened Muslims, effectively crowding out space for meaningful democratic debate.

A second peak in hate speech events occurred in August 2024 with the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government and the ensuing political crisis in Bangladesh. The specter of the Hindu minority community being under attack in Bangladesh provided rich fodder for anti-Muslim rhetoric and hate in India. Though the Hindu minority in Bangladesh did face violence, the BJP, Hindu nationalist groups, supporters, and Indian news outlets engaged in a disinformation campaign over the scale and scope of attacks on the community.<sup>1</sup>

Hate speech patterns in 2024 also revealed a deeply alarming surge in dangerous speech compared to 2023, with both political leaders and religious figures openly inciting violence against Muslims. This included calls for outright violence, calls to arms, the economic boycott of Muslim businesses, the destruction of Muslim residential properties, and the seizing or demolition of Muslim religious structures. In many instances, incitement to violence was framed as either retribution for alleged historical wrongs committed by Muslim rulers or “invaders” against Hindus or as a preemptive measure to counter an imagined Muslim threat.

Social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, and X (formerly Twitter)—have been key instruments in enabling, amplifying, and mainstreaming hate speech and extremist ideologies, both in India and globally.<sup>2</sup> In the Indian context, these platforms have been extensively utilized to articulate and spread Hindu nationalist ideology and anti-minority rhetoric. Of the 1,165 in-person hate speech events targeting Muslim and Christian minorities in 2024, 995 videos were traced back to their original sources on social media, where they were first uploaded or live streamed. Facebook and YouTube emerged as major platforms for dissemination, with Facebook alone accounting for 495 hate speech videos, while 211 videos were exclusively shared on YouTube. Notably, 266 anti-minority hate speeches delivered by senior BJP leaders—primarily during the April–June general elections—were simultaneously live streamed across YouTube, Facebook, and X through the official accounts of the party and the leaders.

Given the logic of virality, social media platforms facilitate the rapid and widespread circulation of hateful content while also elevating the most extreme instances of hate speech through algorithmic amplification. Despite their own community standards prohibiting hate speech, social media platforms failed to enforce their guidelines, allowing violative content to spread unchecked.

Viewed cumulatively, shifts in hate speech patterns in 2024 reinforced and amplified the core tenets of the Hindu nationalist worldview, that is, the idea of India as an exclusively Hindu nation with minorities, especially Muslims and Christians, as perpetual outsiders. Muslims, in particular, were portrayed as an existential threat to Hindus and the Indian nation. Hate speech events were embedded within elaborate conspiracy theories and allegations of various “jihads” to dominate, convert, defile, and seduce Hindus. These narratives were designed to stoke a strong sense of Hindu victimhood and, consequently, to justify the exclusion and marginalization of minorities and acts of violence against them. The sharp spike in the rise of hate speech events points to the incorporation of hate speech as part of routine electoral politics and campaign strategy. It is also indicative of an increasingly aggressive assertion of Hindu nationalism in public and political life. As of 2024, Hindu nationalism has taken on a much more extreme form, with its rhetoric becoming more blatant, inflammatory, and violent. Marking a continuity with past trends, hate speech in 2024 contributed to an environment where increasingly egregious expressions of hate and violence against Indian minorities continued to be normalized.

## 2. Key Findings

India Hate Lab (IHL)  
documented

**1,165**

in-person hate  
speech events

Targeting religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, in 2024 across 20 states, two union territories, and the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi. On average, three hate speech events occurred per day. This marks a **74.4%** increase from 2023, when **668** such incidents were recorded.

**98.5%**  
(1,147)

speeches targeted Muslims—either explicitly (1,050) or alongside Christians (97)—while 115 (9.9%) targeted Christians, either explicitly (18) or alongside Muslims (97).

**79.9%**  
(931)

hate speech events took place in states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), or in union territories where the police and public order is under the purview of the BJP-led central government. The opposition ruled states recorded 234 (20%) hate speech events.



**Uttar Pradesh (242), Maharashtra (210), and Madhya Pradesh (98)** ranked top among states for hate speech events. These three states, ruled by the BJP and their allies, collectively accounted for **47%** of the total hate speech events recorded in 2024.

- **BJP directly governed or ruled in coalition in seven of the ten states with the highest hate speech incidents.**

**29.2%**  
(340)

hate speech events were organized by the BJP, making it the most frequent organizer in 2024, with most events occurring during the general election campaign. This marks a **580%** increase from 2023, when the party organized 50 such events.

**58.8%**  
(685)

hate speech gatherings were organized by entities that are part of the broader Sangh Parivar (the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh family), including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad-Bajrang Dal, the BJP, the Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS) and Durga Vahini.

**39.7%**  
(462) hate speeches were delivered by politicians. BJP leaders were responsible for **452** of these speeches. Compared to 2023, when BJP politicians delivered **100** hate speeches, this represents an increase of **352%**.

**6/10**  


Six of the ten most frequent purveyors of hate speech were **politicians**, including Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Adityanath delivered **86 (7.4%)** hate speeches, while Modi delivered **63** hate speeches, accounting for **5.7%** of all such speeches in 2024.

**32%**  
(373) of all hate speech events took place during the 2024 general election, between March 16, when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) went into effect, and June 1, the last phase of elections.

**9.8%**  
(114) hate speeches were delivered by Hindu Religious Preachers with Mahant Raju Das, Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, and Sadhvi Saraswati among the key figures.

**49.9%**  
(581) incidents of hate speech in our data set referenced common far-right conspiracy theories, including, but not limited to, "**love jihad**", "**land jihad**", "**population jihad**", and "**vote jihad**". Compared to 2023, hate speech events with conspiracy theories increased by **38.3%**.

**22.2%**  
(259) events featured dangerous speech, which includes **explicit calls for violence**. Of these, 224 took place in states governed by the BJP or its allies or in union territories where law enforcement and public order fell under the jurisdiction of the BJP-led central government. Compared to 2023, dangerous speech events increased by 8.4%.

- Maharashtra BJP minister **Nitish Rane** (24 speeches), BJP Telangana legislator **T. Raja Singh** (22 speeches), and Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP)-Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD) chief **Pravin Togadia** (9 speeches) were among the key figures responsible for delivering dangerous speech in 2024.



**23.5%**  
(274)

hate speeches called for **the seizure, removal, or destruction of places of worship** owned by **Muslims or Christians**. BJP politicians were responsible for 84 of these speeches, while 216 such gatherings occurred in states governed by the BJP or its allies. Compared to 2023, hate speeches targeting places of worship rose by **62.1%**.

**10.6%**  
(123)

hate speeches included an explicit call to arms, advocating for Hindus to procure and distribute weapons under the guise of “protection” from members of minority communities. Compared to 2023, such speeches rose by **32.3%**.

**9.5%**  
(111)

of hate speeches explicitly called for the social or economic boycott of minority communities, primarily **Muslims**. Compared to 2023, such speeches rose by **27.6%**.

**10.1%**  
(118)

hate speech events in 2024 targeted the vulnerable Rohingya refugee community, while 182 (15.6%) speeches promoted the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey. Hate speech against Rohingya refugees surged by 210% compared to 2023.

**995/1,165**  
hate speech events

in 2024 were first shared or live streamed on social media platforms, including **Facebook, YouTube, Instagram**, and **X**, with Facebook leading at **495 events**.

 **259** recorded instances of **dangerous speech**, including explicit calls for violence, 219 were first **shared or live streamed on social media**. Facebook accounted for **164 (74.9%)**, YouTube for **49 (22.4%)**, and Instagram for **6**.

As of **February 6, 2025**, only 3 of the reported videos have been removed by Facebook, while the remaining **98.4%** continue to stay up across different platforms despite clear violations of community standards.

### 3. Methodology

To classify any speech at an event or rally as hate speech, we continue to apply the United Nations framework, which characterizes hate speech as:

“Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.”<sup>3</sup>

This definition, widely used by organizations and scholars to study hate speech, provides a foundational framework for our analysis.<sup>4</sup> We classify dangerous speech as a distinct subset of hate speech. Drawing from the Dangerous Speech Project (DSP), which defines dangerous speech as communication that “can increase the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group,” we emphasize its role in the proliferation of narratives that justify and promote violence as an essential and critical action.<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of our typology is the understanding that hate speech should never be misunderstood as merely the outpouring of outrage from sections of an aggrieved community. This “myth of spontaneous rage” often masks the strategic planning and intent employed by entrepreneurial merchants of hate who effectively harvest outrage and indignation through narratives of victimhood to mobilize and justify the vilification and victimization of targeted minority groups.<sup>6</sup> We thus argue that, in order to truly comprehend the depth and impact of hate speech in India, one needs to understand how narratives of victimhood and victimization can be employed to incite fear and hate toward minority communities.

Within the Indian context, hate speech manifests in multiple forms, including the use of discriminatory and dehumanizing language directed at minorities—particularly Muslims, Christians, and other marginalized groups. It also includes the propagation of “jihad”-based and other conspiracy theories (see below), direct calls for violence, calls to seize, remove, or destroy places of worship, calls to arms, and advocacy for economic or social boycotts. The bogey of large-scale “Bangladeshi infiltration” and “Rohingya infiltration” is frequently invoked to question the citizenship and legitimacy of national belonging of India’s Muslim citizens.

To ensure methodological rigor in our analysis of hate speech events in India, we also adopt the Rabat Plan of Action’s six-part threshold test, articulated by the Office of

the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights Office) and derived from Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to determine whether hate speech meets the legal threshold for incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.<sup>7</sup>

The six factors include:

1. **Context:** Assessing the broader social and political environment at the time the speech was delivered, including how these contextual factors influenced the speech's impact and intent.
2. **Speaker:** Considering the speaker's history and role in society, particularly their relationship to the audience and their capacity towards mobilization and influence in society.
3. **Intent:** Determining whether the speech was deliberately employed to incite fear, hate, and harm. Discerning intent ensures that negligence and recklessness do not meet the threshold for hate speech, requiring instead a thread of resolve linking speech, audience, and the targeted community.
4. **Content and Form:** Evaluating the provocative content of the speech, its calls towards fear and hate, including the employment of conspiracy theories as well as its rhetorical style and arguments to determine whether it constitutes incitement.
5. **Extent of the Speech:** Analyzing the reach, and diffusion of the speech, including the size of the audience, the platforms used, and the frequency of communication. This helps evaluate the potency of hate speech incidents.
6. **Likelihood and Imminence:** Determining the probability that the speech would lead to acts of violence, with a focus on the immediacy of the risk of harm towards targeted communities.

We adopt the Rabat threshold to ensure methodological rigor and to analyze hate speech events within India in a structured and systematic manner. To achieve this, we employ a wide range of methods to track, document, and verify hate speech events and gatherings.

Our approach includes monitoring and tracking Hindu far-right groups and affiliated political actors and leaders at both national and local levels by observing their daily activities on various social media platforms. We collect data on hate speech incidents reported by local, regional, and national newspapers, websites, and channels.

Furthermore, we rely on a well-established network of activists and journalists across India who collate and report hate speech incidents with supporting evidence, ensuring a comprehensive and verifiable documentation process.

We utilize data scraping techniques, leveraging keywords in multiple regional languages across platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram to extract videos and live streams of hate speech events and rallies.

Once collected, each video undergoes a rigorous authentication and verification process, where we confirm the precise location of the hate speech event and date of recording while cross-referencing the event with at least two independent sources, including reports from news organizations. The verified data is then compiled into a comprehensive database of hate speech events, systematically mapped by state, involved organizations, speaker identity, and speaker affiliation. Finally, we conduct a detailed narrative analysis, categorizing the content into distinct yet overlapping classifications, ensuring a structured and methodical approach to analyzing key themes and narratives of hate speech.

**These categories include the use of “jihad”-based conspiracy theories, calls for violence, calls to arms, calls for social or economic boycott, calls to seize, remove, or destroy places of worship, speeches targeting Rohingya refugees living in India, and speeches invoking the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey.**

The "jihad"-based conspiracy theories represent some of the most prevalent hateful narratives within the Indian Hindu nationalist ecosystem. These include:

**Love Jihad:** The false claim that Muslim men lure Hindu women into marriage under false pretenses to convert them to Islam and establish Muslim dominance in India.

**Land Jihad:** The allegation that Muslims deliberately occupy public or government land by building religious structures or holding mass prayers.

**Vote Jihad:** Promoted by Prime Minister Modi, this baseless conspiracy theory claims that Muslims in India strategically vote as a block to manipulate elections, increase their political influence, and weaken Hindu dominance.<sup>8</sup>

**Population Jihad:** The baseless theory that Muslims are engaged in a coordinated effort to outnumber Hindus in India, often linked to the Great Replacement Theory, despite Muslims comprising only 14% of the population.

**Rail Jihad:** A baseless conspiracy theory that falsely accuses Muslims of deliberately placing objects on railway tracks to cause train accidents and "mass killings" as part of a supposed sabotage campaign.<sup>9</sup>

**Economic Jihad:** The false claim that Muslim businesses and individuals conspire to economically harm Hindus.

**Halal Jihad:** The conspiracy that Halal certification is a ploy to undermine Hindus, damage the Indian economy, and fund terrorism.

**Mazar Jihad:** The claim that Muslims build shrines (mazars) on government or forest land as a territorial expansion strategy.

**Thook Jihad:** The baseless conspiracy theory that Muslims spit on food served to Hindus to contaminate it and spread diseases.<sup>10</sup>

**UPSC Jihad:** The baseless belief that Muslims manipulate civil service exams (UPSC) to infiltrate India's bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup>

**Fertilizer Jihad:** The unfounded claim, first propagated by Assam's BJP Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, that Muslim farmers use excessive chemical fertilizer to destroy soil.<sup>12</sup>

These narratives continue to evolve as far-right groups and the ruling BJP increasingly frame any expression of Muslim faith or activity as part of a larger, systematic effort aimed at undermining Hindu interests.

Despite the comprehensive methods employed, challenges persist in detecting and analyzing hate speech, and we acknowledge that our dataset is not exhaustive nor a complete account of hate speech events in India in 2024. Many hate speech events and incidents lack a digital imprint or involve unverifiable content. Furthermore, implicit messaging and indirect provocations through dog whistling is commonplace in many speech events but are difficult to identify, verify, and authenticate with certainty. The dynamic nature of hate speech and its constantly evolving rhetoric also necessitates constant adaptation of methods and categories.

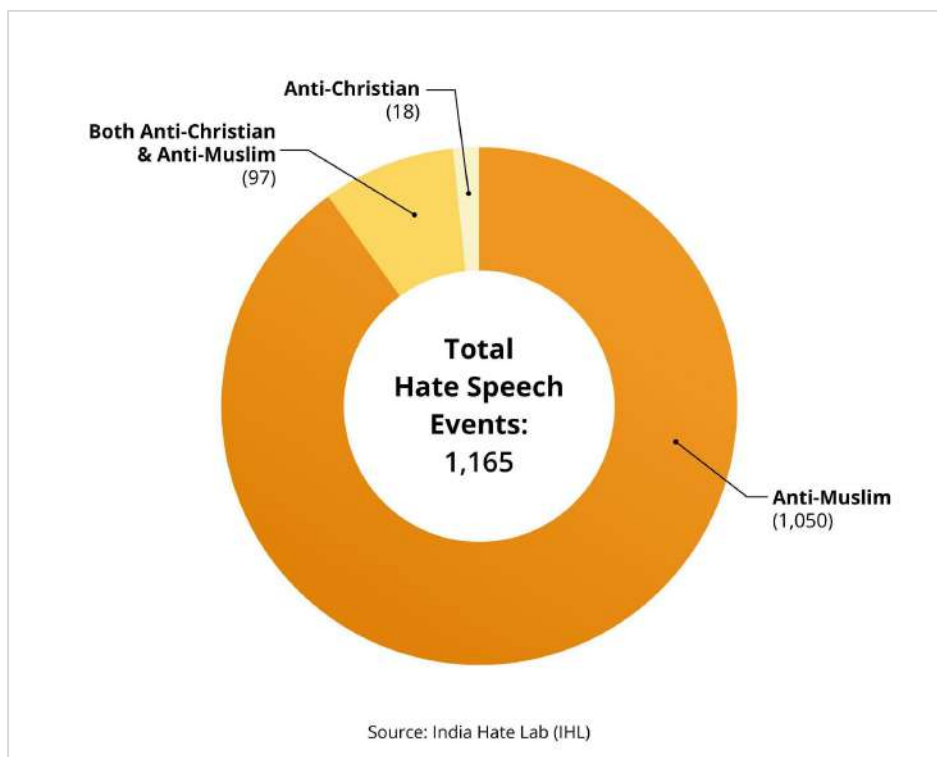
Together, these challenges contribute to the inevitability of data gaps. As such, while we are convinced that this report provides valuable and critical insights into the patterns and proliferation of hate speech in India in 2024, we also acknowledge its limitations. We will continue to strive to evolve our research methods further, ensuring that our work remains rigorous, comprehensive, and relevant.

# 4. Hate Speech Trends in 2024

## 4.1 Targets of Hate Speech

In 2024, the India Hate Lab (IHL) documented 1,165 instances of hate speech delivered at in-person events. Religious minorities, in particular, were the target of these speeches, with 1,147 (98.5%) targeting Muslims—either explicitly (1,050) or alongside Christians (97)—while 115 (9.9%) targeted Christians, either explicitly (18) or alongside Muslims (97). There is some overlap, as these numbers indicate, as many events and gatherings feature hate speech directed at both Muslims and Christians.

**FIGURE 1: BREAKDOWN OF HATE SPEECH BY TARGETED COMMUNITIES**

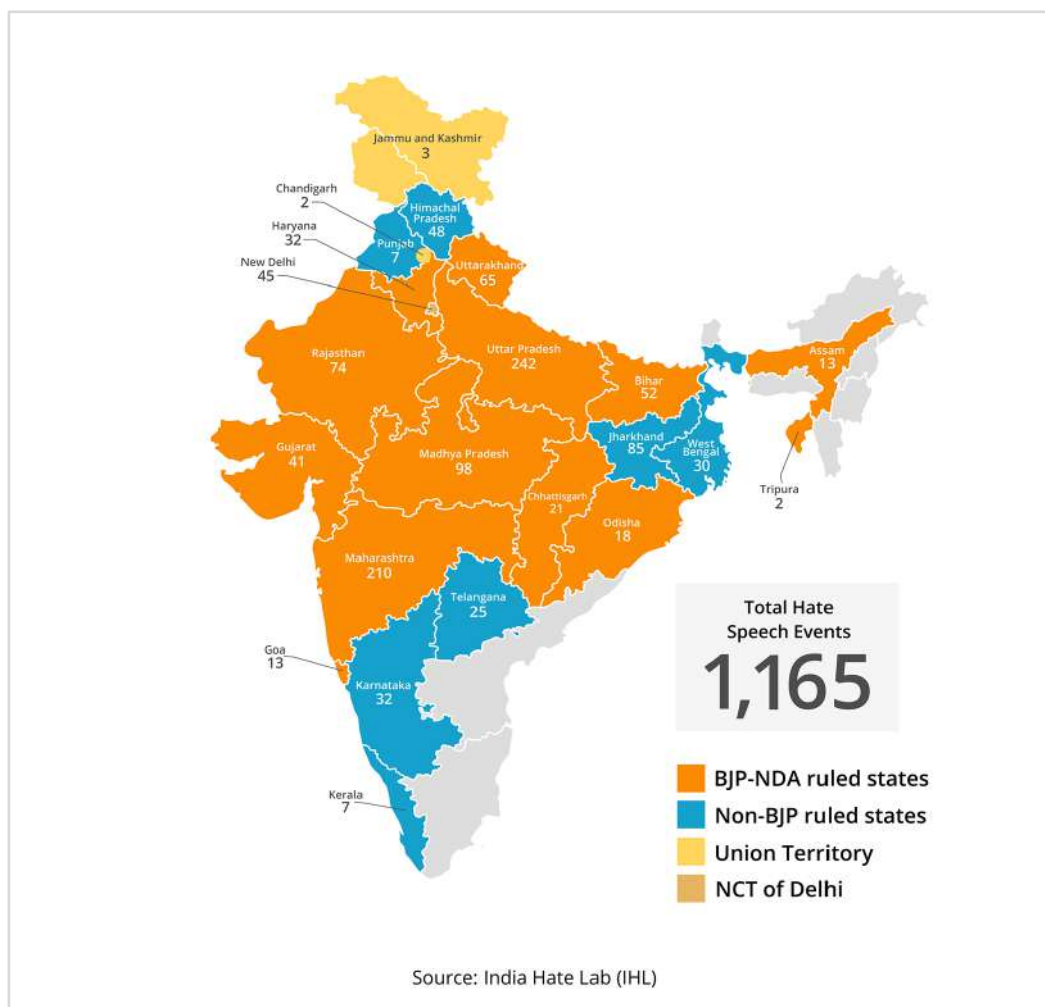


Additionally, 118 hate speech events also targeted Rohingya refugees, while 182 speeches invoked the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey. These speeches ranged from conspiracy theories such as “love jihad,” “land jihad,” and “population jihad,” to outright calls for violence.

In 2024, hate speech events and gatherings remained geographically dispersed across India, even as most incidents remained concentrated in the country's northern, central, and western regions.

Overall, 1,165 documented instances of hate speech at in-person events occurred across 20 states, two union territories, and the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, reflecting a staggering 74.4% increase from the 668 events recorded in 2023.

**FIGURE 2: HATE SPEECH TRENDS ACROSS STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES**



Among 20 states, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of hate speech events in 2024, with 242 events (20.8% of the total). This marked a stunning 132.7% increase from 2023, when the state saw 104 hate speech events. The prevalence of hate speech in Uttar Pradesh is not surprising, as the state is governed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who ranked number one among all political and far-right leaders in delivering hate speeches in 2024. The state saw a significant surge in hate speech during the 2024 general election between April and June 2024, as the BJP sought to use anti-Muslim hate, fear, bigotry, and conspiracy theories to polarize voters along religious lines in this electorally crucial region. In just the month of May 2024, Uttar Pradesh recorded 78 hate speeches, which made up 32% of the total hate speech



events for the entire year in the state. Adityanath led this surge, delivering 45 hate speech events in May, while Prime Minister Modi contributed 14. The state also saw a spike in hate speech events in December, when the VHP-Bajrang Dal organized a series of Shaurya Yatras, or ‘victory rallies,’ to commemorate and celebrate the anniversary of the Babri Mosque demolition in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in 1992.

Out of 242 hate speeches in Uttar Pradesh, 223 were explicitly anti-Muslim, 17 targeted both Christians and Muslims, and two were explicitly anti-Christian.

Maharashtra, India’s second most populous state, recorded the second highest number of hate speeches, with 210 events, making up about 18% of our dataset. This marked a 78% increase in hate speech events in 2024 compared to the previous year, when the state recorded 118 incidents. Out of 210 hate speeches, 195 were explicitly anti-Muslim, and 14 targeted both Christians and Muslims, while one was explicitly anti-Christian.

The monthly data on hate speech in Maharashtra for 2024 indicates clear spikes corresponding to major political events, particularly the general elections in May and the state elections in November. Hate speech incidents first peaked in May, with 32 recorded events, as political leaders and Hindu nationalist groups leveraged communal rhetoric for electoral polarization. Following a brief decline, hate speech resurged in August and remained consistently high until the state elections in November. Between August and November, Maharashtra recorded 90 hate speech events, accounting for 42.9% of the total incidents throughout the year.

While Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, India’s two most populous states, recorded the highest number of hate speech events, several smaller states also witnessed a disproportionately high volume of such incidents. Himachal Pradesh, a state governed by the Indian National Congress (INC), saw a dramatic surge in anti-Muslim hate speech events, with 48 recorded incidents in 2024, compared to 13 in 2023—marking a 269% increase. In 2024, Himachal Pradesh accounted for 4.1% of all hate speech events nationwide. This disproportionate spike appears to be the result of deliberate mobilization efforts by far-right organizations, including the BJP, the VHP, Bajrang Dal, and the Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM), all of whom have actively worked to inflame anti-minority sentiments in the state.

A similar trend was observed in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh’s neighboring state, which recorded 65 hate speech events in 2024. This represented a 58.5% increase from 2023, when the state recorded 41 incidents. Uttarakhand was responsible for

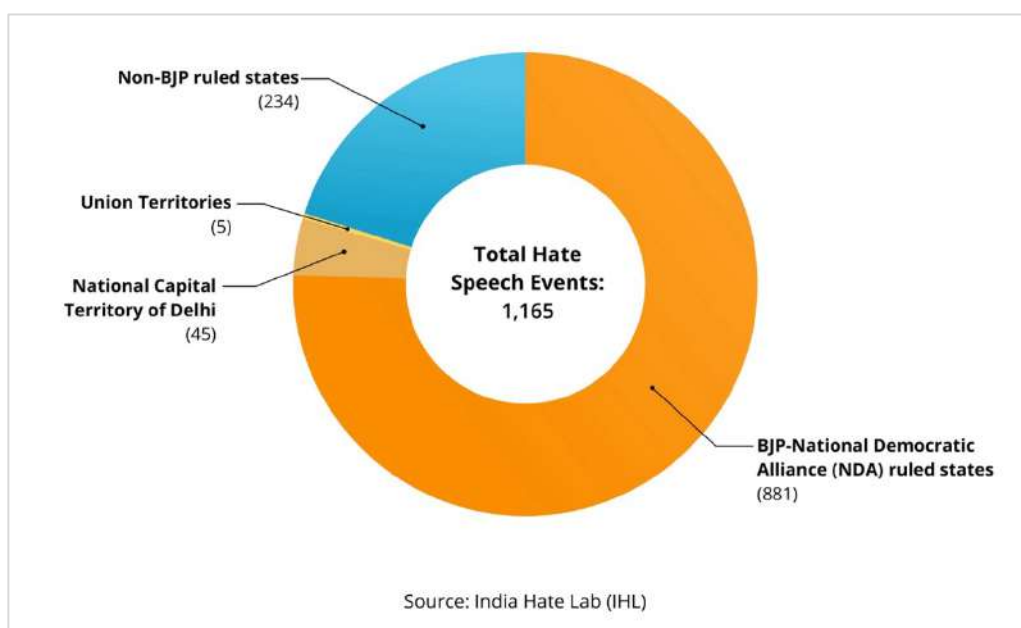
5.6% of all hate speech events in 2024. As documented in our 2023 report, the state has become a focal point for Hindu nationalism.<sup>13</sup> The small state has witnessed numerous incidents targeting Muslims, including the installation of signboards<sup>14</sup> banning Muslims from entering several villages and organized campaigns advocating ethnic cleansing of Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Out of 65 hate speeches, 59 were explicitly anti-Muslim and four targeted both Christians and Muslims, while two were explicitly anti-Christian.

We also recorded hate speech events in 16 other states with varying frequency of occurrences, including Madhya Pradesh (98), Jharkhand (85), Rajasthan (74), Bihar (52), Gujarat (41), Karnataka (32), Haryana (32), West Bengal (30), Chhattisgarh (21), Telangana (25), Odisha (18), Goa (13), Assam (13), Kerala (7), Punjab (7) and Tripura (2). The union territories of Chandigarh and Jammu and Kashmir recorded 2 and 3 hate speech events, respectively, while the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi witnessed 45 events.

## 4.2 Hate Speech Events Ranked by Party in Power

In most cases, the major determinant in allowing hate speech events to take place is the government in power at the state level. In India, state governments are responsible for maintaining law and order, thus bearing primary responsibility for enforcing laws against hate speech and incitement to violence.

**FIGURE 3: HATE SPEECH EVENTS BY PARTY IN POWER**



Among the top ten states with the highest number of hate speech events in 2024, the BJP directly governed or ruled in coalition in seven of them throughout the year. Additionally, the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, where the BJP-led central government controls police and public order, despite the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) heading the state government, ranked ninth with 45 recorded hate speech incidents.

Jharkhand, which ranked fourth with 85 hate speech incidents, had a Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-Congress coalition government, while Himachal Pradesh, ranked eighth with 48 hate speech events, was under the rule of the Congress. While BJP-ruled states remained the primary hotspots for hate speech, the data shows that Hindu nationalist groups and leaders of the BJP actively fueled anti-minority hatred even in non-BJP states, often as a result of lack of political will and weak enforcement of laws against hate speech by state authorities.

States directly governed by the BJP recorded 604 hate speech events, accounting for 51.8% of all incidents. Meanwhile, states ruled by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)—a coalition led by the BJP in partnership with regional parties such as the Janata Dal (United), Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction), Tipra Motha Party (TMP), United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and others—witnessed 277 hate speech events (23.8%). Additionally, five hate speech incidents were recorded in two union territories—Jammu and Kashmir and Chandigarh—while 45 were held in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi. Although union territories are directly administered by the central government, police and law enforcement in Delhi fall under the jurisdiction of the BJP-led central government.

Overall, 931 hate speech incidents (79.9%) took place in BJP-ruled states, NDA-governed coalition states, union territories, and Delhi, highlighting the overwhelming concentration of anti-minority hate speech in BJP-controlled regions.

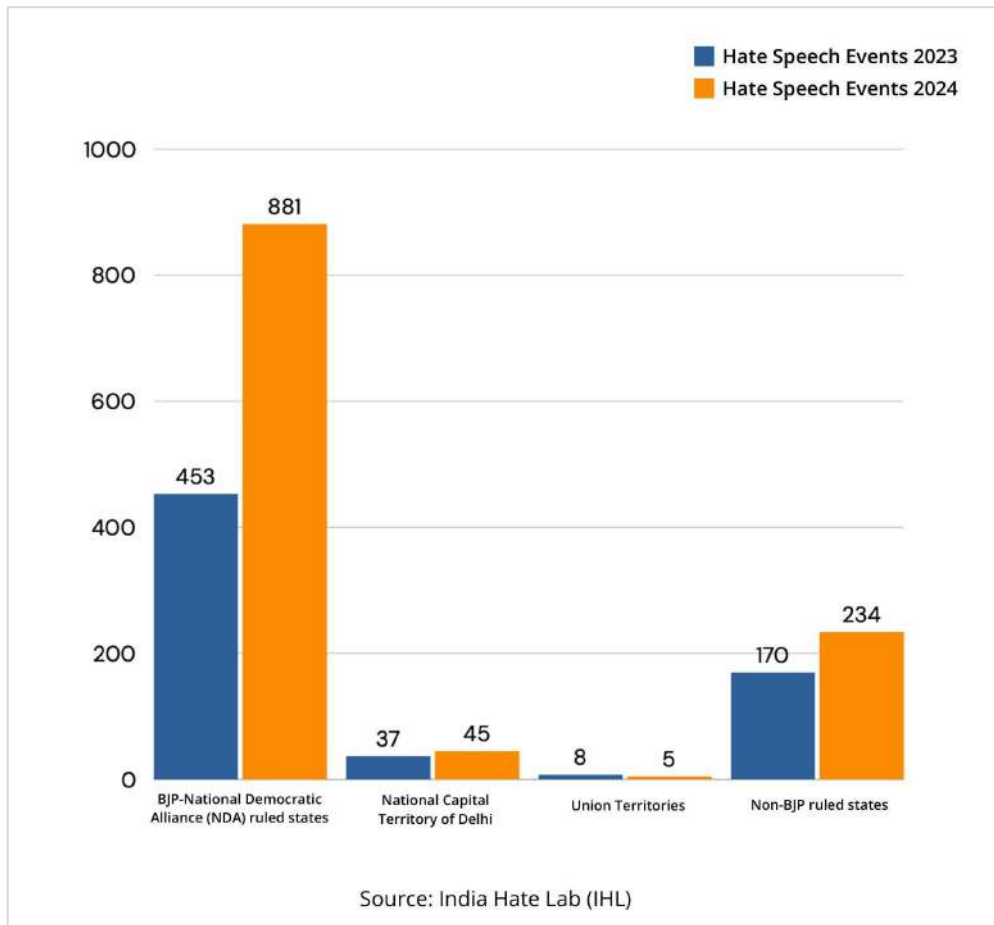
The seven states ruled by opposition parties like the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Congress, JMM, AAP, and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) recorded 234 (20%) hate speech events.

#### **4.2.1 Comparative Analysis of Hate Speech Events by Parties in Power in 2023 vs. 2024**

The number of hate speech events surged across both BJP-led and opposition-ruled states between 2023 and 2024, with the sharpest rise occurring in BJP-ruled and BJP-led NDA states. In 2023, these states recorded 453 hate speech incidents, accounting

for 68% of all documented cases. By 2024, this figure nearly doubled to 881, reflecting a 94.5% increase, underscoring the worsening climate of hate speech in BJP-controlled regions.

**FIGURE 4: HATE SPEECH EVENTS BY PARTY IN POWER IN 2023 vs. 2024**



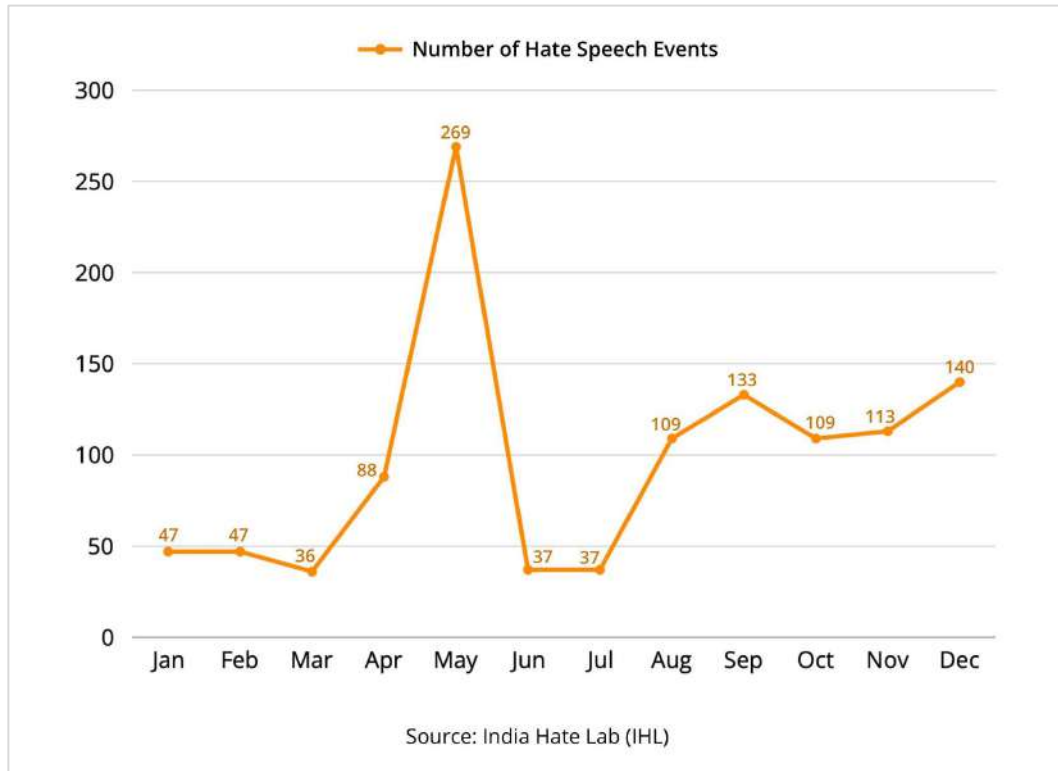
Similarly, opposition-ruled states witnessed a 37.6% rise, with hate speech incidents increasing from 170 in 2023 to 234 in 2024. In the National Capital Territory of Delhi, incidents rose from 37 in 2023 to 45 in 2024, reflecting a 21.6% increase. Conversely, union territories saw a decline, with events dropping from 8 in three union territories in 2023 to five in two union territories in 2024.

### 4.3 Monthly Breakdown of Hate Speech Events

In 2024, an average of three hate speech events took place daily across India. While multiple factors contributed to this alarming surge, the three most significant drivers were the 2024 Indian general election, the state elections in Maharashtra and

Jharkhand, and hate rallies organized in response to exaggerated claims of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh.

**FIGURE 5: MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN 2024**



Hate speech escalated sharply in May 2024, coinciding with the peak of the national general election campaign. In this single month, 269 hate speeches were delivered, accounting for 23.1% of all incidents recorded throughout the year. This surge was not coincidental but rather strategic, aligning with the electoral mobilization efforts of the BJP and its affiliates.

A particularly notable inflection point occurred on April 21, when Modi delivered an anti-Muslim hate speech in Banswara, Rajasthan, where he referred to Indian Muslims as "infiltrators" and invoked dangerous communal tropes.<sup>16</sup> Prior to this speech, between the start of the election period on March 16 and April 21, there had been approximately 61 hate speech events, averaging nearly two per day. However, in the 43 days between April 22 and June 1, hate speech surged dramatically, with 312 incidents recorded nationwide, equating to an average of over seven per day—a more than threefold increase.

The overwhelming majority of these hate speeches were delivered at election rallies, reinforcing how anti-Muslim hate was deliberately deployed as a political tool to

polarize voters. Modi's speech in Banswara was widely interpreted as a signal to BJP leaders, party workers, and the broader Hindu nationalist ecosystem, legitimizing and emboldening their use of anti-Muslim rhetoric as a campaign strategy.

Similarly, hate speech surged in August 2024 following student protests that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a close ally of the Modi government.<sup>17</sup> Although the transition of power in Bangladesh was accompanied by some reports of violence against Hindu minorities, Hindu nationalist groups, leaders, and online supporters in India seized the moment to launch a disinformation campaign, falsely alleging a genocide of Hindus in Bangladesh.<sup>18</sup> This fabricated narrative triggered hundreds of rallies across India, many of which featured incendiary hate speeches, including explicit calls for revenge against Muslims in India.

The spike in hate speech events in August 2024 persisted throughout the remainder of the year, fueled by both the situation in Bangladesh and the upcoming legislative elections in Haryana, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra. During the election period in October and November, Maharashtra and Jharkhand alone accounted for 93 hate speech events, representing 41.9% of the 222 incidents recorded nationwide during those two months.

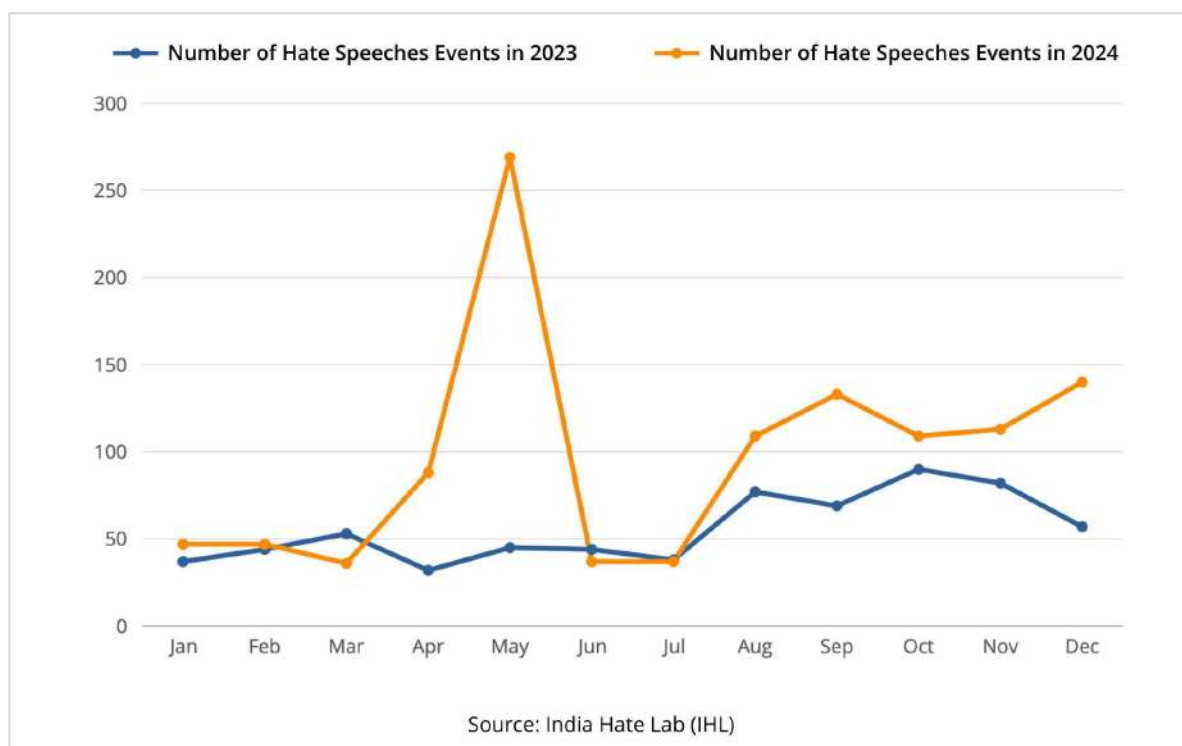
This pattern of rising hate speech during election periods, combined with the impact of Modi's speech in April 2024, underscores the deeply political nature of anti-minority rhetoric in India. This well-documented phenomenon in Indian political discourse reflects how political incentives and electoral mobilization strategies drive the use of hate speech as a tool for polarization.<sup>19</sup>

Another notable spike in December 2024 coincided with the VHP-Bajrang Dal organizing a series of Shaurya Jagran Yatras, or 'victory rallies,' to commemorate the anniversary of the Babri mosque demolition in 1992. These rallies prominently featured anti-Muslim speeches.

### **4.3.1 Comparative Analysis of Hate Speech Events in 2023 vs. 2024**

The monthly comparison of hate speech events in 2023 and 2024 shows a sharp rise in the latter year, with key political, socio-religious, and international events driving major spikes.

**FIGURE 6: MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN 2023 vs. 2024**

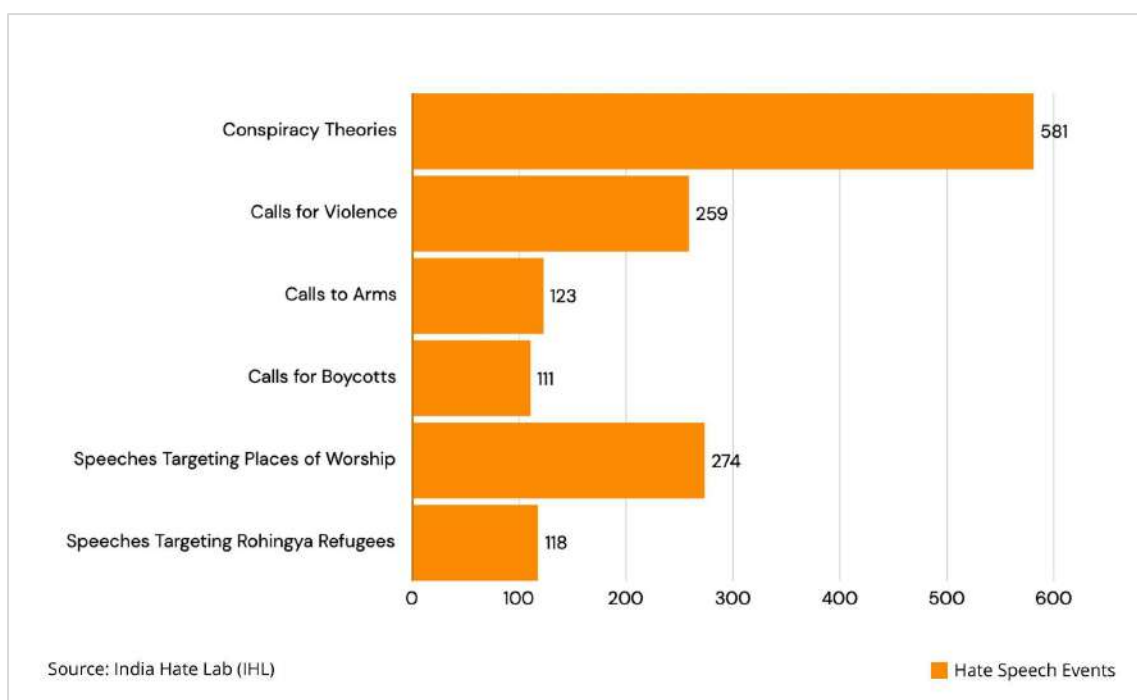


In 2023, hate speech surged in August following communal violence in Nuh, Haryana, with additional spikes in October and November, coinciding with legislative elections in multiple states and the VHP’s nationwide Shaurya Jagran rallies—patterns that also emerged in 2024.

#### 4.4 Decoding Hate Speech

To understand the nature and key themes underlying hate speech in India in 2024, we conducted a narrative and thematic analysis of all the speeches. Specifically, we examined whether speeches propagated conspiracy theories, included a call to violence (dangerous speech), called for the boycott of minority communities, advocated for targeting, seizing, or removing places of worship, contained a direct call to arms, or targeted Rohingya refugees or invoked “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey. As outlined in the methodology section, these categories are not mutually exclusive; for instance, some speeches combined both anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and direct calls for violence.

**FIGURE 7: KEY NARRATIVES AND THEMES IN 2024**



In 2024, approximately 581 hate speeches (49.9%) referenced conspiracy theories. The most prominent among them included “love jihad,” “land jihad,” “population jihad,” “thook (spit) jihad,” “population jihad,” and “vote jihad.” These conspiracy theories were among the most frequent themes in hate speeches, often promoted by prominent BJP leaders such as Modi, Home Minister Shah, Chief Minister Adityanath, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, as well as by leaders of various Hindu far-right organizations.

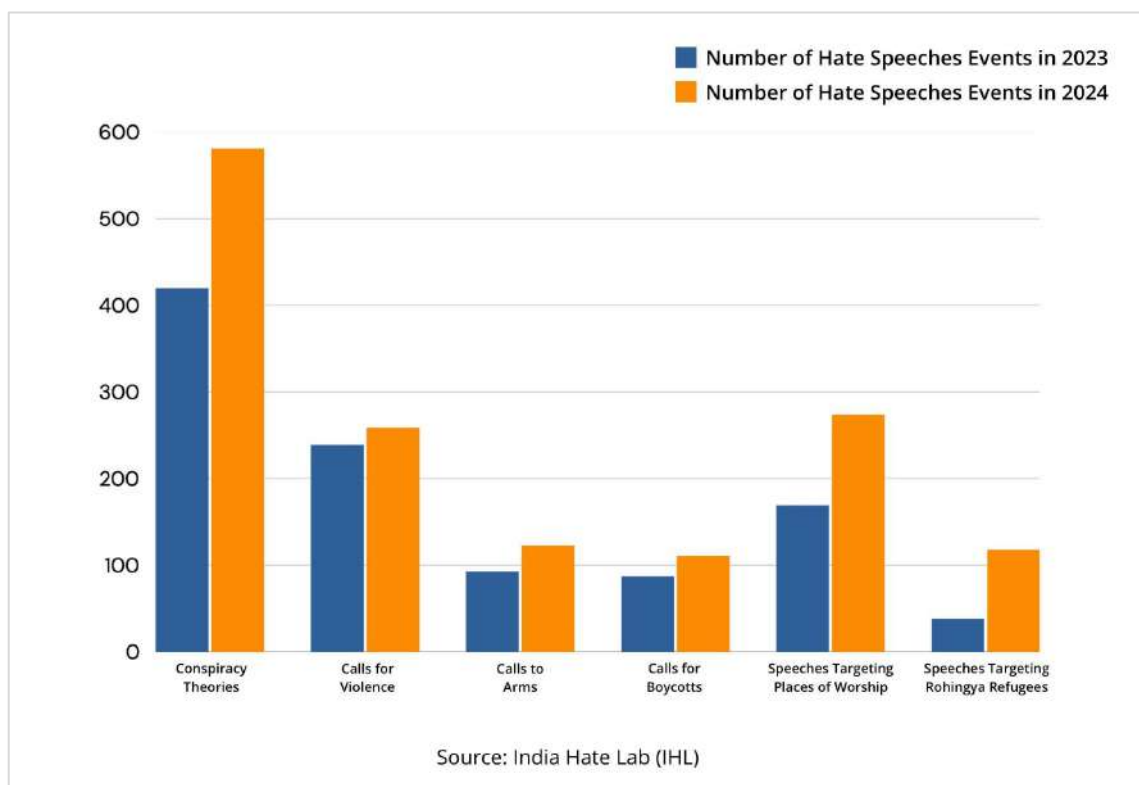
Our analysis also revealed the shocking frequency of direct calls to violence, which were categorically found in 259 speeches (22.2%) in 2024. A total of 111 hate speeches explicitly called for the social or economic boycott of minority communities, primarily Muslims; 123 speeches contained direct calls to arms, and 274 speeches included calls to seize, remove, or destroy places of worship, mostly mosques. Furthermore, 118 hate speeches specifically targeted Rohingya Muslim refugees residing in India.

#### **4.4.1 Comparative Analysis of Narratives and Themes in 2023 vs. 2024**

Hate speech in India escalated sharply in 2024, with conspiracy theories in speeches rising by 38.3% and direct calls to violence increasing by 8.4% compared to 2023. Calls for social or economic boycotts grew by 27.6%, while explicit calls to arms surged by 32.3%.



**FIGURE 8: KEY NARRATIVES AND THEMES IN 2023 vs. 2024**

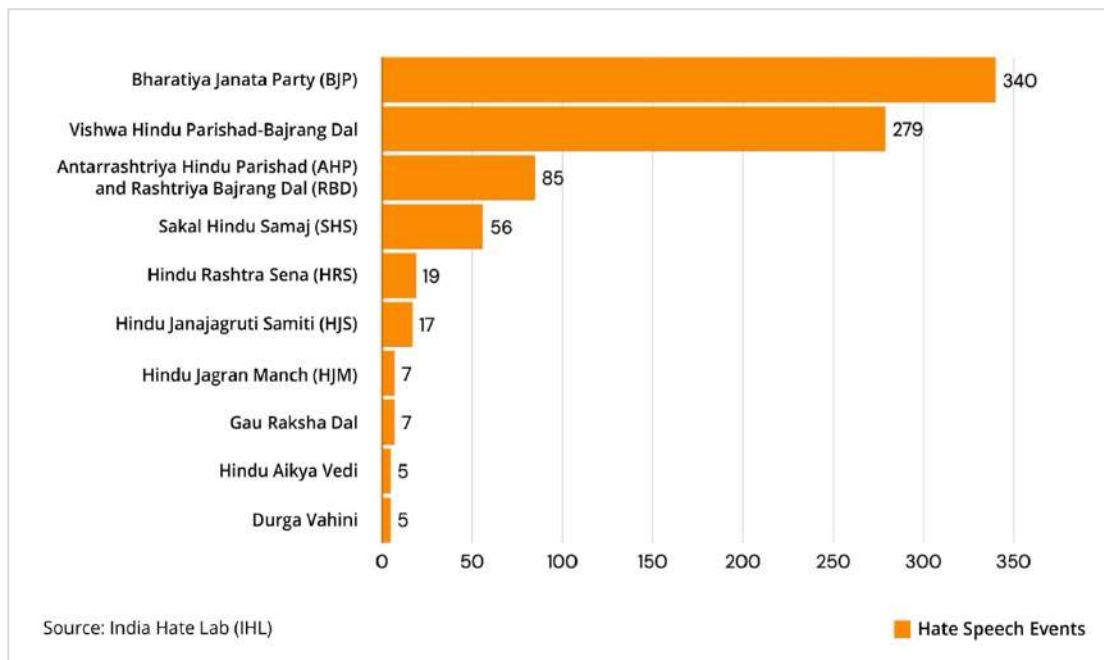


The most alarming rise was in speeches advocating for the destruction of places of worship, which increased by 62.1%, and hate speech targeting Rohingya Muslims, which soared to 210%.

## 4.5 Organizers of Hate Speech Events

In 2024, the ruling BJP was the most frequent organizer of hate speech events, directly sponsoring and facilitating 340 such gatherings, which accounted for 29.2% of all documented incidents. Describing itself as the largest political party in the world, the BJP played a central role in orchestrating these events, with 76.7% (261) of the events occurring during the general election period as part of a nationwide campaign characterized by the weaponization of anti-Muslim hate speech as a strategy.<sup>20</sup> While the BJP's involvement in organizing such gatherings is not new, its role significantly expanded in 2024, marking a 580% increase from 2023, when the party was responsible for organizing only 50 of these events in comparison.

**FIGURE 9: KEY ORGANIZERS OF HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN 2024**



The VHP and its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, were the second most active organizers of hate speech events, collectively organizing 279 gatherings—a 29.16% increase from 2023. The VHP and Bajrang Dal are militant religious organizations with a documented history of anti-minority violence. Both groups played a central role in facilitating hate speech across India in 2024.<sup>21</sup> These groups have been linked to some of the most notorious incidents of violence in the country, including attacks on Christian communities and the 2002 anti-Muslim Gujarat riots.<sup>22</sup> Given the Bajrang Dal’s role as the VHP’s youth arm, the two worked in tandem to co-host many events that featured hate and dangerous speech targeting religious minorities.

Importantly, both the VHP and Bajrang Dal are part of the Sangh Parivar (“family of organizations”), an umbrella network of groups historically led by the paramilitary group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which consists of dozens of organizations. The BJP serves as the political wing of the Sangh Parivar.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, organizations directly associated with the Sangh Parivar, including the VHP-Bajrang Dal, RSS, BJP, Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS), Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), and Durga Vahini were responsible for 685 hate speech events (58.8%). This represents a 123% increase in hate speech events organized by the Sangh Parivar as compared to 2023.

The RSS and BJP have historically used groups like the VHP, Bajrang Dal, and other Sangh Parivar organizations as proxies to promote anti-minority hatred and violence while maintaining plausible deniability. In 2024, while the BJP was directly responsible for the largest number of hate speeches, the VHP-Bajrang Dal hosted some of the most extreme events from a hate speech perspective. For example, on October 12, the VHP organized a Shastra Pujan (weapons worship event) in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, at which a speaker openly incited violence, stating that “killing a non-Hindu would lead to salvation.”<sup>24</sup> The VHP’s hostility was not limited to Muslims; in a similar vein, at a November 24 guidance committee meeting in Siliguri, West Bengal, a VHP speaker urged activists to prevent Christian pastors from entering villages and to resort to violence to stop them, if necessary.<sup>25</sup>

Another Sangh-affiliated organization, the Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS), played a key role in spreading hate in 2024. This Maharashtra-based coalition of Hindu nationalist and Sangh Parivar organizations was responsible for 56 hate speech events, primarily held in Maharashtra.<sup>26</sup> These events featured prominent Hindu nationalist speakers, including far-right influencers Kajal Hindustani and Harsha Thakur, Sudarshan News owner Suresh Chavhanke, and BJP legislators Nitish Rane and T. Raja Singh. The SHS was particularly notorious for hosting high-profile dangerous speech events. For example, at a March 10 rally, Rane called for the boycott of Muslim street vendors, baselessly accusing them of being “Rohingya refugees and migrants from Bangladesh.”<sup>27</sup> Rane went further, promising impunity to anyone who committed violence against the vendors.

The most prominent non-Sangh Parivar organizer of hate speech events in 2024 was the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP)-Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD), led by Pravin Togadia, the former head of the VHP. The AHP-RBD, modeled after the VHP-Bajrang Dal, organized 85 hate speech events in 2024.<sup>28</sup> While Togadia has had personal disagreements with Modi and the broader Sangh Parivar, his organization mirrors the ideology of his former allies and remains deeply involved in spreading anti-minority hate across the country.

Another notable organizer was the Hindu Rashtra Sena (HRS), which, while smaller, played a significant role in coordinating 19 hate speech events. Led by Dhananjay Desai, a far-right leader accused in the 2014 murder of a Muslim tech professional in Pune, Maharashtra, the HRS has a long record of anti-Muslim violence.<sup>29</sup> While the group has been primarily based in Maharashtra, it is currently expanding its presence in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

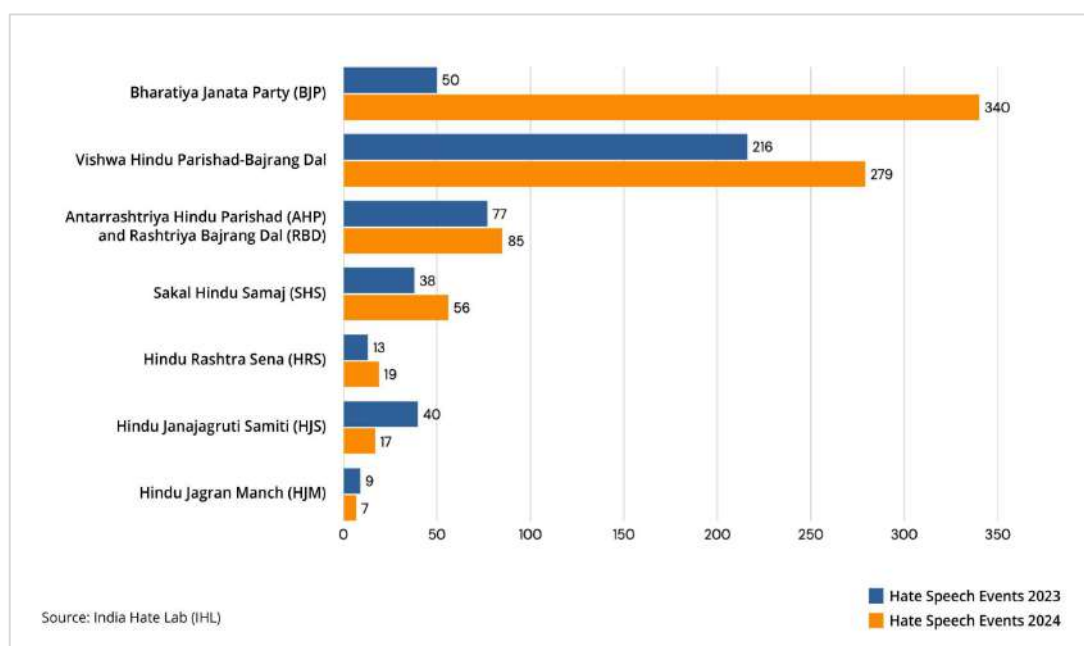
Desai delivered keynote speeches at most of the HRS-organized events, frequently using anti-Muslim slurs and promoting extremist conspiracy theories.<sup>30</sup> On December 6, the HRS expanded its operations by launching a new chapter in Madhya Pradesh. During the event, its Karnataka-based leader, known only by his first name, Sandeep, glorified the demolition of mosques and incited violence against minorities.<sup>31</sup>

The Kerala-based far-right group Hindu Aikya Vedi (HAV) also played a role in organizing five events at which anti-Muslim hate speeches were delivered. Beyond these major organizers, several other far-right and religious groups actively hosted hate speech events in 2024. These included the Arya Samaj, Devbhoomi Raksha Abhiyan, Devbhoomi Sangharsh Samiti, Durga Vahini, Ekta Aj Lakshya, Gau Raksha Dal, Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM), Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), Matra Shakti Sammelan, Rashtriya Hindu Sher Sena, Rudra Sena Uttarakhand, Sanatan Hindu Ekta Padyatra, Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan, Shiv Shakti Akhada, and Shri Ram Sena. Their involvement underscores the diverse and decentralized nature of the Hindu far-right ecosystem and apparatus of hate speech mobilization, with various organizations operating across states to propagate anti-minority sentiments.

#### 4.5.1 Comparative Analysis of Key Organizers in 2023 vs. 2024

In 2024, hate speech events saw a dramatic shift in key organizers, with some groups expanding their activities while other groups reduced theirs.

**FIGURE 10: KEY ORGANIZERS OF HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN 2023 vs. 2024**



The BJP's direct involvement surged by 580%, marking a significant escalation in its role as a key organizer of hate speech events. Similarly, the VHP-Bajrang Dal increased their events by 29.2%, reinforcing their prominence in mobilizing anti-minority rhetoric. The AHP-RBD saw a more modest rise of 10.4%, while the Sakal Hindu Samaj and Hindu Rashtra Sena expanded their activities by 47.4% and 46.2%, respectively.

## 4.6 Key Figures Driving Hate Speech in 2024

Our analysis of the individuals most actively involved in delivering hate speeches reveals a vast network of senior BJP leaders, far-right organization heads, social media influencers, and religious leaders.

**FIGURE 11: POLITICAL FIGURES RANKED BY HIGHEST NUMBER OF HATE SPEECHES DELIVERED IN 2024**

	Name	Position/Affiliation	Hate Speech
1	Yogi Adityanath	Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh	86
2	Narendra Modi	Prime Minister	67
3	Amit Shah	Home Minister	58
4	Himanta Biswa Sarma	Chief Minister of Assam	36
5	T Raja Singh	BJP Legislator, Telangana	32
6	Nitesh Rane	Minister of Fisheries and Ports, Maharashtra	29
7	Pushkar Singh Dhami	Chief Minister of Uttarakhand	17
8	Ashwini Upadhyay	BJP Leader, Delhi	14
9	Giriraj Singh	Minister of Textiles	10
10	Navneet Rana	BJP Leader, Maharashtra	8

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)

Overall, 462 hate speeches (39.7%) in our dataset were delivered by politicians, highlighting the direct role of political figures in spreading anti-minority rhetoric. BJP leaders delivered 452 hate speeches, six were delivered by independent candidates, and four were delivered by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and Shiv Sena leaders. The involvement of BJP leaders in hate speech skyrocketed by 352%, from 100 instances in 2023 to 452 in 2024.

Among the top ten individuals responsible for delivering the most hate speeches in 2024, a mix of senior BJP leaders, the owner of a far-right news outlet, a social media influencer, and the heads of two far-right organizations stand out.

**FIGURE 12: KEY POLITICAL & FAR-RIGHT FIGURES RANKED BY HIGHEST NUMBER OF HATE SPEECHES DELIVERED IN 2024**

	Name	Position/Affiliation	Hate Speech
1	Yogi Adityanath	Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh	86
2	Narendra Modi	Prime Minister	67
3	Amit Shah	Home Minister	58
4	Himanta Biswa Sarma	Chief Minister of Assam	36
5	Suresh Chavhanke	Sudharshan News Owner	36
6	T Raja Singh	BJP Legislator, Telangana	32
7	Pravin Togadia	Chief of Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad	31
8	Nitesh Rane	Minister of Fisheries and Ports, Maharashtra	29
9	Kajal Hindustani	Far-right Influencer	23
10	Dhananjay Desai	Chief of Hindu Rashtra Sena	18

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)

As Figure 12 illustrates, six of the ten most frequent purveyors of hate speech were politicians, including Adityanath, Modi, Home Minister Shah, Chief Minister Sarma, and BJP leaders T. Raja Singh and Nitish Rane.

Unlike in 2023, when state-level politicians like Singh and Rane dominated the list, hate speech in 2024 was increasingly delivered by some of the most powerful national leaders, underscoring a dangerous escalation in the normalization of hate speech at the highest levels of political leadership.

Adityanath was solely responsible for delivering 86 hate speeches in 2024, accounting for 7.4% of all recorded incidents. As the leader of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state with over 241 million residents, including 40 million Muslims, Adityanath averaged one hate speech every four days, making him one of the most prolific political figures engaged in spreading anti-minority hatred.

Every instance of hate speech delivered by Adityanath in 2024 occurred during the April-June 2024 general election campaign or during the November legislative

election campaigns in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. He was one of the BJP's star campaigners during the elections.

One of Adityanath's most frequently repeated claims during the 2024 election campaign was the false and inflammatory assertion—originally introduced by Modi—that the opposition Congress party would seize Hindu wealth and redistribute it to "Muslim infiltrators." For example, in a May 21 speech in Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath declared, "After conducting an X-ray of your wealth, they will distribute it to infiltrators—Bangladeshi infiltrators, Pakistani infiltrators, or any other Muslim infiltrators."<sup>32</sup>

Adityanath also frequently promoted anti-Muslim conspiracy theories throughout his campaign speeches. In a November 12 election rally in Maharashtra, he accused the opposition of trying to turn the state into a hub for "love jihad," "land jihad," and "PAN card jihad," a conspiracy theory that accuses Muslims of misusing PAN cards—a unique identification number issued by the Indian Income Tax Department—for illegal or anti-national activities.<sup>33</sup> By routinely indulging in such hate speech, Adityanath, like other BJP politicians, persistently vilified Indian Muslims, portraying them as a collective threat to Hindu women, Hindu property, and Hindu wealth.

Modi ranked second on the list. Between April 21 and May 30, he delivered 63 hate speeches. While Modi's April 21 speech in Banswara, Rajasthan, gained notoriety for its inflammatory rhetoric, he continued to replicate similar hate speeches across India during the election campaign.

In multiple speeches, Modi falsely alleged that the opposition would seize Hindu wealth and redistribute it to their "vote jihad vote bank," often explicitly naming Muslims as the intended beneficiaries. In a May 2 speech in the Anand town of Gujarat, Modi used the bogey of "jihad" to spread conspiracy theories about Muslims.

"I had heard of land jihad and love jihad, but now I am concerned about Vote Jihad," Modi said.<sup>34</sup>

By using a term like "vote jihad," Modi essentially framed the very act of Muslims exercising their democratic rights as an affront to Hindus. Later in the year, during the Jharkhand assembly election campaign, Modi specifically targeted "Bangladeshis," a term frequently used by Hindu far-right leaders, groups, and BJP politicians as a dog whistle to refer to Indian Muslims, particularly Muslims hailing from West Bengal or Assam state, to falsely portray them as foreigners "illegally" residing India.

Modi suggested that the ruling parties in the state had settled “Bangladeshi ghuspaithiye” (infiltrators) in the state and said: “When stones are pelted on festivals, Durga idols are stopped, when daughters are deceived in the name of marriage, you know that water has started passing above the head; They are stealing your food, your daughters and your land from you.”<sup>35</sup>

Modi was closely followed by Home Minister Amit Shah, who was responsible for 58 hate speeches at election rallies (5%). As Home Minister, Shah controls the central government’s security apparatus and is responsible for enforcing the law—including laws against hate speech and incitement to violence—in centrally administered territories. Instead of enforcing laws against communal incitement, Shah chose to partake in hate speech himself. Like Adityanath and Modi, almost all of Shah’s hate speech events were concentrated around the 2024 general and state legislative assembly election campaigns in the states of Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Shah repeated many of the themes used by Adityanath and Modi, singling out Muslim minorities.

Chief Minister Sarma ranked fourth among the top hate actors, responsible for 36 hate speech events. Sarma has largely focused his rhetoric on the false conspiracy theory of “land jihad,” claiming that Muslims are systematically taking Hindu land by harassing Hindus, illegally occupying it, and forcing them to move out. In a speech at the state executive meeting of the BJP in Assam on August 4, Sarma boasted about his efforts to introduce a law restricting land sales to Muslims. “One by one, people from a ‘particular community’ snatched land from the indigenous people and made us a minority in our own land. The state government has decided that we will bring in a law restricting the sale of land to people from that ‘particular community’ in the erstwhile Goalpara district,” he said.<sup>36</sup> During an election speech in the state of Haryana on October 2, Sarma went one step further, implying that the “Babars” (a derogatory term for Muslims based on the name of a Mughal emperor) should be removed from India.<sup>37</sup> By using such rhetoric, Sarma was essentially engaging in dog whistling to explicitly threaten violence against Indian Muslims.

Other BJP leaders, such as T. Raja Singh (32 hate speeches), Nitish Rane (29), Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami (17), BJP leader and Supreme Court lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay (14), BJP leader and Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh (10), BJP leader and former Member of Parliament from Maharashtra Navneet Rana (8), BJP Member of Parliament Sakshi Maharaj (5), and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav (5), have also been prominent figures in delivering hate speeches.

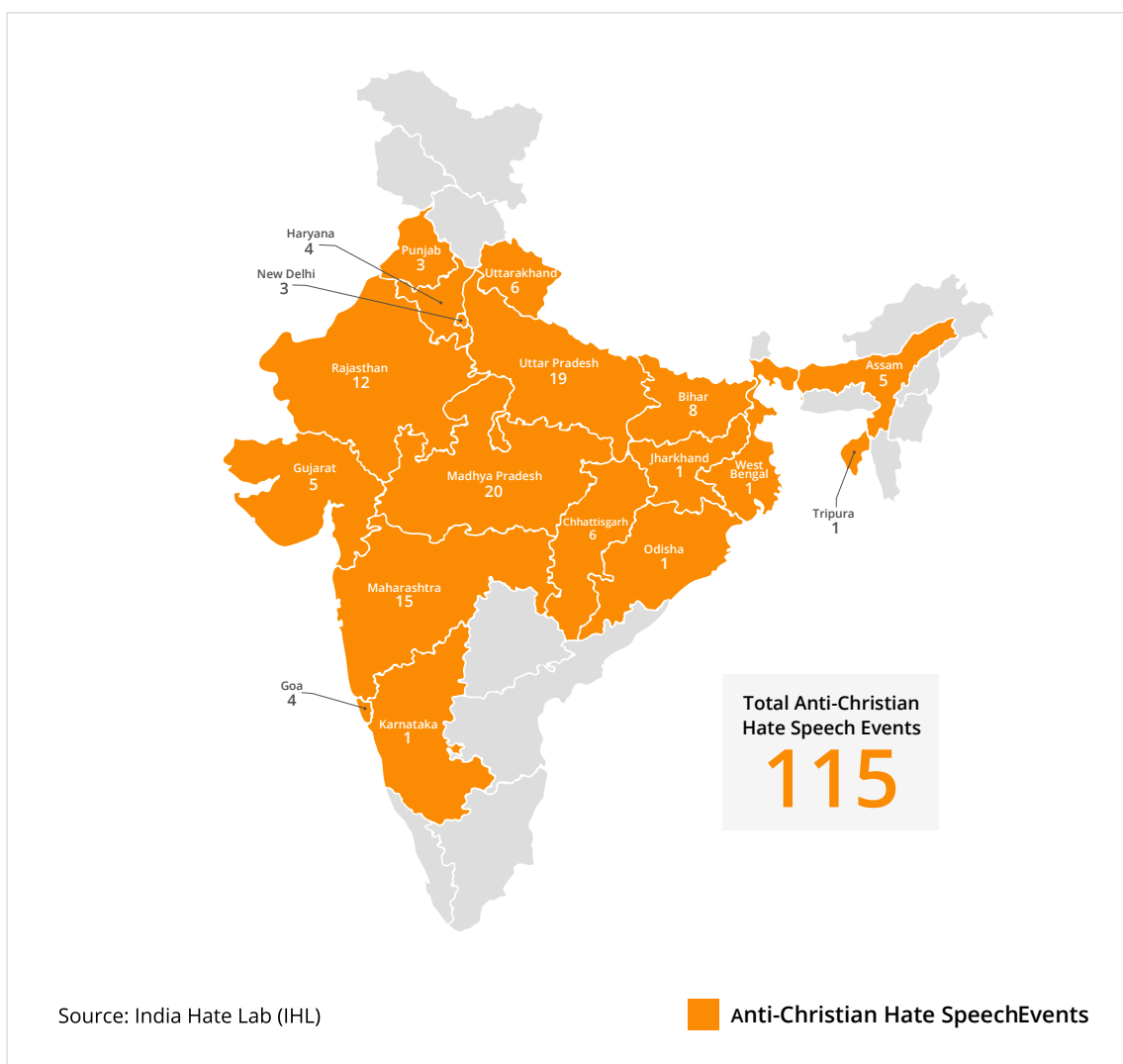


Among non-politicians, the most active figures engaging in hate speech included Sudharshan News owner and Chairman Suresh Chavhanke (36), the AHP-RBD chief Pravin Togadia (31), Hindu far-right social media influencer Kajal Hindustani from Gujarat (23), the Chief of Hindu Rashtra Sena in Maharashtra Dhananjay Desai (18), the priest of Ayodhya's Hanuman Garhi Temple Mahant Raju Das (14), Bajrang Dal leader Vikas Verma from Dehradun (14), Bajrang Dal Chief Neeraj Doneria (13), and religious preacher Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati (12). Other notable figures include Senior AHP and RBD leader Manoj Kumar (11), Hindu far-right social media influencer Harsha Thakur from Maharashtra (10), religious preacher Sadhvi Saraswati (8), Hindu far-right influencer Gautam Khattar (7), and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) General Secretary Surendra Jain (5).

## 5. Anti-Christian Hate Speech

On January 1, 2024, IHL initiated systematic data collection of in-person events and gatherings that promoted hatred against the Christian community. Christians make up less than 2.5% of India's population, according to the 2011 Census.<sup>38</sup> Despite their small numbers, Christians have historically faced profound systemic discrimination, hostility, and periodic violence across various parts of the country.

**FIGURE 13: STATE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTI-CHRISTIAN HATE SPEECH**



By the end of 2024, IHL recorded 115 (9.9%) hate speeches that targeted Christians, either solely (18) or in conjunction with targeting of Muslims (97) as well. Madhya Pradesh (20), Uttar Pradesh (19), Maharashtra (15), and Rajasthan (12) accounted for the majority of these incidents.

Of the 115 hate speech events, 106 were held in BJP-ruled states, three in Delhi, and six in states governed by parties such as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), and Indian National Congress (INC).

December, coinciding with Christmas celebrations, recorded a peak in anti-Christian hate speech, with 17 incidents—the highest monthly total of the year. This surge followed a pattern of escalating anti-Christian hate speech in the latter half of the year, with over 10 such incidents reported each month from August onward.

At the core of Hindu nationalist ideology is the characterization of Christians and Muslims as “foreigners” and “invaders” who lack a legitimate claim to belonging in India. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a prominent Hindu nationalist ideologue, argued that these communities exhibit “divided loyalty” because their respective holy places of worship, such as the Vatican and Mecca, are located outside the Indian subcontinent.<sup>39</sup> This narrative is further reinforced by the historical presence of Christian missionary activity in India dating back to the 16th century. Hindu nationalists view missionary efforts as a deliberate campaign of “forced conversion,” which they believe undermines Hinduism and erodes India’s cultural and religious identity.<sup>40</sup>

This perspective promotes suspicion toward all public expressions of Christianity, including church activities, festivals, and charity events. These are often intentionally misconstrued as covert attempts at religious conversion, leading to institutional bias against Indian Christians as well as social ostracization and persecution.

According to a report by the United Christian Forum, which tracks anti-Christian violence in India, the number of attacks on Christians rose from 734 in 2023 to 834 in 2024.<sup>41</sup> This alarming increase in violence must be understood in the context of the growing normalization of hateful rhetoric targeting Christians, driven mostly by Hindu nationalist groups like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad-Bajrang Dal, Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP) and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD), Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), and the Maharashtra-based coalition of Hindu far-right groups called Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS). Our data reveals that 23 incidents of hate speech targeting the Christian community included calls to violence, while at least 17 speeches explicitly gave a call to arms.

At a VHP event in Siliguri, West Bengal, on November 24, a speaker urged VHP workers to “prevent pastors from entering villages, and, if required, resort to violence against them.”<sup>42</sup>

VHP leaders have consistently propagated baseless conspiracy theories, accusing churches of engaging in drug trafficking and supplying intoxicants to youth. For instance, on October 27, during an event in Haflong, Assam, VHP joint general secretary Surendra Jain alleged that local churches were involved in the drug trade and said:<sup>43</sup>

**“On one hand, the Church is destroying our culture, insulting the traditions and beliefs here, and also destroying the life of the people here. Conversion is a challenge. We do answer it, but we will also tell the Church that if you disturb the law and order here, hurt the beliefs here, or engage in drug trade, this will not be accepted, and society will take it as a challenge.”**

At another VHP event on November 10 in Deeg, Rajasthan, Jain reiterated these accusations, falsely claiming that churches in northeastern India were “supplying intoxicants to the youth.”<sup>44</sup>

Schools run by Christian communities have also been frequent targets of Hindu nationalist hate campaigns. On September 22, the AHP-RBD organized an event in Tamulpur, Assam, at which RBD leader Dinesh Kalita alleged Indian Christians of conspiring “to make not just Assam but the entire North-East into a New England through education. They have been converting Hindus in the name of promoting education,” he said.<sup>45</sup>

At an event in Aurariya, Uttar Pradesh, on December 18, Madhuram Sharan Shiva, leader of the armed Hindu monk group Shiv Shakti Akhada, explicitly called for Hindus to take up arms against Catholic schools.<sup>46</sup> Accusing Catholic schools of covert missionary activity, he claimed: “Christmas arrives only in schools and temples, but not in madrasas or mosques.” This perception of Catholic schools as centers of missionary activity is a recurring theme in Hindu nationalist discourse and often leads to threats of violence.

For instance, in BJP-ruled Assam on March 4, the radical Hindu nationalist group Sanmilita Sanatan Samaj posted notices across Christian-run educational institutions demanding the removal of Christian symbols, chapels, and idols. The notices also instructed Christian clergy to abandon their traditional attire. These posters ended with a menacing warning: "This is the final warning to stop using the school as a religious institution. Remove Jesus Christ, Mary, cross, church, etc., from the school premises and stop such anti-Bharat [anti-India] and unconstitutional activities, or else."<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, on April 18 in Telangana's Mancherial district, the principal of a Christian school was attacked by a religious mob following social media accusations that the school was discriminating against Hindu students.<sup>48</sup> The allegations, which included claims that Hindu students were denied the right to wear religious dress, led to a mob descending on the school. They vandalized property, broke windows, and physically attacked the school principal Father Jaimon Joseph, forcibly applying a tilak (Hindu marking) to his forehead.

These incidents mirror a nationwide trend of threats and violence against Christian minorities. At a VHP-Bajrang Dal event in Banswara, Rajasthan, on December 11, a Hindu monk boastfully claimed "to have shut down 10-15 churches, filed cases against priests, and jailed 80 of them during a six-phase campaign."<sup>49</sup> He warned followers of a supposed conversion campaign targeting Adivasis [tribals] and exhorted them to prevent members of the Christian community from being buried in their villages.

In two separate incidents, one in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, and another in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, there were calls for the "reconversion" of Christians to Hinduism. In Jhabua on February 9, VHP leader Azad Prem Singh claimed that India belonged to Hindus, labeling Muslims and Christians as outsiders. He further stated that if these communities did not accept majoritarian Hindu rule, they should be prepared for violence.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in Meerut on March 5, religious preacher Swami Sachchidanand emphasized that "ghar waapsi" (religious conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism) was necessary to protect Hindus. He warned that without such measures, India would become "like Afghanistan," claiming, "Within 25 years, your houses will be captured, you will lose control of your businesses, and the future of Hindu girls and daughters will be one of darkness."<sup>51</sup>

The overall trends in anti-Christian hate speech recorded throughout 2024 highlight a systematic and deliberate effort by Hindu far-right groups to marginalize the Christian community in India. These groups have employed a calculated strategy to spread disinformation, incite violence, and promote hostility toward Christians, framing them as "foreigners" and "threats" to India's cultural and religious identity. This targeted hate has further normalized an environment where fear, harassment, and persecution have become routine experiences for the Christian community in the country.

## 6. Hate Speech During Elections

The 2024 general elections in India witnessed the highest instances of hate speech documented by IHL. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) took effect on March 16, and voting concluded in various phases on June 1, with results announced on June 4. During this period, hate speech incidents surged dramatically.

A majority of these speeches explicitly targeted Muslims, disseminating conspiracy theories aimed at demonizing and dehumanizing the community. The strategic deployment of anti-Muslim sentiment served as a core electoral tool for the ruling BJP. However, hate speech was not exclusive to the BJP—six instances were recorded from independent candidates or individuals contesting elections without a party affiliation.

In general, these speeches attacked opposition parties, portraying the INDIA bloc as sympathetic to Muslim minorities and, therefore, opposed to Hindu interests. In contrast, the BJP framed itself as the defender of Hindu interests, positioning itself as the sole protector of the majority community. The INDIA bloc included parties such as the Indian National Congress, Samajwadi Party (SP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), and other national and regional parties.

IHL also recorded a spike in hate speeches during two critically important state assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, alongside the general elections. Between March 16 and June 1, 2024, IHL recorded and analyzed 373 hate speeches. Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest number (96), followed by Maharashtra (47), Bihar (30), New Delhi (28), West Bengal (27) and Jharkhand (22).

Out of 373 hate speeches, 354 were explicitly anti-Muslim, 15 targeted both Christians and Muslims, while four were explicitly anti-Christian. Additionally, 38 speeches (nearly 10%) specifically targeted Rohingya refugees and invoked the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey. Furthermore, 75 speeches called for seizing or removing the minority places of worship.

### 6.1 Star Campaigners of Hate During General Elections

The hate speech data collected by IHL covers the period from March 16, 2024, when the Election Commission of India’s (ECI) Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into

effect, to June 1, 2024, the final phase of the general election. The ECI's code explicitly states that "appealing to communal feelings for securing votes" is prohibited during elections.<sup>52</sup> Despite this, there were repeated violations of the code, particularly by BJP leaders, while the ECI largely failed to take substantive action, limiting its responses to notices and requests for written explanations.

Most of the BJP's star campaigners, officially designated by the party to campaign during the elections, played a central role in delivering hate speeches. BJP leaders were responsible for 267 such speeches, with key contributors including Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath (73 speeches), Prime Minister Modi (64 speeches), Home Minister Shah (43 speeches), Chief Minister Sarma (23), Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami (11), Former Member of Parliament Navneet Rana (7), BJP Legislator T. Raja Singh (6), BJP leader and Union Minister of Textiles, Giriraj Singh (5) and BJP Member of Parliament Sakshi Maharaj (5). Additionally, independent candidates delivered four hate speeches.

One of the most egregious instances of hate speech came from Modi. At an election rally in Banswara, Rajasthan, on April 21, Modi stated:

"When they (the opposition) were in power, they said that Muslims had the first right to the properties of the state. This means that they would collect these properties and give them to the ones who have more kids (insinuating Muslims). They will give it to the ghuspaithiye (infiltrators). Do you want to give away your hard-earned money to the intruders? These urban naxals will not even spare the mothers and sisters or their mangal sutra. They will go that far."<sup>53</sup>

In Anand, Gujarat, on May 2, Modi promoted conspiracy theories like "love jihad" and "land jihad," stating:

"I had heard of land jihad and love jihad, but now I am concerned about vote jihad."<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, in Beed, Maharashtra, on May 7, he claimed: "The opposition is saying all the reservations should go to Muslims. This is dangerous news for Dalits and OBCs [Other Backward Castes] of our country."<sup>55</sup>

In Jharkhand, where state elections followed the general elections, Modi escalated anti-Muslim rhetoric at a rally on May 14: "It has become difficult to follow our faith in Jharkhand today. The idols of our gods are being destroyed. Infiltrators with a jihadi



mindset are ganging up and attacking, but the Jharkhand government is looking away and supporting them from afar. These infiltrators have threatened the security of our sisters and daughters.”<sup>56</sup>

At a rally in Sonipat, Haryana, on May 17, Modi continued: “On one side, we have vikas [development], and on the other, vote jihad. Who will win—vikas or vote jihad? To please the people who do vote jihad, they kept delaying the Ram Mandir verdict.”<sup>57</sup>

The BJP also amplified hate speech through social media campaigns. One particularly inflammatory video, released by the BJP’s Karnataka state unit on May 5, depicted Indian National Congress (INC) leader Rahul Gandhi “feeding funds” to a large bird wearing a skullcap, representing Muslims, as it pushed small fledglings labeled Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Caste out of the nest.<sup>58</sup> This video reflected a longstanding BJP trope accusing the opposition of “appeasement politics” and of handing out resources to Muslims at the cost of caste minorities and other socioeconomically marginalized groups. The ECI later asked the social media platform X to remove the video for violating the MCC.

## 6.2 Mobilizing Hate and Conspiracy Theories

A critical aspect of the BJP’s divisive election campaign narrative in 2024 was the use of conspiracy theories to undermine newly formed social alliances. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party and the Indian National Congress advanced the concept of the Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak (PDA) alliance, which united Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and religious minorities. This initiative, part of the broader INDIA bloc, aimed to expose and counter the BJP’s anti-poor and anti-minority policies, as well as the overarching ideology of Hindu nationalism. By promoting such alliances, the INDIA bloc sought to carve out electoral space to challenge the BJP’s communal politics.

In response, BJP leaders started targeting Muslims in a manner that attempted to manufacture a sense of social competition over resources and job reservation between Muslims and other marginalized caste groups while also whipping up conspiratorial narratives.

Speaking at an election rally in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, on May 26, Modi outlined the BJP’s strategy of social division and anti-minority sentiments. “First, the people of INDI [INDIA] alliance will change the Constitution and write in it afresh that reservation

should be given on the basis of religion in India. Second, these INDI people will end the reservation given to SC, ST, and OBC. Third, they will give the entire reservation to Muslims on the basis of religion. Today, the SP, Congress, and the INDI people want to make the majority community in India second-class citizens.”<sup>59</sup>

Adityanath amplified this narrative during a rally on May 27 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. He claimed that the INDIA block “will give OBC reservations to Muslim....They will x-ray your assets and distribute them among Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghanis, and Rohingya infiltrators.....They will implement Muslim personal law.....Women will have to wear a Burqa. Women won't be able to go to school or markets. They want to bring back triple talaq. They want to implement sharia law.”<sup>60</sup>

Addressing an election rally in Sangam Vihar, New Delhi, on May 20, Home Minister Shah further attacked the opposition over alleged Muslim favoritism and claimed: “Congress will bring back Triple Talaq. Congress doesn't have any supporters in India; all of them are from Pakistan. The opposition didn't come to the Ram Mandir inauguration because they are scared of their vote bank. Do you know who their vote bank is? It's not you; it's the Rohingya infiltrator.”<sup>61</sup> Through these remarks, Shah equated Indian Muslims with Pakistanis and Rohingya refugees, reinforcing divisive and exclusionary narratives that framed Muslims as outsiders and threats to national identity.

BJP leader and Member of Parliament Tejasvi Surya, who has a history of engaging in anti-Muslim speech, furthered these claims in two different speeches. In Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, on May 11, he said:<sup>62</sup>

“If Congress comes to power, they would have forcibly asked all the women to wear burka [garment worn by Muslim women].... Congress party will allow Muslims to kill cows and implement sharia law in the country.”

On May 8 in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, he promoted fear of Muslims voting in their localities and added, “Congress will overturn Ayodhya judgment and build Babri Masjid again. Voting for Congress is like voting for Jinnah or Owaisi.”<sup>63</sup>

These speeches reflected the BJP's calculated strategy to incite anti-Muslim fear and hostility on a national scale. It is essential to emphasize that all religious communities in India, including Muslims, are constitutionally guaranteed the freedom to practice their personal laws, and none of these laws advocate for or support the implementation of Sharia law in India.

The rhetoric surrounding "cow protection" has long served as a weapon for Hindu nationalists to vilify Muslims, branding them as "beef-eaters" and portrayers of disrespect toward Hindu cultural values, which for many Hindus include a reverence of the cow. This narrative has fueled the rise of vigilante groups that systematically target Muslims, often subjecting them to violence and, in some cases, brutal lynchings, under the false pretext of beef consumption or the transportation of cattle for slaughter.<sup>64</sup>

These speeches must be understood as part of the BJP's broader strategy of Hindu nationalist political mobilization. The party consistently frames Muslims as both undeserving of state resources and as beneficiaries of disproportionate state largesse through social welfare programs. This framing allows the BJP to portray opposition parties as engaging in Muslim appeasement, falsely alleging that they grant special privileges to the community in an effort to secure their votes. In contrast, the BJP positions itself as the sole party committed to the welfare of marginalized groups, including Dalits, Adivasis, and Other Backward Classes, who depend on state support through reservations and welfare schemes.

Another way the BJP targeted Muslims during the election campaign was by amplifying conspiracy narratives such as "love jihad," "land jihad," "vote jihad," and "political jihad."<sup>65</sup> These narratives were designed to stoke fear, deepen communal divides, and legitimize anti-Muslim sentiments. "Love jihad," which refers to the conspiratorial belief that Muslim men systematically seduce Hindu women to convert them to Islam and alter the demographic makeup of India, was mobilized in order to raise fears about women's safety and legitimize vigilante action targeting Muslim men.<sup>66</sup> "Land jihad," on the other hand, refers to claims by Hindu nationalists that Muslims encroach on public land to construct places of worship and other properties, allegedly to further their "takeover" of Hindu spaces. Similarly, the BJP manufactured fears around "vote jihad" to promote the idea that Muslims would vote as a unified bloc for the INDIA bloc to defeat the BJP, supposedly in opposition to the BJP's defense of Hindu causes and culture.

These narratives reveal how Hindu nationalists use “jihad” as a master trope to portray Muslims in India as violent, anti-Hindu, and anti-national, leveraging a range of conspiracy theories to deepen communal divides.

Speaking at a rally in Madhya Pradesh on May 7, Modi said, “Terrorists in Pakistan are threatening jihad against India. And here, those in Congress have also announced to do vote jihad against Modi...that means people of a particular religion are being asked to vote unitedly against Modi. Imagine what level the Congress has stooped to.”<sup>67</sup>

On May 15, Sarma spoke at a rally in Giridih, Jharkhand, where he framed Muslim “infiltration” as an existential threat and claimed: “Infiltrators are entering Jharkhand and are forcefully marrying Adivasi women [referencing the ‘original inhabitants’ of India]. These Muslim infiltrators are again becoming citizens and are grabbing lands in Jharkhand.... They came in thousands, then in lakhs, and now they are in crores. Today, we (Hindus) have to fight daily for our existence.”<sup>68</sup>

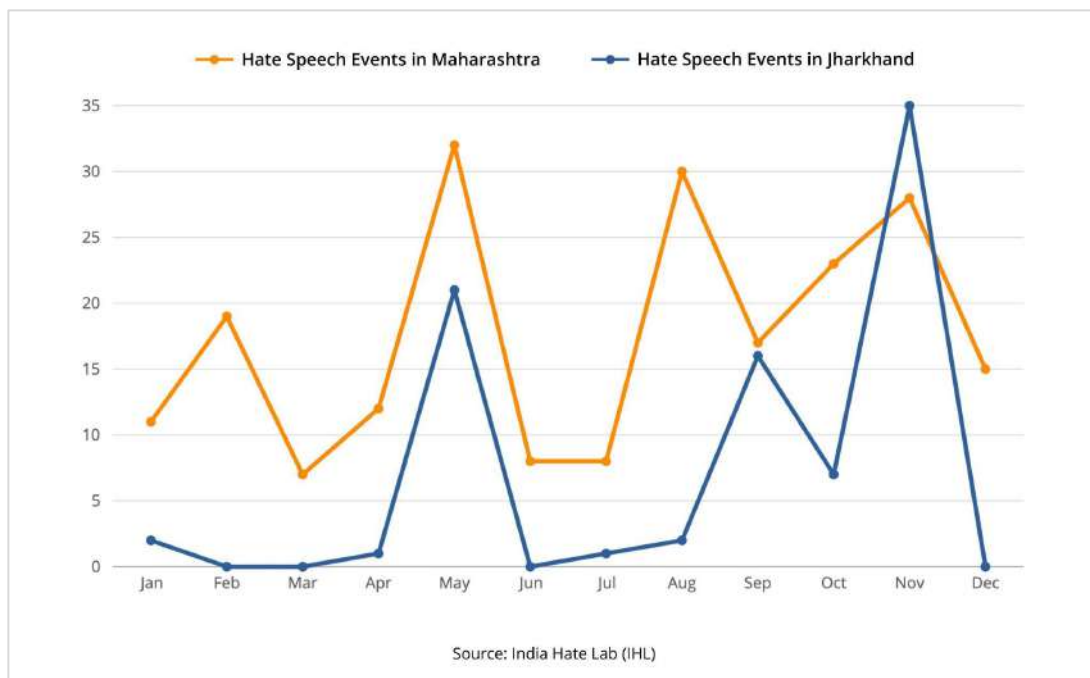
Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh echoed these hateful views when he addressed a rally in Begusarai, Bihar, on May 11, where he said, “Muslims broke a temple. I can't stay out of that. I will protect women from love jihad; this doesn't make me communal. They [opposition parties] are stealing your reservation and giving it to Muslims. They want to do Islamization of India and make it Pakistan.”<sup>69</sup>

### 6.3 Maharashtra and Jharkhand State Elections

The 2024 state elections saw a direct correlation with the frequency of hate speeches, with 347 instances recorded in states holding legislative elections. This pattern suggests a deliberate strategy to exploit hateful rhetoric and anti-minority sentiments as a tool for electoral mobilization and political gain.

IHL recorded 210 hate speeches in Maharashtra throughout the year, with peak activity observed in May (32 speeches) and August (30 speeches) and notable spikes in October (23 speeches) and November (28 speeches), coinciding with legislative elections.

**FIGURE 14: MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF HATE SPEECH EVENTS IN MAHARASHTRA AND JHARKHAND**



Among political figures, Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane delivered the highest number of speeches (29), followed by T Raja Singh (12), Adityanath (12), and Home Minister Shah (9). The Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS) organized the largest number of events, accounting for 54 hate speech events, followed by the BJP (37), VHP-Bajrang Dal (25) and Hindu Rashtra Sena (15).

In Jharkhand, IHL recorded 85 hate speech events over the year, with the highest number (35 speeches) taking place in November, coinciding with the assembly elections held between November 13 and 20. Hate speech events saw significant increases during key months leading up to and during the election phase: May (21 speeches), September (16 speeches), and November (35 speeches). This trend suggests a deliberate strategy of ramping up hatred as key election dates approached.

All 85 speeches were explicitly anti-Muslim, reflecting a communal strategy aimed at polarizing the electorate through anti-Muslim sentiments. Members of the BJP were responsible for 72 of the 85 speeches. Key contributors included Home Minister Shah (13 speeches), Chief Minister Sarma (12 speeches), and Modi (11 speeches).

## 6.4 “Infiltration” as an Election Issue

The BJP’s electoral strategy centered around baseless claims of large-scale “infiltration” by Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi migrants and their alleged takeover of social services with the support of opposition parties. It is important to note that Hindu nationalist groups and leaders often use “Rohingya infiltrator” and “Bangladeshi infiltrator” as dog whistles against Muslim citizens, particularly Muslims hailing from West Bengal or Assam state, falsely portraying them as “infiltrators” or undocumented foreigners “illegally” residing in India.

During the Jharkhand state elections, Adityanath stoked fears of infiltration. At a rally in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, on November 5, he claimed: “People of Hazaribagh told me that JMM [Jharkhand Mukti Morcha] and INDI [INDIA] alliance have started illegal infiltration ever since they came to power.”<sup>70</sup> In another election rally held in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, on November 5, he added that “the type of infiltration which is happening is dangerous. The Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators will lead to demographic change which won’t let you practice Hinduism in the future.”<sup>71</sup>

This narrative allows the BJP to manufacture an artificial fear of resource scarcity amongst the local population that creates fear and panic among marginalized groups that rely on social services like subsidized ration, affirmative action, or public healthcare. Furthermore, the BJP speeches here highlight an attempt to frame an Indian version of the ‘Great Replacement Theory,’ portraying Muslims as a demographic threat seeking to outnumber Hindus.

Modi used this rhetoric when addressing a rally on November 4 in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand, where he claimed: “JMM-Congress alliance has endangered the identity of Jharkhand, and there is a conspiracy to change its demography and identity...JMM and Congress are creating fake documents for illegal infiltrators and protecting all their wrongdoings.....They are stealing your food, your daughters, and your land..... They will remove Adivasi [tribal groups] reservation and give it to their ‘vote bank.’”<sup>72</sup>

Home Minister Shah, in his speech delivered on November 11 in Ranchi, Jharkhand, claimed: “Hemant Babu (the incumbent Jharkhand Chief Minister) is settling Bangladeshi ghuspaithiye (infiltrators) in Jharkhand for their vote bank. These infiltrators have eaten up the jobs of Jharkhand’s youth. They do second, third, and fourth marriages with Jharkhand’s daughters and snatch their land. These infiltrators

are a threat to our food, daughters, and land. The Adivasi population is on the verge of extinction; it is decreasing.”<sup>73</sup>

By invoking such rhetoric, the BJP seeks to mobilize communal fears and portray Muslims as existential threats to local resources, culture, and demographics, polarizing the electorate further. Although the BJP faced a resounding loss in the Jharkhand elections, its efforts to integrate these groups into broader anti-Muslim conspiracy theories suggest that the party is unlikely to abandon its divisive rhetoric aimed at these vulnerable groups anytime soon.

## 6.5 Electoral Consequences of Hate Speech

The spike in incidents of hate speech during the period of the 2024 election campaign hints at the strategic role that the BJP places on hate speech as an electoral and ideological mobilizer among its constituents. It is evident that the BJP, led by the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, and chief ministers, willfully orchestrated a campaign rooted in disinformation, hate speech targeting Muslims, and promoting communal discord to secure electoral gains. The Election Commission of India (ECI) played an enabling role in this process. Despite the Model Code of Conduct explicitly prohibiting such behavior, the ECI consistently failed to enforce its rules,<sup>74</sup> leading to accusations of favoritism toward the BJP from opposition parties and the public.<sup>75</sup>

In response to criticism regarding the prevalence of hate speech during the campaign, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar stated that “over 90% of 495 major complaints were disposed of and notices were issued” to ensure communal harmony and a safe electoral environment.<sup>76</sup> However, as our data reveals, hate speech incidents persisted unabated throughout the campaign, underscoring the ECI’s ineffectiveness and unwillingness to address this dangerous trend. Most leaders ignored ECI notices or delayed proceedings until after the elections.

The national election results reflected significant losses to the BJP, forcing the party to rely on its coalition partners in the NDA to retain power. Observers noted that the BJP’s hateful rhetoric failed to mobilize voters effectively. The party suffered a defeat in Banswara, where Modi had delivered his first campaign hate speech targeting Muslims.<sup>77</sup> It also lost in Ayodhya, the site of the newly constructed Ram Mandir, which Modi had inaugurated in January 2024 on the ruins of the Babri mosque, which was demolished by Hindu nationalists in 1992.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, according to a report

by The Quint, the BJP and NDA lost 77 out of the 164 constituencies where Modi had campaigned, amounting to nearly 47%.<sup>79</sup>

While these outcomes may appear to signal a rejection of the BJP's campaign of hate, such an interpretation is premature. Establishing a direct correlation between the BJP's deployment of hate speech and its electoral losses in specific constituencies is challenging, as electoral outcomes are rarely the result of a single factor. More alarmingly, these developments highlight a deeply troubling reality in India's electoral landscape: the erosion of institutional accountability by the ECI and the judiciary, which has enabled the mainstreaming of hate speech and violent anti-minority rhetoric in election campaigns.



## 7. Rohingya Refugees and the “Bangladeshi Infiltrator” Narrative

IHL’s 2024 hate speech data shows a persistent targeting of Rohingya Muslim refugees residing in India alongside the use of the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey. As mentioned in the section above, Hindu nationalist groups and leaders frequently use “Rohingya infiltrator” and “Bangladeshi infiltrator” as dog whistles against Muslim citizens, particularly Muslims hailing from West Bengal or Assam state, falsely portraying them as “infiltrators” or undocumented foreigners “illegally” residing in India. The notion of the “infiltrator” is deeply rooted in Hindu nationalist ideology. Historically, this ideology views Muslims and Christians as “outsiders” and Hindus as the sole authentic and indigenous people of India.

The narrative of the “infiltrator” also serves another function within the broader ideological framework of Hindu nationalism, feeding on and reinforcing a fear of demographic change in India based on bogus claims of “explosive population growth” among Muslims. Unchecked Muslim population growth, it is alleged, will lead to Muslim domination and the eradication of Hindus in India. For years, Hindu nationalists have mobilized anti-Muslim sentiments around this imagined threat using conspiracy theories about Muslims, such as “population jihad,” which rooted in the unsubstantiated claim that Muslims will take over India’s population by intentionally producing more children than Hindus.<sup>80</sup> This same argument about demographic change is now being made by invoking Rohingya refugees<sup>81</sup> and the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey.<sup>82</sup>

Throughout 2024, IHL documented 118 instances of hate speeches directed at Rohingya refugees, while hate speeches invoking the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey totaled 182 throughout the year. Of these, 26 (22%) explicitly called for violence against the Rohingya community. Similarly, 40 of the 182 speeches mentioning “Bangladeshi infiltrators” (22%) included direct calls for violence, highlighting a troubling pattern of incitement. These narratives were often deployed in tandem, leading to multiple instances where hate speech simultaneously targeted both Rohingya refugees and invoked the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey.

## 7.1 Hate Speech and the "Rohingya Infiltrator" Narrative

The term "Rohingya infiltrators" is commonly used by the Hindu far-right and mainstream Indian media, especially those with Hindu nationalist leanings or pro-government sympathies, to describe members of the Rohingya Muslim community from Myanmar. This community has faced systemic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide due to their religious and ethnic identity.<sup>83</sup> The 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar, widely recognized as a genocidal campaign, forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to flee the country.<sup>84</sup> The situation further deteriorated after the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, exacerbating the vulnerability of the Rohingya.<sup>85</sup>

The United Nations recognizes the Rohingya who are fleeing persecution and violence as refugees. However, in the Indian context, the term "Rohingya infiltrators" is typically used to characterize them as illegal entrants and agents of organized infiltration. This rhetoric seeks to delegitimize their refugee status, simultaneously portraying them as a threat to national security. According to a 2017 Indian Ministry of Home Affairs report,<sup>86</sup> India is home to 40,000 Rohingya refugees, a number which has subsequently gone down to 22,500 in 2024, as per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.<sup>87</sup> The Home Ministry further claimed in the same report that Rohingya in India should be designated as "illegal migrants" and be deported. Hindu nationalist groups have targeted the Rohingya population in India since 2017, subjecting the community to threats of physical violence, dispossession, and socio-economic discrimination.<sup>88</sup> This has meant that the community has constantly been a victim of 'double persecution' wherein, on the one hand, they have faced genocidal violence in Myanmar, and on the other hand, they continue to be targets of political violence and social exclusion in India owing to their religious identity.

The BJP has strategically used the narrative of "Rohingya infiltrators" as a convenient proxy to invoke fears of resource scarcity, effectively pitting marginalized groups against one another. During multiple state election campaigns, BJP leaders have accused the Rohingya of illegally obtaining identification documents, accessing social welfare benefits, and claiming indigenous land.<sup>89</sup>

Since Bangladesh hosts the largest Rohingya refugee population in the world, the political crisis in Bangladesh during the summer of 2024 triggered renewed attention on Rohingya. Data collected by IHL reflects the intensification of this narrative during this period. In August, following Sheikh Hasina's ousting and the emergence of claims about a "genocide of Hindus," there were 27 recorded incidents of hate speech

invoking the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” narrative. Each subsequent month in 2024 witnessed at least 15 such incidents. A similar trend emerged in anti-Rohingya rhetoric, with 16 events recorded in August—the third-highest monthly total for the year.

## 7.2 Hate Speech and the "Bangladeshi Infiltrator" Narrative

The term "Bangladeshi infiltrators" refers to individuals from Bangladesh who are accused of illegally migrating to India to seek economic opportunities and allegedly “misusing state welfare” through fraudulent means. Animosity toward Bangladeshi migrants, whether legal or illegal, has been a long-standing political issue leveraged by the Hindu far-right in India.

In the northeastern state of Assam, the Hindu far-right has historically exploited fears of demographic change purportedly caused by Muslim migration from Bangladesh. These claims eventually led to the creation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a controversial mechanism aimed at identifying undocumented immigrants. The NRC was designed to “recognize and expel illegal immigrants” by determining “who was born in Assam and is therefore Indian, and who might be a migrant from neighboring Bangladesh.”<sup>90</sup> However, during its 2019 implementation, 1.9 million people, including many Hindus, were excluded from the register.<sup>91</sup> Muslims left out of the NRC faced particularly harsh consequences,<sup>92</sup> as many were detained in government-run detention centers under inhumane conditions.<sup>93</sup>

The unfounded fear of Bangladeshi infiltration has been weaponized as a political tool across India, particularly in regions with significant populations of Indian Muslim citizens from West Bengal or Assam. Those working in the unorganized sector, such as domestic workers, vegetable vendors, and rickshaw pullers, are frequently targeted by individuals and groups affiliated with the Hindu far-right. These groups falsely accuse them of being illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, fueling harassment, discrimination, and acts of violence.<sup>94</sup>

The narrative of Hindus being persecuted in Bangladesh was weaponized to reinforce the bogey of “Bangladeshi infiltrators.” The political crisis in Bangladesh became a catalyst for Hindu nationalist hate speech, stoking fears of Muslim aggression. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath delivered 25 speeches using the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” bogey during this period. At a rally in Agra on August 26, shortly after Sheikh Hasina’s ouster and the emergence of unsubstantiated reports about attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh, Adityanath gave his infamous “batenge toh katenge”

(divided, we perish) speech.<sup>95</sup> This slogan quickly became a rallying cry for the BJP in subsequent state elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The slogan invoked the imagined fear of Hindus being attacked in Bangladesh, calling for greater Hindu unity under the BJP, which presented itself as the defender of Hindus against Muslims.

As mentioned above, the ruling BJP has mainstreamed the conspiracy of “Rohingya infiltration” and “Bangladeshi infiltration” as part of its electoral strategy in several Indian states, including Jharkhand and Maharashtra. This pattern becomes strikingly evident when analyzing the monthly trends of these narratives. Anti-Rohingya speeches peaked in May (34), coinciding with the general elections and saw a rise between August and December during state elections in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana. Geographically, most anti-Rohingya speeches were concentrated in Maharashtra (43), followed by Uttar Pradesh (17) and Jharkhand (14). Notably, 59 out of the 118 anti-Rohingya speeches (50%) were delivered in states holding assembly elections in 2024.

Hate speech invoking “Bangladeshi infiltration” followed a similar trajectory. These speeches peaked in November (38), coinciding with state elections, and in May (33) during the general elections. The highest occurrences were recorded in Jharkhand (51) and Maharashtra (51), both of which held state elections in 2024. Like the anti-Rohingya speeches, the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” narrative in states with assembly elections accounted for 107 (58.8%) of the 182 total speeches.

During a campaign speech in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, on November 5, Adityanath said that “the JMM government has settled Bangladeshi infiltrators and Rohingyas and made “love jihad” and “land jihad” a part of the conspiracy towards demographic change.<sup>96</sup> The High Court has raised concerns about the decreasing Adivasi population in the Santhal province and their whereabouts—how has ‘another community’ become the majority?”

On the same day in Dumka, Jharkhand, Union Minister of Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chauhan said: “Foreign infiltration is at an all-time high. Now, Bangladeshi infiltrators come and settle here, and this has led to a decrease in the Adivasi population. These infiltrators keep coming, grabbing land, marrying our women, and then running for panchayat elections! I am here to warn you all—if this infiltration doesn't stop, the Bangladeshis will control the Santhal Pargana, and you will be ruined.”<sup>97</sup>

He further added: “You have to understand the gravity of the situation. Your land is in danger. Your women are in danger because of these infiltrators. Your livelihoods

are in danger. These infiltrators are protected by Hemant Soren (JMM Chief Minister). The opposition helps them infiltrate and make Aadhaar IDs and ration cards for them. They are a vote bank. We promise to throw them out, one by one. Just bring in the BJP.”

A critical concern surrounding the “infiltrator” narrative is its adoption beyond the BJP, with other political parties exploiting it for potential electoral gains by targeting vulnerable minorities. One of the most prominent proponents of this false narrative, aside from the BJP, has been the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which governs Delhi and Punjab.

On December 15, in the lead-up to the Delhi state elections, Chief Minister Atishi Marlena made anti-Rohingya remarks, stating that “by settling Rohingya refugees in Delhi, the Central Government has stolen the rights of the citizens of Delhi.”<sup>98</sup> This statement was both patently false and deeply problematic, given the extremely small number of Rohingya refugees residing in Delhi.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the AAP doubled down on its stance following the press conference.

On December 24, the party issued a notice instructing schools to implement stricter admission procedures, requiring thorough verification of student documentation “to prevent illegal Bangladeshi migrants’ enrollment.” The notice specifically called for “greater scrutiny to detect and prevent unauthorized admissions of illegal Bangladeshi migrants.”<sup>100</sup>

This rhetoric and subsequent actions highlight how the “infiltrator” narrative, initially popularized by the BJP, has permeated the broader political discourse, enabling the targeting of already marginalized communities under the guise of protecting local resources and rights. These vulnerable communities risk becoming political pawns in the escalating rivalry between the BJP and AAP as they campaign during assembly elections, further exposing them to socio-economic marginalization and violence.

## 8. Hindu Religious Leaders and Hate Speech

**H**indu monks and religious leaders have emerged as central figures in delivering anti-minority hate speeches, effectively providing religious legitimacy to the normalization of hatred. In 2024, they were responsible for 114 incidents of hate speech, as documented by the IHL.

The monthly data reveals a marked escalation in the latter half of the year, with August (16), September (12), October (14), and December (17) collectively accounting for more than 50% of the total incidents. Geographically, the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh (40), Rajasthan (16), Madhya Pradesh (15), and Uttarakhand (10) reported the highest number of incidents, demonstrating the concentration of hate speeches by monks in BJP-ruled states. Overall, BJP-ruled states accounted for 99 of 114 incidents, highlighting the significant correlation between the fact of governance by the Hindu nationalist party and the prevalence of hate speech by religious leaders. Additionally, six incidents were recorded in Union Territories, while nine took place in opposition-ruled states such as Jharkhand (3), Himachal Pradesh (2), Karnataka (2), and Punjab (2).

The majority of these speeches targeted Muslims, with 92 explicitly containing anti-Muslim hate, while 21 targeted both Christians and Muslims, and one exclusively targeted Christians. Alarming, 35 of the recorded speeches (31%) included explicit calls for violence, while 23 (20%) contained direct calls to arms, highlighting a dangerous shift from hate speech to active mobilization for violence.

Many of these hate speeches were delivered at religious events organized by lesser-known groups such as the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad, Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti, Bhagawati Manav Kalyan Sangathan, Devbhoomi Raksha Abhiyan, Dharam Raksha Sanstha, Shiv Shakti Akhada, and Arya Samaj. Established organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad-Bajrang Dal, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), and Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS) organized 26 events where religious leaders delivered hate speeches. These events underscore the systematic coordination between far-right groups and religious leaders, who exploit religious authority, public trust, and large followings to mainstream anti-minority hate and bigotry.

**FIGURE 15: RELIGIOUS LEADERS RANKED BY HIGHEST NUMBER OF HATE SPEECHES DELIVERED IN 2024**

	Name	Position/Affiliation	Hate Speech
1	Mahant Raju Das	Priest at Hanuman Garhi Temple	14
2	Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati	Religious preacher	12
3	Sadhvi Saraswati	Religious preacher	8
4	Swami Sachidanand	Arya Samaj preacher	8
5	Madhuras Sharan Shiva	Chief of Shiv Shakti Akhada	4
6	Swami Darshan Bharti	Devbhoomi Raksha Abhiyan Sangathan	4
7	Acharya Ramswaroopbhamchari	Religious preacher	3
8	Dhirendra Shastri	Religious preacher	3
9	Kalicharan Maharaj	Religious preacher	3
10	Swami Dipankar	Spiritual Guru	2

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)

Prominent religious figures who propagated hate in 2024 included Mahant Raju Das, a priest at Hanuman Garhi Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, who delivered 14 hate speeches, and Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati who delivered 12 speeches. Sadhvi Saraswati, a religious preacher from Madhya Pradesh, and Arya Samaj preacher Swami Sachidanand each delivered eight speeches. Madhuras Sharan Shiva, leader of the armed Shiv Shakti Akhada group in Uttar Pradesh, and Swami Darshan Bharti, founder of the Devbhoomi Raksha Abhiyan Sangathan in Uttarakhand, delivered four speeches each. Other notable contributors included Kalicharan Maharaj (3), Dhirendra Shastri (3), Acharya Ramswaroopbhamchari (3), Swami Prabhodanand Giri (2), and Swami Dipankar (2), underscoring the significant role of religious leaders in propagating hate speech throughout the year.

## 8.1 Conspiracies as a Weapon of Fear

These religious leaders have selectively misused religious texts and scriptures, distorting them to justify calls for violence and arms. They have also effectively leveraged social media platforms to broaden their audience and amplify their

rhetoric. Their speeches frequently featured dehumanizing references to Muslims, including the use of slurs such as *malecchas* and *vidharmis* (pejoratives for Muslims and non-Hindus) and mentions of “religious war.” Central themes in the speeches included jihad-based conspiracy theories, which are weaponized to portray Muslims as existential threats to Hindu society. The speeches often advocate for the takeover of mosques, call for the social and economic boycott of Muslims, and demand oaths to turn India into a Hindu nation.

On August 4, Sadhvi Saraswati spoke at a Hindu nationalist event in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, organized by the group Dharm Raksha Org. During her speech, she promoted unfounded anti-Muslim conspiracy theories—including claims of “love jihad,” “land jihad,” “spit jihad,” and “cinema jihad”—and called for violence against Muslims. She also urged Hindus to boycott Muslims economically.<sup>101</sup> A month later, on September 22, Saraswati delivered another anti-Muslim hate speech in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, where she urged the audience to arm themselves if they wished to prevent Muslims and *vidharmis* (non-Hindus) from living in their homes. She added:

“We cannot be brothers with Muslims as they eat our mother cow... Everyone has to buy swords for the upcoming religious war... We have to boycott Muslims economically.”

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On August 17, local monks at a rally in Balotra, Rajasthan, addressed a crowd full of people waving tricolor and saffron flags, inciting them to commit brutal violence against Muslims, including decapitation. A monk stood in front of the crowd and said:

“If Muslims kill one Hindu, we will kill 100 Muslims. We will enter their homes and kill them.”<sup>103</sup>



On August 30, at the Hindu Sant Sammelan in Paharganj, New Delhi, multiple religious preachers delivered anti-Muslim speeches, including calls to violence and economic boycotts.

“We have to teach Muslims a lesson; otherwise, we will keep dying,” one preacher warned.<sup>104</sup>

On September 29, at an event in Lohia Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, far-right monk Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati explicitly called for the eradication of Muslims and Islam.<sup>105</sup> At a November 26 protest organized by the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh in Bengaluru, Karnataka, Kumara Chandrashekaranaatha Swamiji, the seer of the Vishwa Vokkaliga Mahasamstana Math religious institution, suggested that Muslims should be stripped of their voting rights in India.<sup>106</sup>

Terms like “bulldozer” frequently surface in speeches delivered by Hindu preachers. In the Indian context, “bulldozer justice” refers to the punitive state-led demolitions of Muslim homes and businesses. Over the past five years, this practice began in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and has since been replicated in several other BJP-governed states. On January 28 in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Swami Prabodhanand Giri advocated for the nationwide adoption of “bulldozer justice.”<sup>107</sup>

The role of Hindu monks and religious leaders in spreading anti-minority hate speech in 2024 exposes a deliberate strategy to weaponize religious imagery in order to negatively incite Hindus. By framing Muslims as an enemy and political opponents as “pro-Muslim” or “anti-Hindu,” these leaders exploit communal anxieties and legitimize violence as a form of religious duty.

## 9. Dangerous Speech and Call to Arms

**D**angerous speech in India, including explicit calls for violence and exhortations for Hindus to arm themselves or procure weapons, remained pervasive throughout 2024. These calls were sometimes accompanied by the direct distribution of weapons, including pitchforks and swords. The escalation from broad discriminatory rhetoric to actively organizing violent measures exposes a calculated and methodical strategy employed by Hindu nationalist groups.

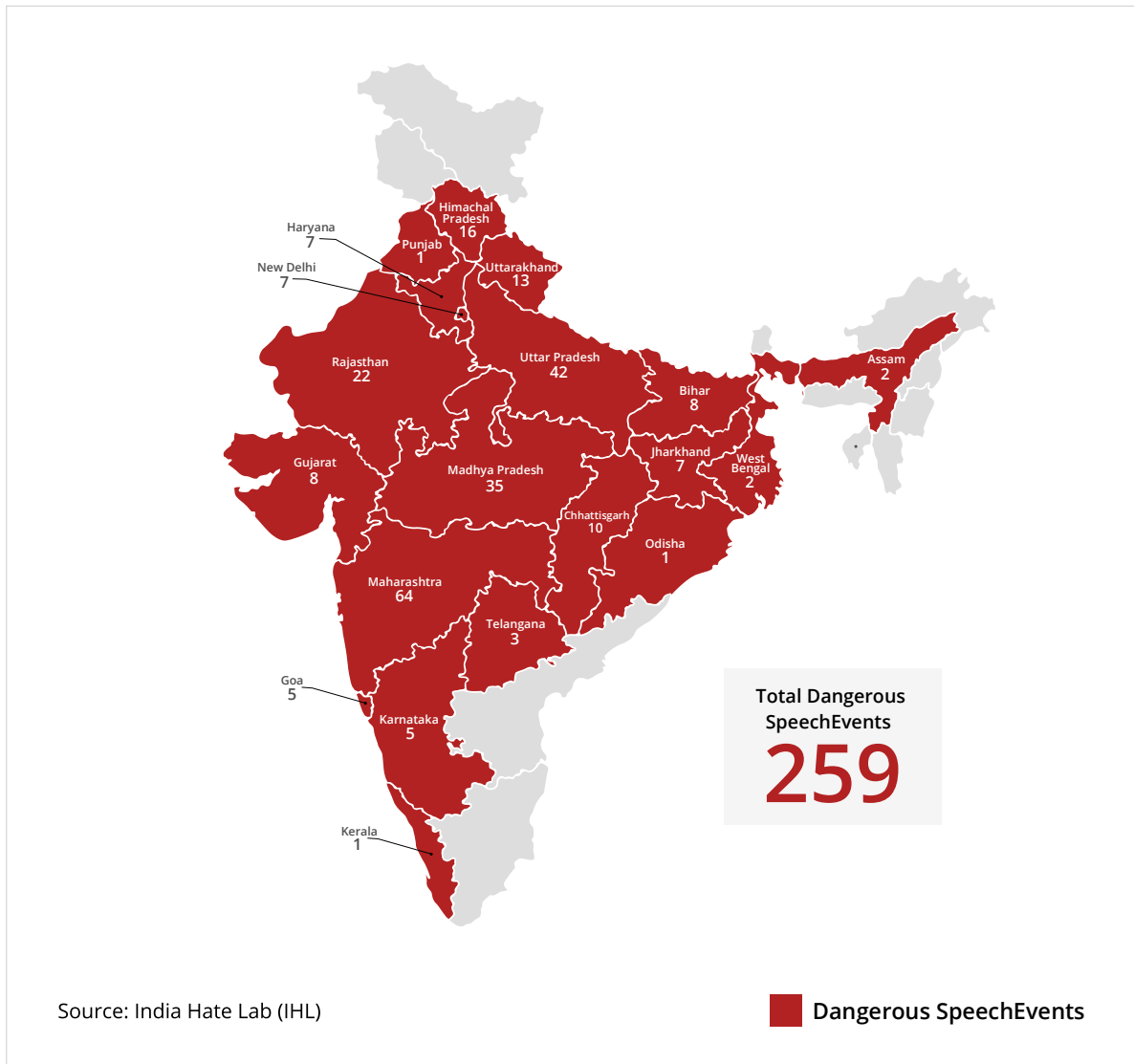
Prominent figures delivering such speeches included BJP leaders, other far-right group leaders, and religious preachers. IHL documented 259 incidents of dangerous speech or calls to violence during the year. The data reveals that 23 speeches also called for violence against both Christians and Muslims.

BJP-ruled states accounted for 217 of these events, with seven occurring in Delhi and 35 in opposition-ruled states.

A monthly breakdown of the data revealed that August (46 incidents) and September (41 incidents) held the highest record numbers. This surge coincided with heightened anti-Muslim sentiment, inflamed by reports alleging a "genocide of Hindus" in Bangladesh following the ouster of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During this period, far-right groups organized hundreds of rallies across India, which served as platforms for delivering hate-filled speeches targeting Indian Muslims.

The Indian state of Maharashtra topped the list, with 64 events involving dangerous speeches. Uttar Pradesh (42) and Madhya Pradesh (35) ranked second and third, highlighting how BJP-ruled states have been the primary sites for such incidents to burgeon. These three states accounted for 54.4% of all incidents in 2024. The opposition Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh state also recorded 16 dangerous speech events. In total, the states ruled by opposition parties recorded 35 such incidents.

**FIGURE 16: DANGEROUS SPEECH HOTSPOTS ACROSS INDIA IN 2024**



Far-right organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)-Bajrang Dal (74), Sakal Hindu Samaj (33), and Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad-Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (28) were the primary organizers of events where dangerous speeches were delivered, underscoring the coordinated efforts of Hindu nationalist groups in whipping up hate and violence against minorities. Politicians played a critical role in this proliferation, delivering 62 dangerous speeches—all of which were given by BJP leaders.

**FIGURE 17: KEY FIGURES RANKED BY HIGHEST NUMBER OF DANGEROUS SPEECHES DELIVERED IN 2024**

	Name	Position/Affiliation	Dangerous Speech
1	Nitesh Rane	Minister of Fisheries and Ports, Maharashtra	24
2	T Raja Singh	BJP Legislator, Telangana	22
3	Pravin Togadia	Chief of Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad	9
4	Harsha Thakur	Far-right Influencer	6
5	Sadhvi Saraswati	Religious Preacher	5
6	Kajal Hindustani	Far-right Influencer	4
7	Navneet Rana	BJP Leader, Maharashtra	4
8	Vikas Chaturvedi	Rashtriya Hindu Sher Sena	3

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)

Nitesh Rane led the list with 24 speeches, a sharp rise from the four he delivered in 2023. T. Raja Singh followed closely behind with 22 speeches, up from 14 in the previous year. AHP-RBD chief Pravin Togadia delivered nine dangerous speeches. Other speakers who delivered such speeches included far-right social media influencer Harsha Thakur from Maharashtra (6), religious preacher Sadhvi Saraswati (5), and Kajal Shingala (alias Kajal Hindustani) (4).

On August 18, Rane spoke at an event in Karjat, Maharashtra, organized by the SHS, a coalition of Hindu far-right organizations known for hosting events across Maharashtra where anti-minority speeches are regularly delivered. During his speech, Rane openly called for violence against Muslims, stating: “If you attack our temples, we will not spare your mosques, remember that. Remove all your encroachments, otherwise, our bhagwa [saffron, associated with the Hindu nationalist movement] activists will storm all your mosques and start doing Maha-Arati [a Hindu ceremony] there. The police won't be able to save you. This is not an empty threat; we are getting ready... Just as Muslims are ready to do anything for their religion, we Hindus are also ready to finish you off for our religion.”<sup>108</sup> Rane further added:

“Our religion clearly says we can use weapons if someone is attacking us. To fight your jihad, we can't just keep faith in the police... You [Muslims] are insects.”

Rane’s speech is a clear example of dehumanizing language that lays the groundwork for violence. On September 19, while speaking at another SHS event in Sangli, Maharashtra, Rane referred to Muslims as “green snakes” and said, “These jihadis keep weapons in their mosques, just waiting to attack us... If you guys don’t stop these attacks, we will attack you as well... Listen up, jihadis, yes, you jihadis, who keep stashing weapons in mosques.”<sup>109</sup> Rane further added:

“Take off from work one Friday, and we will come finish you off. We know exactly where you all live.”

At another SHS event in Paratwada, Amravati District, Maharashtra, on September 29, Rane said, “If you even look at us the wrong way, we will kill you one by one... Don't start this. If you do again, forget about celebrating your festivals and taking out rallies for us. You will start it, we will finish it.”<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, T. Raja Singh has been at the forefront of delivering dangerous speeches. At an event organized by the SHS in Sangli, Maharashtra, on May 26, he encouraged Hindu youth to arm themselves, stating:

“Learn to use weapons so you can shoot in the chest of people who do love jihad. Don't be afraid of going to jail for killing a 'love jihadi.’”<sup>111</sup>

Such speeches capitalize on manufactured fears of Muslim aggression and frame violence as a necessary defense against an existential threat to Hindus. These narratives are also extended to target Christians, accusing them of participating in a

global conspiracy to expand missionary activities in India. At an event organized by the Bajrang Dal and VHP on August 12 in Bishrampur, Chhattisgarh, Raja Singh said: "If you want to kill a land jihadi, love jihadi, or cow killer, then join Bajrang Dal. If the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh creates a task force to kill cow killers, love jihadis, or land jihadis [a reference for Muslims], nobody will stop you... There are 1 crore [10 million] Rohingyas in India; that's why you need to learn how to use weapons... We have to root out all the people who do dharmantran [religious conversion]. Pastors are getting funds from abroad to target Hindu families." <sup>112</sup>

Raja's call for a task force to kill minorities— even vulnerable Rohingya refugees— exemplifies how anti-minority violence has been disturbingly made acceptable, enabling a leader of India's ruling party to openly incite violence. Equally alarming is the state's inaction regarding such events of dangerous speech. The authorities often fail to act even when concerned citizens file cases against hate and dangerous speeches. In Maharashtra, the police were directed by the Bombay High Court to review instances of hate speech by Rane and Raja and file First Information Reports (FIRs) as appropriate.<sup>113</sup> The lack of action underscores a systematic reluctance to hold these leaders accountable. This apathy further emboldens hate actors, reinforcing a climate of hostility and violence against minorities in India.

Addressing a VHP-Bajrang Dal crowd in Khargao, Madhya Pradesh, on September 1, Sadhvi Saraswati, a religious preacher, called upon participants to engage in violence, claiming: "Muslims and Christians can never be our brothers; they kill cows and rape our sisters and mothers... Everyone should keep swords, knives, and weapons so they can cut off the heads of love jihadis... If someone does not chant Bharat Mata ji Jai [Victory for Mother India] and Vande Mataram [national song of India, they should be buried alive." <sup>114</sup>

## 9.1 Calls to Arms Against Minorities

Throughout the year, IHL also recorded 123 hate speeches that included explicit calls to arms. This represents a dangerous escalation in speeches that promote not only hostility but active mobilization for violence against minorities. Calls to arms often centered on advocating for the procurement and distribution of weapons, such as pitchforks, swords, and guns, under the guise of "self-defense" against fabricated threats from minority communities. These speeches frame literal weaponization as a necessary and justified response, even as they simultaneously weaponize a fear of minorities, creating an environment ripe for sectarian violence in the bargain.

Geographically, Rajasthan (24), Uttar Pradesh (21), Maharashtra (19) and Madhya Pradesh (18) reported the highest number of such speeches which strongly featured a call to arms, reflecting strong far-right mobilization for violence in these states.

Our data reveals that the number of speeches containing explicit calls to arms was not evenly distributed throughout the year. Significant spikes occurred in August (23 speeches), September (21 speeches), and October (26 speeches), accounting for nearly 57% of the total 123 speeches recorded. These spikes coincided mainly with the political crisis in Bangladesh and broadly with BJP political campaign cycles. These claims were weaponized to unify Hindu voters against the perceived minority 'enemy' and distract from governance failures, such as rising unemployment and inflation, in BJP-ruled states.

VHP-Bajrang Dal emerged as the leading organization in propagating these calls to arms, accounting for 47 speeches. The AHP-RBD contributed 15, and the Sakal Hindu Samaj organized seven events.

BJP leaders Nitesh Rane and T. Raja Singh have been central to propagating calls to arms, alongside prominent far-right figures such as influencer Kajal Hindustani, Sudarshan News owner Suresh Chavhanke, AHP chief Pravin Togadia, and AHP senior leader Manoj Kumar. Religious preachers, including Sadhvi Saraswati, Madhuram Sharan Shiva, and Swami Sacchidanand, have further amplified dangerous rhetoric. Together, these individuals have repeatedly used public platforms to deliver speeches urging Hindus to arm themselves, framing violence against minorities as a defensive or even patriotic or religious duty.

These inflammatory appeals have materialized in concrete terms through rallies, religious gatherings, and weapon-distribution events across India in 2024. On June 28, in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, Suresh Chavhanke, speaking at a religious event, urged Hindus to pick up swords instead of pens.<sup>115</sup>

"Hindus should keep weapons. Imagine if an Afzal Khan or Aurangzeb gets elected in Delhi," he said while referring to historical Muslim figures who feature prominently in the Hindu nationalist imagination as treacherous and villainous oppressors.

On August 10, in Vasco Da Gama, Goa, during a Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS) event, far-right leader Nitin Faldesai delivered a dangerous speech steeped in anti-Muslim

hate. Addressing the audience, he urged, “Stop buying your kids mobile phones for 30,000 rupees; instead, buy weapons for 5,000 rupees. WhatsApp shares won’t save you, but a weapon will.”<sup>116</sup>

On August 11, HJS organized a protest rally in Mumbai, Maharashtra, at which Dhanashree Kelshikar of the Sanatan Sanstha said, “We have to look for a solution. If you want to learn how to use a rifle, please come to Swatantra Veer Savarkar Smarak; there is a rifle training school there. We don’t have another option. This is the only way we can achieve Hindu Rashtra.”<sup>117</sup>

On September 23, during a pitchfork distribution event in Banswara, Rajasthan, Bajrang Dal Chief Neeraj Doneria issued a direct call to arms. In his inflammatory speech, he declared, “Wherever there is anyone indulging in love jihad, we will cut off their arms. Every time a cow smuggler comes, we need to make sure he doesn’t have legs to go back.”<sup>118</sup>

This shift from general hate speech to speech that emphasizes mobilization of action against minorities, including explicit calls to arms, highlights the systematic and deliberate efforts by Hindu nationalist groups to lay the groundwork for mass violence. The frequency and scale of such speeches delivered throughout 2024 represent an alarming escalation from the previous year, portending a deeply troubling development toward legitimizing physical hate crimes against minority groups.<sup>119</sup>

The ease with which calls to arms and violence are made also underscores the extent to which religious minorities in India, particularly Muslims, have been dehumanized and designated as legitimate targets of violence. The overwhelming concentration of such incidents in BJP-ruled states underscores the complicity—or at the very least, the indifference—of political and law enforcement systems that enable such dangerous speech to flourish without consequence.



# 10. Economic Boycott of Minorities

**D**emands for an economic and social boycott of Muslims have become a recurring and troubling feature in the hate speech landscape of India in recent years. Data from 2024 highlights a sharp increase in such hate speeches, with 111 documented incidents over the year.

A monthly analysis reveals a significant late-year surge, with 18 incidents recorded in August, 19 in September, and 23 in December. Geographically, Maharashtra (26), Uttar Pradesh (18), and Uttarakhand (13) reported the highest number of incidents. Notably, Maharashtra conducted Legislative Assembly elections in the latter half of the year, while Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are now key hubs for anti-minority hate speech in general. Strikingly, nearly 85% of all hate speeches advocating boycotts occurred in states governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Of the 111 documented cases, 107 explicitly targeted Muslims, with Christians also being mentioned in a smaller subset (15 incidents) alongside Muslims. Organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)-Bajrang Dal (33) and Sakal Hindu Samaj (SHS) (13) were among the most active organizers of events where such calls were delivered.

Prominent individuals involved in propagating these boycotts included Kajor Hindustani (10 speeches), BJP's Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane (7 speeches), and AHP-RBD chief Pravin Togadia (6 speeches). These calls have become an integral component of the broader ecosystem of sectarian hate, polarization, and division.

## 10.1 Economic Boycott as the "Action" Element of Hate Speech

Economic boycotts should be recognized as a deliberate form of exclusion aimed at further marginalizing minorities, systematically isolating them from the mainstream of society under the guise of protecting the majority community. Such calls are invariably framed as preemptive or defensive measures against an alleged existential threat posed by Muslims. They are often portrayed as necessary actions to "seek revenge" and protect Hindus from various purported conspiracies, including "love jihad" and "land jihad." This narrative reinforces Hindu nationalism's core themes of Hindu victimhood and Muslim culpability.

The calls for an economic boycott of Muslims in India represent a critical "action" element within the broader hate speech ecosystem, operating alongside direct incitements to violence as tangible real world manifestations of hate. By urging Hindus to sever social and economic ties with Muslims, this rhetoric aims to deepen Muslim marginalization in the public sphere, extending it into the realm of economic deprivation. Such actions are not merely economic measures, but are also part of a broader strategy of systemic exclusion and marginalization, perpetuated in tandem with violent mobilization.

The roots of economic boycott-related hate speech in contemporary India are exemplified by the policies of Adityanath and his government in Uttar Pradesh since he assumed power in 2017. During his tenure, Adityanath has systematically overseen the social and economic marginalization of Muslims, forging a model of governance that justifies exclusionary policies with overt anti-Muslim hatred. During the 2024 elections, Adityanath championed a slogan of "batenge to katenge [if we divide, we will be cut]" in several rallies, calling for Hindu unity against "external threats," which swiftly became one of the BJP's key electoral war cries, along with "ek hain toh safe hain [if we are united, we are safe]." This call for Hindu unity has to be observed in concert with Adityanath's rule in UP, which has seen him earn the moniker "Bulldozer Baba" for his government's punitive demolition of Muslim homes and businesses.<sup>120</sup> In a state where Muslims have historically played a significant role in commerce and culture, Adityanath's model has served as a template for similar campaigns aimed at the marginalization of Muslims, highlighting Uttar Pradesh's role as a laboratory for Hindu nationalism.

Adityanath's success in Uttar Pradesh has also emboldened established Hindu nationalist organizations, spurred the growth of new local groups, and encouraged individual far-right activists across India to engage in blatant hate speech, where calls for economic boycotts are seamlessly interwoven with broader appeals decrying various jihads and the need for Hindu unity. For instance, on September 8 in Purnapur, Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh, at an event organized by Hindu far-right groups in support of Sanjay Mishra<sup>121</sup>—who had attempted to kill a Muslim youth—a leader from the group administered an oath alleging the proliferation of "love jihad" against Hindus and advocating for an economic boycott of Muslims.<sup>122</sup>

On December 19, at a Kumbh fundraising event in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, AHP-RBD chief Pravin Togadia called for an economic boycott of non-Hindus, urging attendees to pledge to use this tactic as a "weapon" as it would undermine the ability of Muslims to fund activities like zakat and "jihad."<sup>123</sup>

At a 'Chetna and Chetavani' rally in Srinagar Garhwal, Uttarakhand, on October 3, Lakhpat Bhandari, a local leader of BJP, delivered a hate speech that urged Hindus to boycott Muslims and even called for the "burning of shops" to teach the community a lesson for conspiring and carrying out love jihad against Hindus.<sup>124</sup>

BJP legislator T. Raja Singh, notoriously prolific as far as an anti-Muslim speech is concerned, delivered a hate speech at a rally in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, on June 15, promoting anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and targeting Rohingya refugees. In his speech, Singh threatened Muslims with explicit threats of violence and "bulldozer justice" while also urging Hindus to engage in an economic boycott of the community.<sup>125</sup>

## 10.2 Kanwar Yatra and "Spit Jihad"

In July 2024, the governments of Uttar Pradesh and subsequently Uttarakhand issued directives requiring eateries along the route of the Kanwar Yatra, a prominent annual Hindu pilgrimage, to prominently display the names of both their owners and employees during the festive period.<sup>126</sup> Adityanath and his allies justified these measures as a way for devotees to make "informed decisions" about where to eat, citing complaints "that restaurant owners and street vendors hide their real identity and use fake names."<sup>127</sup> Adityanath claimed the measures were necessary to help pilgrims maintain ritual purity and sanctity during their journey.

These actions followed a series of similar initiatives, including the 2023 directive banning the labeling of halal certification on food products and the 2024 ban on the distribution and sale of halal-certified items.<sup>128</sup> Together, these measures reflect a growing institutionalization of exclusionary practices targeting Muslim-owned businesses.

On July 27, T. Raja Singh accused the Muslim community of engaging in a so-called "thook (spit) jihad," a baseless conspiracy theory alleging that Muslim food vendors spit on food before selling it. He stated: "In Uttar Pradesh, the Kanwar Yatra is celebrated with great pomp. So, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath mandated that all shops display the names of their owners because these people spit on water, food, and other items, carrying out 'thook jihad.' Now, they must clearly state who their owners are so that our Hindu brothers are aware of their machinations."<sup>129</sup>

In October 2024, the Uttar Pradesh government doubled down by issuing two ordinances, allegedly to ensure "food safety," that made it mandatory for employees

of eateries throughout the state to display their names on badges at all times.<sup>130</sup> The ordinances also make it an offense for anyone to spit or mix any bodily fluid or waste into food. The ordinances were triggered by the spread of unverified videos which alleged that Muslim food vendors were engaged in contaminating food and drinks sold to Hindus with spit and urine. Adityanath declared that strict measures were necessary to prevent food adulteration “with human waste or other dirty substances” as they would “affect public health and social harmony.”<sup>131</sup>

The Uttar Pradesh government’s directives on the Kanwar yatra and “food safety” have triggered a spate of hate speech, which has spread to other states as well. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and his government have quickly adopted Adityanath’s guidelines on food safety. These new orders have made it mandatory for owners and employees of eateries to undergo identity verification with the police and install cameras in kitchens.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, a hefty fine of up to one lakh rupees has been announced for offenses related to contaminating food with bodily waste. Dhami has also engaged openly in hate speech promoting anti-Muslim conspiracy theories like “spit jihad.” At a Vijay Dashami event, he gave an openly anti-Muslim speech which fear mongered about the demographic takeover by Muslims and promoted conspiracy theories like “love jihad,” “land jihad,” “Mazar jihad,” and “thook (spit) jihad,” while vowing to eliminate these threats.<sup>133</sup> At another public function on October 13, he stated that “religious conversion, encroachment, land jihad, and thook (spit) jihad will not be allowed in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand.”<sup>134</sup>

On September 14, in Jharsuguda, Odisha, far-right influencer Kajal Hindustani delivered an anti-Muslim hate speech claiming that Muslim fruit vendors and eateries were injecting medicines that were increasingly rendering Hindus impotent and infertile.<sup>135</sup> She exhorted the audience to boycott Muslim establishments, businesses, and workers and to only hire Hindus.

Similarly, on September 19, in Sangli, Maharashtra, Nitesh Rane delivered a hate speech that alleged that Muslims were storing weapons in mosques while preparing to attack Hindus and actively engaging in “love jihad.”<sup>136</sup> He also alleged that Bangladeshis were actively stealing jobs and businesses meant for Hindus. As a solution, he advocated both violence and an economic boycott as the only solution to “fix those people,” assuring his audience that in the event of violence, he would ensure that no cases would be filed against them.

In Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, during agitations calling for the demolition of an allegedly illegal mosque, the Devbhoomi Jagran Manch and its president, Kshitij Sood, organized massive demonstrations between September 14 and September 30,

shouting slogans while distributing over a hundred thousand pamphlets calling for the economic boycott of “outsiders” and urging Hindus to keep a careful watch on them.<sup>137</sup> Sood also alleged that “we cannot live with them who spit in our food and touch our women inappropriately while taking measures for stitching clothes,” and called for a social and economic boycott of the Muslim community.

### 10.3 Shoorvir Program

The proliferation of hate speech calling for an economic boycott by Hindu nationalist groups also has an undeniable economic motive, a dimension best exemplified by the Shoorvir program, a service platform founded by Hindu nationalist leader Virendra Pandey, which aims to connect Hindu service providers to Hindu clients.<sup>138</sup> Describing itself as a “social service” and a “noble cause,” the program is focused on ensuring that “every penny spent by Hindus remains within the community” and has drawn support from a wide range of Hindu nationalist organizations and prominent politicians, including Union Minister Giriraj Singh.<sup>139</sup>

In an event organized by the Hindu Janjagriti Samiti in June, Shoorvir founder Virendra Pandey delivered a speech laden with themes calling for an economic boycott of Muslims, warning against letting “those people” into Hindu homes. Virendra noted that “most men in cities go to work, leaving mothers and sisters at home. In such situations, if they call someone to fix a broken AC, imagine a Vidharmi [non-believer] entering the most private parts of your house. He gains detailed knowledge of your home—how many sisters, daughters, old or young; who comes and goes, and when. This is how 80-90 percent of jihad begins to take root when we allow a non-believer into our homes.”<sup>140</sup>

He further alleged that “in 10 years, there will be many areas where you won't find a Hindu worker” and that Hindus “should attempt to boycott them economically,” at least if they were not able to fight Muslims physically.

Shoorvir's social media networks have actively engaged in calling for an economic boycott of Muslims while engaging in hate speech alleging conspiracies like “mandi jihad” and “market jihad,” claiming these are efforts to undermine the economic well-being of the Hindu community.

In a social media post on X, Shoorvir shared a video alleging “market jihad” targeting the Hindu community, accompanied by the following caption: “The Islamic conspiracy ‘Mandi Jihad’ to break the backs of Hindu traders must be stopped immediately. This

business jihad is being orchestrated by local leaders and police. These are the wolves responsible for placing them in the market." <sup>141</sup>

A report by Newslandry on the Shoorvir program uncovered a vast network of connections to prominent Hindu nationalist groups, activists, and journalists with a history of engaging in hate speech against Muslims.<sup>142</sup> These include organizations and individuals such as the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, Yati Narasimhanand Saraswati, Amol Kale, Ajeet Bharti, and Sanjay Dixit, among others.

Hate speech calling for the social or economic exclusion of Muslims should not be viewed in isolation but as an integral component of a larger project aimed at redefining social norms and legitimizing exclusionary practices. This rhetoric thrives within a broader ecosystem of conspiracies, which construct a narrative of Hindu victimhood at the hands of Muslims. These conspiracies frame Muslims as outsiders, enemies, and an existential threat—one that must be excluded, marginalized, and, if deemed necessary, eradicated for the supposed greater good.

By weaponizing economic exclusion through hate speech and conspiratorial narratives, Hindu nationalists present economic boycotts as a means for the Hindu majority to actively participate in marginalizing Muslims. This tactic provides a pathway to contribute to systemic exclusion without resorting to direct violence, embedding discriminatory practices within everyday economic interactions.

# 11. Campaign to Seize Minority Places of Worship

In January 2024, Prime Minister Modi presided over the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. The temple was constructed over the ruins of the Babri mosque, which was demolished by Hindu nationalist groups in 1992. The inauguration of the temple by the Prime Minister, a position ostensibly committed to secularism and impartiality, signaled a clear alignment with Hindu majoritarianism in India.<sup>143</sup>

In November 2024, the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, became the focal point of another legal battle.<sup>144</sup> A local court ordered a survey of the mosque site in response to a petition filed by eight individuals, including Hari Shankar Jain, a lawyer involved in several cases, seeking Hindu claims over Muslim places of worship. The petition alleged that in 1527-28, “Hindu Beg, the Lieutenant of Babar Army, partly demolished Shri Hari Har temple at Sambhal.”<sup>145</sup> Subsequently, “the Muslims occupied the temple building to use the same as a mosque.” Despite the lack of historical evidence<sup>146</sup> to substantiate these claims, the court's decision to order a survey and the state's overt support for the petitioners provoked protests in Sambhal. Police responded to the demonstrations with violence, resulting in the killing of five Muslim men.<sup>147</sup>

This incident, along with numerous others throughout the year, was fueled by inflammatory rhetoric explicitly calling to seize, remove, or destroy Muslim places of worship.

In 2024, IHL recorded 274 speeches calling for the targeting or takeover of places of worship owned by Muslims or Christians. Of these, 216 were held in states where the BJP held power, either directly or as part of a coalition. BJP politicians were responsible for 84 such speeches. While most of these speeches targeted Muslim places of worship, 33 also targeted Christian sites, highlighting the broader and systematic nature of the campaign.

## 11.1 Narrative Underlying the Targeting of Places of Worship

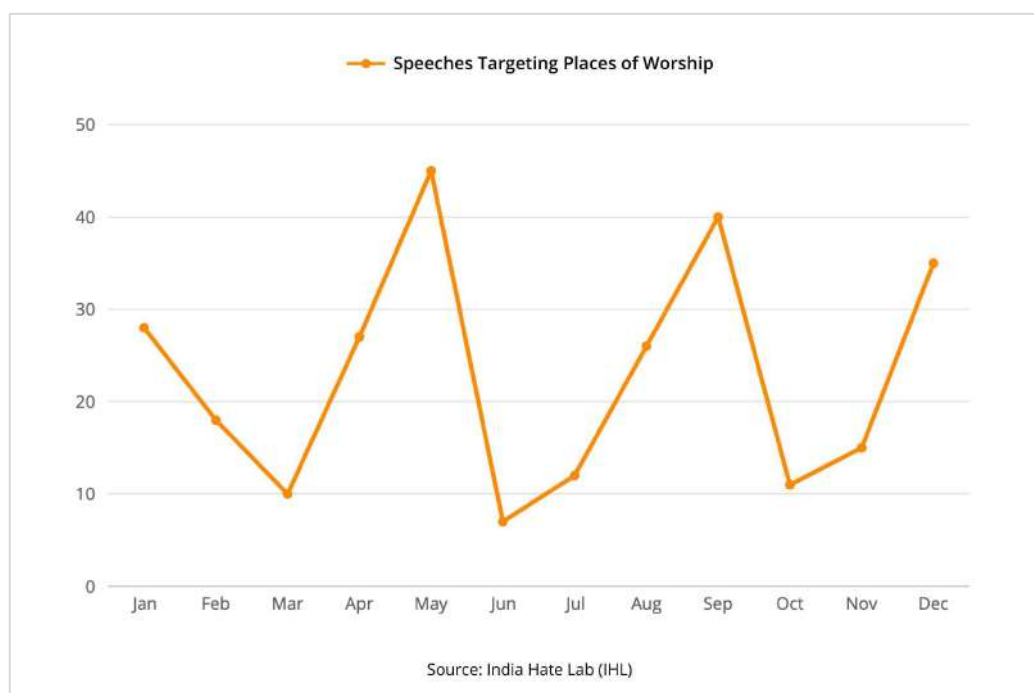
The Hindu nationalist justification for targeting Muslim places of worship plays a central role in its ideological framework. Proponents claim that many mosques in India were built over temples destroyed by Muslim rulers, portraying this as evidence

of the "foreign" nature of Muslim rule. However, academic historians have thoroughly debunked these assertions, highlighting that such claims are highly exaggerated and often lack historical evidence.<sup>148</sup> Scholars emphasize that in medieval South Asia, the demolition, construction, and reconstruction of places of worship were common practices across all ruling powers and were not exclusive to Muslim rulers.

As per the Places of Worship Act enacted in 1991, the status of places of worship was to be maintained as it was on August 15, 1947, to prevent the possibility of religious conflict.<sup>149</sup> However, in 2022, a Supreme Court bench led by then Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud ruled that the Act did not prevent a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. This ruling paved the way for a wave of similar petitions, including the one in Sambhal.<sup>150</sup>

The destruction of the Babri Masjid and the subsequent construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, along with the court order on Gyanvapi, has amplified calls for the destruction of minority places of worship. Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh ranked as the top two states for hate speeches targeting places of worship in 2024, recording 59 and 49 speeches, respectively, followed by Madhya Pradesh (27), Rajasthan (23), Himachal Pradesh (20), Bihar (12), Gujarat (12), New Delhi (11), Uttarakhand (11), Jharkhand (10), Odisha (8), West Bengal (8), Haryana (6), Telangana (6), Chhattisgarh (4), Assam (2), Goa (2), Karnataka (2), Punjab (1), and Tripura (1).

**FIGURE 18: MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF HATE SPEECH TARGETING PLACES OF WORSHIP**





The monthly data highlights how major political and communal events significantly influenced the frequency of such speeches. The month of January saw 28 speeches, driven by the Ram Temple consecration in Ayodhya, a key moment for Hindu nationalist mobilization. The numbers surged to 45 in May, coinciding with the general election campaign, as leaders leveraged communal rhetoric to polarize the electorate. September recorded 40 speeches, reflecting the impact of the anti-mosque campaign in Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh, while December saw a spike to 35 speeches, mostly due to Shaurya Jagran Yatras, or 'victory rallies,' by the VHP to celebrate the demolition of the Babri mosque.

An analysis of 2024 hate speech events targeting places of worship shows the central role of Hindu nationalist groups in fomenting and spreading this trope in public discourse. The VHP-Bajrang Dal led the count, organizing 68 such events, followed by the BJP (50), the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP)-Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD) (24), the Sakal Hindu Samaj (15), and the Hindu Rashtra Sena (10).

Several political, far-right, and religious figures were prominent in delivering hate speeches targeting places of worship in 2024. Assam Chief Minister Sarma led the list with 25 such speeches, followed by T. Raja Singh, the BJP legislator from Telangana, with 14. Adityanath and far-right social media influencer Kajal Hindustani each delivered 13 speeches.

On May 10, during a campaign speech in Kolkata, West Bengal, Sarma stated, "We want to see a temple in place of Gyanvapi mosque... We also want to see a temple at Krishna Janmabhoomi [Shahi Idgah Mosque] in Mathura," signaling an explicit endorsement of the far-right narrative that targets Muslim places of worship.<sup>151</sup>

At another speech delivered by Sarma in Mangolpuri, New Delhi, on May 12, he said, "The Mughals took away our Krishna Janambhoomi, they took away our Ram Janambhoomi, and in Banaras [Varanasi], they took our land and built Gyanvapi Mosque. Modi has installed Ram Lalla [Ram Temple] and liberated us from Babri Masjid, but we need to liberate Krishna Janambhoomi [Shahi Idgah Mosque] in Mathura, right?"<sup>152</sup>

During a rally in Begum Bazar, Hyderabad, Telangana, on April 17, T. Raja Singh openly declared plans to take over 40,000 mosques.<sup>153</sup> On December 20, while speaking at an event at Ramlila Maidan in Sikar, Rajasthan, Singh referred to the mosques in Kashi and Mathura as "bolts" and declared that Hindus are prepared to "remove them."<sup>154</sup>

Adityanath, speaking at an election rally in Patna, Bihar, on May 28, said: “We are heading towards Mathura. Our Krishna can't wait. Only Ram Bhakts (BJP) can achieve this.”<sup>155</sup>

Other Hindu far-right leaders, like AHP-RBD chief Togadia, called for revenge against Muslims by destroying the mosques in Mathura and Kashi in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh on January 15.<sup>156</sup> At another event in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, on January 30, Togadia warned that “we will step on their [Muslims'] chests and build the temples.”<sup>157</sup>

## 11.2 Anti-Mosque Campaign in Himachal Pradesh

In September 2024, dozens of towns and villages across Himachal Pradesh state witnessed an organized campaign by Hindu far-right groups targeting mosques, alleging that the structures were illegally constructed.<sup>158</sup> The campaign began with a local mosque in Sanjauli, a town in Shimla. Under pressure from far-right groups, including individuals associated with the ruling Congress party in the state, the administration quickly ordered the demolition of portions of the mosque.<sup>159</sup> This incident unfolded within a broader climate of rising anti-Muslim hate in Himachal Pradesh—a state that had historically seen minimal anti-minority violence or inter-religious strife. In 2024, the state recorded 48 anti-Muslim speeches, with 20 specifically calling for the targeting of places of worship.

A report by Article 14 documented nearly 30 anti-Muslim rallies in the state between September 1 and October 5.<sup>160</sup>

While speaking at a protest rally against an under-construction mosque in Shimla on September 5, Runit Singh Thakur, President of the Devbhumi Kshatriya Sangathan, alleged that Muslims were engaging in “love jihad” and advocated for a social boycott of Muslim-owned businesses.<sup>161</sup> On September 11 in Chamba, the VHP organized a protest at the Deputy Commissioner’s office accusing Muslims of “infiltrating Himachal” and constructing illegal mosques and madrassas, along with claims of “Islamic Jihad” and “land jihad.”<sup>162</sup>

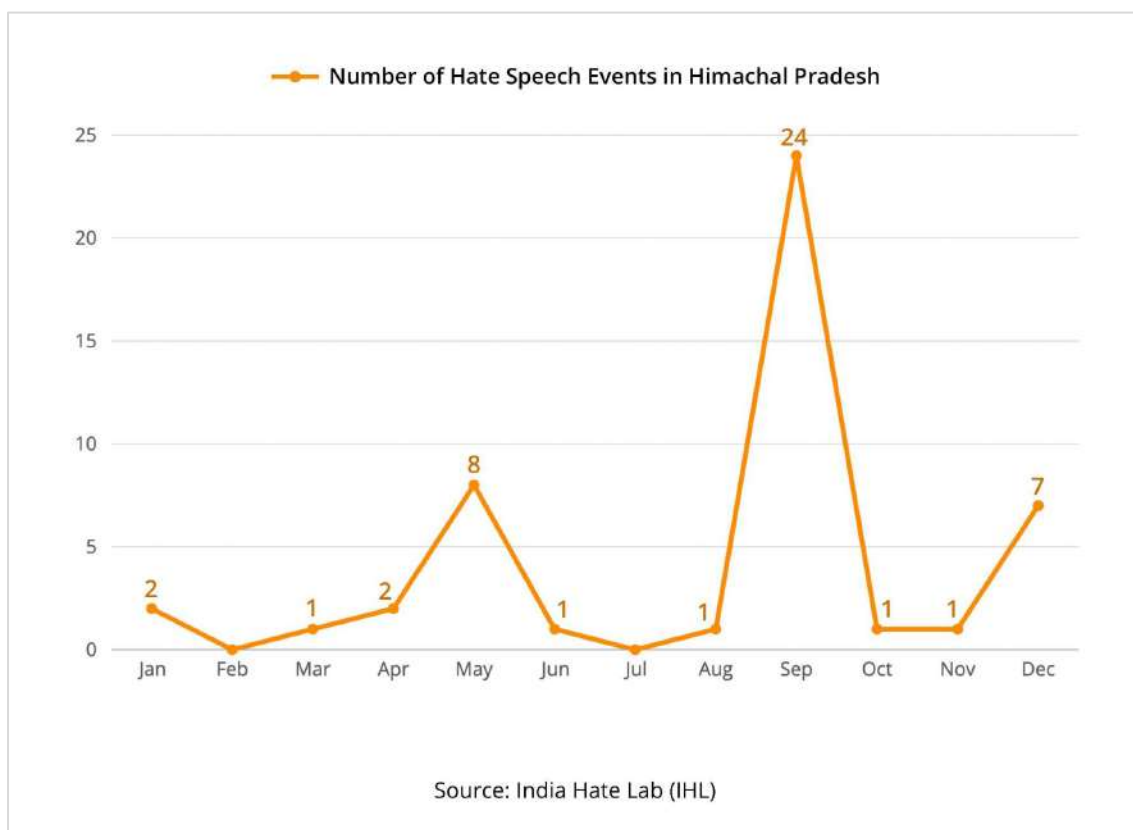
Similarly, during a protest in Dharamshala on the same day, the organizers accused Muslims of “eyeing Hindu daughters and sisters, wherever they go” and “indulging in illegal activities while rampantly constructing mosques within a few years.”<sup>163</sup>

At a hate rally in Palampur on September 14, far-right supporters chanted derogatory and inflammatory slogans such as, “Mullas-thullas [a pejorative term for Muslims] won’t be allowed... Masjids won’t be allowed in Palampur... Beat the mullahs with shoes.”<sup>164</sup>

In Kangra on September 15, a protest against an allegedly “illegal mosque” turned violent as Hindu extremists vandalized shops owned by Muslim vendors while chanting anti-Muslim slogans.<sup>165</sup>

These events in Himachal Pradesh must be understood within the broader political context. During the 2024 general elections, BJP leaders used hate speech targeting Muslims as a central component of their election campaign in Himachal Pradesh, promoting a general climate of hate that culminated in an organized campaign against places of worship in the state.

**FIGURE 19: HATE SPEECH TRENDS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH IN 2024**



On May 11, BJP leader Tejasvi Surya, during a campaign speech, referred to Muslims by using the derogatory term “mulla” and stated, “The Congress party will allow Muslims to kill cows and implement sharia law in the country. If Congress were in power, they would have forcibly asked all the women to wear burkha.”<sup>166</sup>

On May 24, Modi delivered a speech in Shimla in which he claimed, “They (the Congress) want to give away SC/ST, OBC reservation to their vote bank, the one which does vote jihad, they want to give it away to those Muslims. They did it in Karnataka and now want to implement it in the whole country.”<sup>167</sup>

Chief Minister Adityanath deployed similar hateful rhetoric during a May 30 rally in Mandi, where he stated, “The Congress manifesto looks like a Muslim League manifesto. They will implement Muslim personal law. They will become a Talibani regime. Women will have to wear burqas; they won’t be able to go to school or markets. They want to bring back triple talaq. This won’t happen under the BJP. They will x-ray your assets and distribute them among Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Afghan infiltrators.”<sup>168</sup>

The hate speech deployed during the BJP’s general election campaign likely galvanized anti-Muslim sentiment in Himachal Pradesh. Some Congress leaders in the state have also played a role in further amplifying anti-Muslim narratives. On September 25, Vikramaditya Singh, the state Minister for Public Works, issued a controversial order mandating that food outlets display the names and addresses of their owners—a policy widely viewed as promoting the boycott of Muslim vendors.<sup>169</sup> Although public backlash forced the revocation of the policy, that such an order could be issued underscores how deeply anchored anti-Muslim sentiment is in the political discourse in the state.

Overall, escalating hate speech and legal battles related to mosques in Himachal Pradesh and across India reflect a systematic and well-coordinated campaign by Hindu nationalist groups, political leaders, and extremist religious figures. This campaign seeks to ignite new religious conflicts by weaponizing historical revisionism and reframing mosques, on the basis of dubious historical claims, as symbols of alleged past injustices.

## 12. Political Shifts and Hate Speech

The southern Indian state of Karnataka stands out as a notable example of some progress shown in tackling hate speech between 2023 and 2024. This shift is largely attributed to political changes in the state. Until May 2023, Karnataka was governed by the BJP, but following the Congress party's victory in the state elections, the new administration implemented measures that contributed to a decline in hate speech incidents.

Despite a national surge of 74.4% in hate speech incidents between 2023 and 2024, Karnataka witnessed a 20% decline, with 32 recorded hate speech events in 2024, compared to 40 in 2023. This progress becomes even more apparent when considering that six of the 32 events took place during the 2024 general election campaign, and four of them were delivered by national BJP leaders—Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Shah.

In effect, Karnataka significantly reduced localized hate speech, demonstrating a marked contrast to the national trend. The state's share of all hate speech events in India dropped from 6% in 2023 to just 2.7% in 2024, highlighting the impact of political shifts and governance in curbing hate.

Such progress is not coincidental or accidental. Unlike many other states, Karnataka adopted a proactive approach to tackling hate speech, misinformation, and fake news. After coming to power, the state government established the Information Disorder Tackling Unit (IDTU), a specialized body tasked with identifying and addressing hate speech and disinformation. During its 90-day trial period, the unit conducted 537 fact-checks and filed at least 18 First Information Reports (FIRs).<sup>170</sup> Encouraged by these results, the government now plans to formalize fact-checking mechanisms to further curb the spread of fake news and prevent communal tensions.

The state police have also shown a commitment to curb hate speech. In July 2024, Karnataka Director General and Inspector General of Police Alok Mohan issued directives to law enforcement officers, instructing them to initiate legal action against individuals delivering hate speeches.<sup>171</sup> Over the next few years, it will be imperative that the government balances its well-intentioned efforts to tackle hate speech with

appropriate guardrails to ensure that these mechanisms are not misused to go after political opponents or limit freedom of speech and expression.

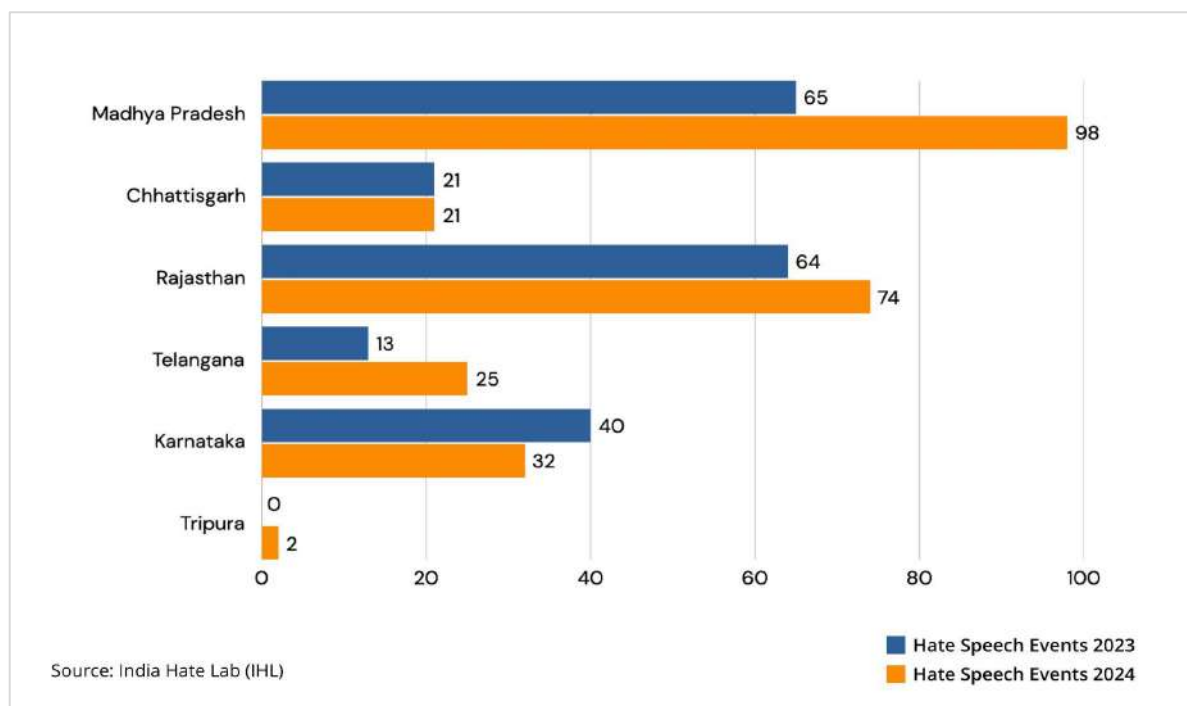
At the same time, the state has also benefited from strengthened civil society efforts, such as the "Hate Speech Beda" initiative, a collective of volunteer lawyers dedicated to fighting legal cases against individuals who engage in hate speech.<sup>172</sup>

However, it is important to note that not all opposition-ruled states have achieved similar success in addressing hate speech. In stark contrast to Karnataka, the Congress-led government in Himachal Pradesh has shown extraordinary leniency toward such harmful rhetoric, allowing hate speech to proliferate unchecked in the state.

Telangana, which the Congress flipped from the incumbent Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in 2023, witnessed a rise in hate speech events, increasing from 13 in 2023 to 25 in 2024.

The distinctiveness of Karnataka's approach becomes even clearer when compared to the five other states that held assembly elections in 2023: Madhya Pradesh and Tripura (where the BJP retained power) and Rajasthan (flipped from the Congress to the BJP), Chhattisgarh (flipped from the Congress to the BJP) and Telangana (flipped from the BRS to the Congress).

**FIGURE 20: HATE SPEECH FLUCTUATIONS IN ELECTION STATES OVER 2023 AND 2024**



While Karnataka reduced hate speech, four states that held elections in 2023 witnessed a surge, with hate speech events rising from 163 in 2023 to 220 in 2024, marking a 35% increase. This suggests that Karnataka's progress was not merely due to the absence of a legislative election in 2024 but rather a reflection of tangible proactive governance initiatives in tackling hate.

Rajasthan saw a 15.6% increase, with hate speech incidents rising from 64 in 2023 to 74 in 2024, while Madhya Pradesh experienced a sharp 50.8% surge, with incidents jumping from 65 to 98 during the same period. In contrast, Chhattisgarh remained unchanged, recording the same number of hate speech events in both years. Odisha, which held elections in 2024 and was flipped by the BJP from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), saw a dramatic spike, with hate speech events soaring from just 2 in 2023 to 18 in 2024.

While Karnataka still has significant work to do in further reducing hate speech, its relative success underscores the crucial role of governance and political will in addressing anti-minority hate. The state's proactive interventions and strong political commitment stand in stark contrast to other states, both BJP and non-BJP ruled, where hate speech has escalated unchecked.

## 13. Judicial and Legislative Developments on Hate Speech

The year 2024 exposed significant institutional failures in addressing hate speech in India. Though the BJP and its allies continued to maintain their dominance in the legislative chambers of parliament, the long-held hope by civil society and social activists persisted that judicial institutions could serve as a crucial safeguard against anti-minority violence and the pervasiveness of hateful rhetoric. However, these expectations were severely eroded in 2024 as judicial inaction and institutional complacency failed to curb the escalating spread of hate speech.

On December 8, Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court delivered an anti-Muslim speech at an event organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). During his address, Justice Yadav made statements widely criticized as prejudicial toward the Muslim community. Discussing social change within India's religious communities, he remarked, "We (referring to the Hindu community) have addressed the ills in our practices, then why are you (referring to the Muslim community) not doing away with this law, that while your first wife is there, you can have three wives without her consent... that is not acceptable."<sup>173</sup>

He also used the derogatory term *kathmulla* when referring to the Muslim community. He further asserted, "I have no hesitation in saying that this is Hindustan [India]...and the country will run according to the majority who live in Hindustan."

These remarks are emblematic of a broader trend, highlighting how anti-Muslim hate is increasingly normalized within institutional spaces. Critics argue that Justice Yadav's statements not only undermine judicial impartiality but also reflect the growing institutional tolerance for hate speech in India.<sup>174</sup>

### 13.1 Judicial Inaction during the 2024 Elections

The 2024 election campaign period in India saw a troubling rise in incidents of hate speech, particularly by leaders associated with the BJP and its allies. The incidents are worth examining, to understand the judiciary's role in addressing cases of hate speech brought before courts.



In its 2014 ruling in *Pravasi Bhilai Sanghatan v. Union of India*, the Indian Supreme Court recognized the need for a statutory definition of hate speech.<sup>175</sup> It directed the Law Commission of India to make recommendations to the Indian parliament instead of strengthening the Election Commission of India's (ECI) mandate in dealing with incidents of hate speech during election campaigns. Over the next decade, neither a statutory definition of hate speech nor significant reforms to the ECI's mandate materialized, leaving the issue unresolved by the time of the 2024 elections.

This lack of progress became evident as courts were called upon to address hate speech incidents during the campaign. In May 2024, activists filed a plea with the Supreme Court, highlighting the rise in hate speech, including anti-Muslim remarks made by Prime Minister Modi and Union Minister Anurag Thakur. The petition urged the Court to direct the ECI to take stricter action against politicians engaging in hate speech, including prosecuting them and disqualifying them from standing for elections.

On May 14, the Supreme Court dismissed the plea, stating, "We are not inclined to interfere. We cannot issue such directions under Article 32 (writ jurisdiction)," and deferred the matter to the ECI.<sup>176</sup> This decision puzzled many observers, as the petition had already pointed out the ECI's repeated failure to take meaningful action against hate speech during the election campaign. The Court's apathy was particularly concerning given the data collected by IHL, which recorded 269 cases of hate speech in May alone—the highest monthly total in all of 2024.

Deferring responsibility to the ECI became the judiciary's default approach in addressing hate speech by prominent BJP leaders. Another petition filed in the Delhi High Court against hate speeches by Modi alleged violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and sought judicial intervention. The plea argued that "inaction on the part of the Respondent (the ECI) is manifestly arbitrary, malafide, impermissible, and constitutes a violation of its constitutional duty. It amounts to rendering the MCC futile."<sup>177</sup> However, the Delhi High Court dismissed the petition, with the judge stating, "I cannot micromanage the ECI as to how they want to deal with [the issue]," and noting that the ECI's ongoing written proceedings would not conclude before the election period ended.<sup>178</sup>

By routinely declining to take direct action or issue clear guidelines to the ECI regarding its inaction, the judiciary failed to uphold its constitutional duty to protect citizens and address the growing issue of hate speech. This pattern of judicial inaction

allowed hateful, anti-Muslim rhetoric to proliferate unchecked, eroding public trust in both the courts and the democratic process.

## 13.2 Hate Speech and the New Indian Penal Code

In August 2023, the BJP government introduced the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)—which translates to the Indian Penal Code—in the Indian Parliament. The BNS forms part of the BJP's broader push to promote its vision of 'decolonial' lawmaking, ostensibly aiming to replace British-era colonial laws that remained embedded in India's Penal Code. As the BNS took effect on July 1, 2024, it is crucial to examine how its new provisions address the growing issues of hate speech across the country.

In 2017, the Law Commission of India emphasized the need to tackle hate speech by submitting its 267th report, titled "Hate Speech."<sup>179</sup> The report recommended adding specific provisions to the Indian Penal Code to address hate speech effectively. The Law Commission identified gaps in the existing legal framework, which lacked clear and precise measures to combat hate speech. These recommendations, coupled with the rise in communal tensions, make it essential to analyze whether the BNS delivers on this critical need.

The BNS notably disregarded earlier Supreme Court judgments that called for a statutory definition of "hate speech" and ignored the Law Commission's recommendations for introducing specific provisions to address hate speech. The only significant change from the existing provisions of the Indian Penal Code, such as Sections 153A and 153B, is the inclusion of "electronic communication" as a medium where hate speech can be prosecuted.<sup>180</sup> However, as the legal team from Citizens for Justice and Peace pointed out, the term "electronic communication" is not defined anywhere within the BNS document.<sup>181</sup>

The provision is poised for misuse by law enforcement, as evidenced by a recent case in Uttar Pradesh. On July 5, journalist Zakir Ali Tyagi reported on a mob lynching of a Muslim man in the Shamli district. The following day, the police filed a First Information Report (FIR) against Zakir and four others under Section 196 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for promoting enmity between different groups.<sup>182</sup>

This case illustrates how the BNS, instead of equipping courts and law enforcement to address hate speech, can be weaponized to target journalists and critics. The inadequacy of the BNS becomes even more evident when examining hate speech

trends following its enforcement in July 2024. From August to December, incidents of hate speech consistently exceeded 100 cases per month, highlighting the BNS's inability to curb this rising issue effectively.

### 13.3 The Judiciary and Rohingya Refugees

In 2024, two significant cases highlighting the spread of hate and dangerous speech targeting Rohingya refugees came before Indian courts. On January 31, the Delhi High Court dismissed a petition filed by Rohingya refugees seeking intervention to compel Facebook India to “immediately take measures to stop the use of its algorithmic features” that amplified “hateful and harmful content against the Rohingya community.”<sup>183</sup> The petition referenced posts that labeled Rohingya refugees as “cockroaches that need to be trampled” and called for action to “wipe out illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingyas from our soil.”<sup>184</sup>

The court rejected the petition, reasoning that any attempt to impose “prior censorship” on content would set a harmful precedent and violate freedom of speech principles. The court further expressed confidence in Facebook's internal grievance redressal mechanism and advised the petitioners to seek resolution through those channels.

Furthermore, the court's reliance on Facebook's grievance redressal mechanism appears misplaced, given the platform's repeated failures to address extremist content.<sup>185</sup>

In July 2024, the Bombay High Court heard multiple petitions filed against BJP leaders Nitesh Rane, T. Raja Singh, and others for hate speech targeting the Rohingya community earlier in January. It is important to note that both Raja and Rane are habitual offenders when it comes to delivering hate speeches. Over the past year, Singh delivered 32 hate speeches, while Rane delivered 29.

The petitions highlighted at least three speeches by Rane, in which he referred to the Muslim community in India as “Rohingyas,” “Bangladeshis,” and “jihadis”— all comments that were further amplified by T. Raja Singh and others.<sup>186</sup>

In response, the Maharashtra Police, represented by public prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar, argued that since “Rohingyas and Bangladeshis are not from India and they have entered our jurisdiction illegally,” no case could be filed under Section 295A, which addresses hate speech provisions. Venegaonkar further contended that “the

use of such words does not hurt the sentiments of any Indian or any community in India.”<sup>187</sup> The court accepted these arguments and dismissed the petitions.

Taken together, the judiciary and legislative institutions in India failed to provide meaningful safeguards against the surge in hate speech in 2024. Instead of acting as a check on escalating anti-minority rhetoric, the Indian courts frequently sidestepped responsibility. Judicial inaction during the general elections, particularly in response to hate speech from senior BJP leaders, weakened public trust in legal institutions, further normalizing inflammatory rhetoric in political discourse.

## 14. Social Media Platforms and Hate Speech

The advent of social media in India has dramatically reshaped the political and ideological landscape, providing Hindu nationalist political parties, groups, and leaders with powerful tools to propagate their narratives. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, and X (formerly Twitter) have been instrumental in amplifying and mainstreaming Hindu nationalist ideology, enabling the rapid dissemination of hateful and extremist content. One of the most troubling aspects of this digital mobilization is the widespread sharing and live streaming of in-person hate speech events and gatherings, which reach not only audiences within India, but also the global Indian diaspora.

Meta-owned platforms, in particular, have played a major role in the spread of digital hate since Prime Minister Modi's rise to power in 2014.<sup>188</sup> Facebook has over 581 million users in India,<sup>189</sup> while WhatsApp usage is projected to reach nearly 800 million users in India this year.<sup>190</sup> Instagram also boasts a 392 million user base in the country. Beyond Meta, YouTube remains a dominant platform, with 462 million users,<sup>191</sup> Telegram has nearly 84 million users,<sup>192</sup> while X (formerly Twitter) has a relatively smaller user base of 27.3 million in India.<sup>193</sup>

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen has noted that Modi was among the "early ones who weaponized social media," leveraging its influence to shape public opinion and political discourse.<sup>194</sup> Modi's BJP has employed a range of strategies—from shadow accounts<sup>195</sup> to ghost advertisers — to reach voters through Facebook, strengthening its electoral appeal in the short term while entrenching support for its Hindu nationalist ideology in the long term.<sup>196</sup> The party and its proxies also manage an extensive network of WhatsApp channels and groups.<sup>197</sup> According to an estimate by the Deccan Herald, the BJP operates over five million WhatsApp groups, with senior party leaders boasting that their messages can reach any location in the country within 12 minutes.<sup>198</sup> As Meta has increasingly enabled cross-posting across Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the significance of social media in shaping political discourse has only grown. To fully grasp the prevalence of hate speech in India, it is crucial to examine the role of Big Tech in enabling the spread of such content across their platforms.

Over the last decade, Hindu far-right groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP), Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD), Durga Vahini, Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM), Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), Hindu Rashtra Sena (HRS), Sri Ram Sena, Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan, Hindu Jagaran Vedike, Hindu Munnani, and various other regional organizations and leaders have significantly expanded their digital footprint and online ecosystem. These groups operate thousands of individual pages representing village units, city chapters, district chapters, state chapters, and individual leaders, contributing to a vast and widespread online presence.

This digital infrastructure has allowed hate and dangerous speeches—often delivered at in-person events like political rallies, religious parades, marches, and demonstrations—to transcend physical boundaries. These mass gatherings of various kinds now amplify their reach far beyond their immediate audiences. Whether through real-time live streaming or widely circulated video recordings, hate speech that once had limited reach is now broadcast to millions. This strategic use of social media ensures that such content remains accessible long after the event has ended, allowing it to be re-shared and repurposed.

While the Indian state has often failed to take action against hate entrepreneurs, major social media platforms have similarly disregarded the consequences of the use of their platforms as a medium to disseminate anti-minority hate.<sup>199</sup> These platforms have consistently failed to curb the spread of hateful content in India, even as the frequency of such incidents has remained high through the year. This was particularly evident during the 2024 general and state elections, as well as in the wake of hate rallies in India following exaggerated claims of a “Hindu genocide” in Bangladesh after Sheikh Hasina’s ouster in August.

It is important to note that the vast majority of hate speech events were cross-posted and shared across multiple platforms. A single incident can take a number of forms—ranging from a full-length, hours-long YouTube or Facebook video to a five-minute highlights clip on Facebook to a 30-second Instagram reel or X post. Hate influencers and extremist groups strategically tailor their content to maximize reach and engagement, adapting their messaging and format to suit the audience of each platform.

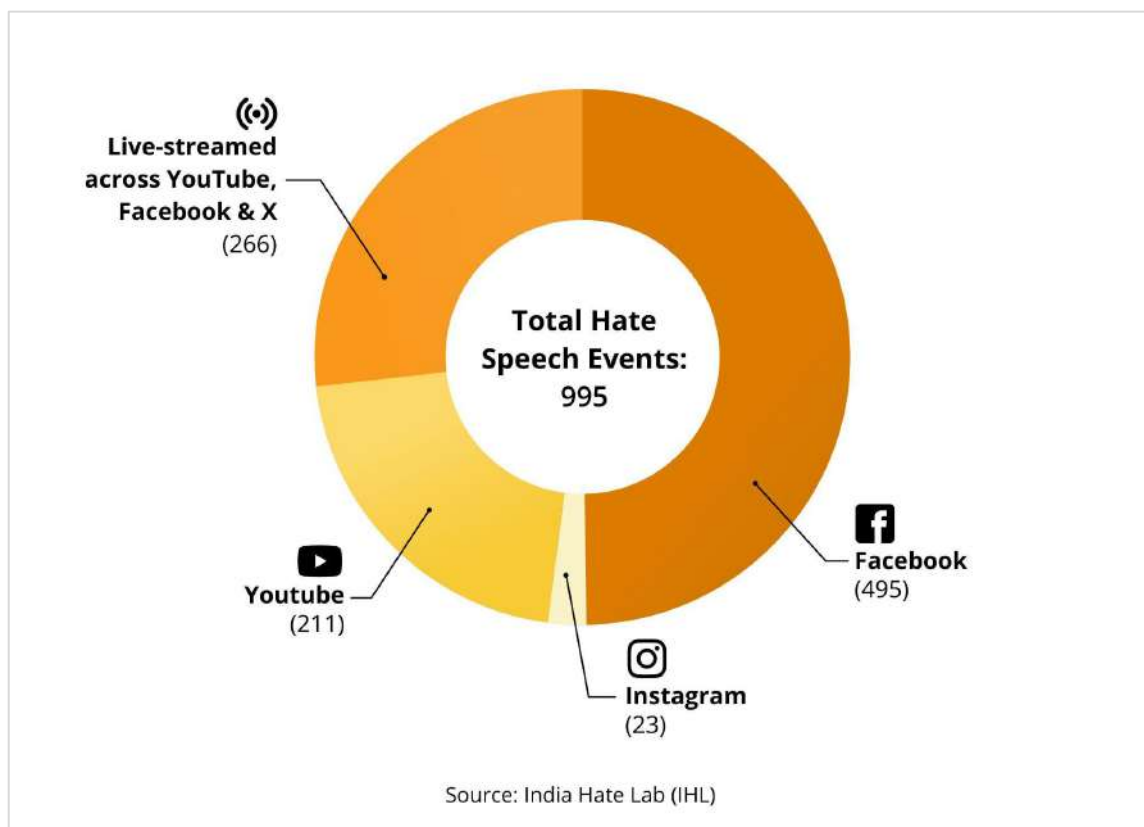
For this analysis, we examined the platforms where videos or live streams of in-person hate speech events were first shared. We primarily focused on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube due to their vast user bases in India and their preeminent

role in hosting live streams and videos of such events. Videos on these platforms are then extensively circulated across multiple platforms, including X and Telegram, where they are repackaged into various formats and reach a broader audience.

## 14.1 Hate Speech Trends on Social Media Platforms

Out of the 1,165 in-person hate speech events targeting Muslim and Christian minorities documented in 2024, IHL traced 995 of these events back to their original sources on social media platforms, where they were first shared or live streamed by BJP leaders, far-right organizations, or individual hate actors.

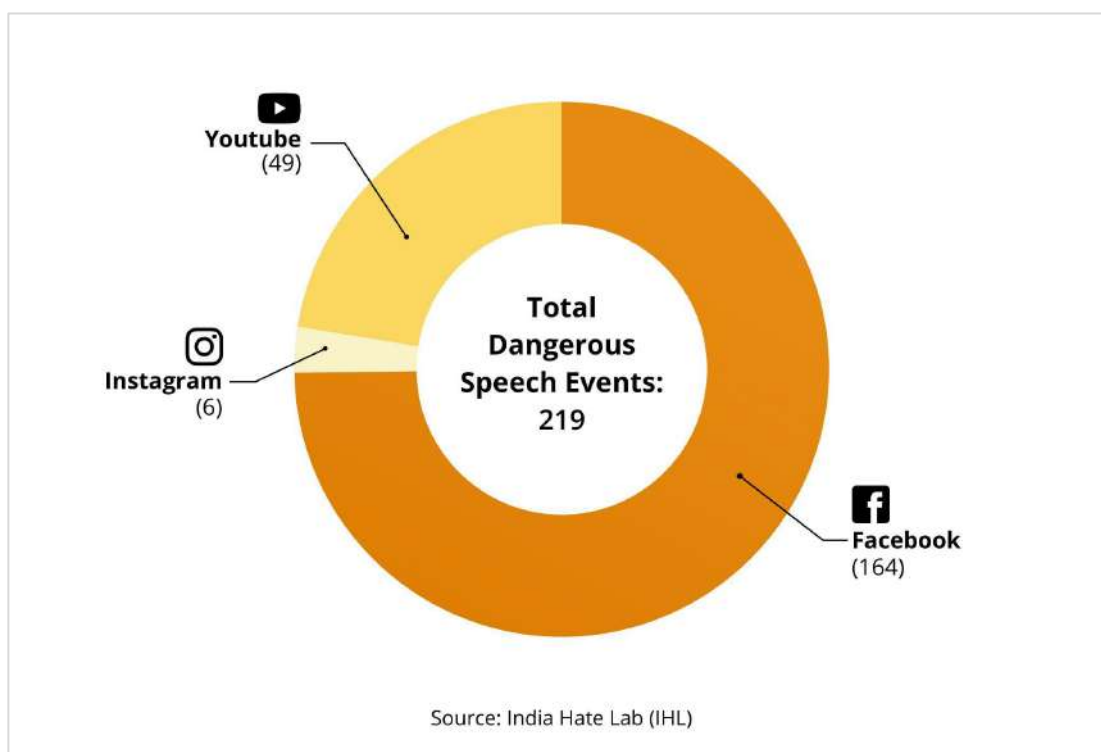
**FIGURE 21: HATE SPEECH ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**



Among these, a significant proportion —495 hate speech events (approximately 49.8%)—were exclusively shared on Facebook, highlighting its dominant role in the dissemination of hateful speech videos. Another 23 incidents (2.31%) were first shared on Instagram, while the remaining 211 videos of hate speech events (21.2%) were exclusively shared on YouTube. We identified 266 anti-minority hate speeches, accounting for 26.7%, delivered by senior members of the ruling BJP, primarily during

the April–June general elections, which were simultaneously live streamed across YouTube, Facebook, and X through their official accounts.

**FIGURE 22: DANGEROUS SPEECH ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**



Out of the 259 recorded instances of dangerous speech—including explicit calls for violence—219 were first shared or live streamed on social media platforms. Among these, a significant majority—164 speeches (74.8%)—were initially shared on Facebook, while 49 speeches (22.4%) were first posted on YouTube and six on Instagram.

A similar trend was observed in hate speech events involving calls for boycotts and calls to arms. Of the 94 boycott speeches shared on social media, 66 (70.2%) were disseminated via Facebook, while 26 (27.7%) were first posted on YouTube. Of 102 speeches with calls to arms, 70 (68.6%) were shared on Facebook, 28 on YouTube, and four on Instagram.

## 14.2 Live Streaming of Hate Speech Events

The ruling BJP extensively utilizes Facebook Live, YouTube Live, and X Live to broadcast election campaign speeches, where anti-Muslim hate and bigotry have increasingly become central themes. Its national and state-level social media

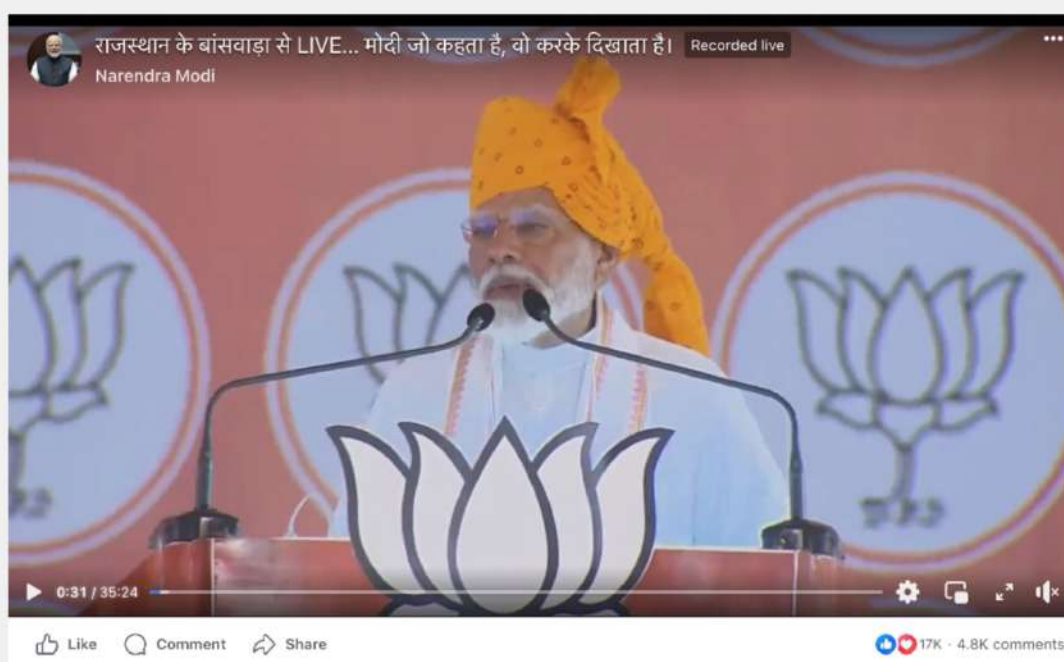


accounts, boasting millions of followers, along with the personal accounts of senior leaders, are actively used to live stream these speeches.

Modi delivered 67 hate speeches targeting Muslims during his election campaign, all of which were live streamed on his official social media accounts. His vast online following includes 26.5 million subscribers on YouTube, 50 million followers on Facebook, 104 million on Instagram, and 92 million on X.

In addition to Modi's speeches, other senior BJP leaders designated as 'star campaigners' by the party were also broadcast across the official pages of the BJP and its state units. The BJP's national and state pages have a combined reach of over 49 million followers on Facebook alone. The party's official Facebook account live streamed 1,317 videos in 2024.

One of Modi's most inflammatory speeches, delivered in Banswara, Rajasthan, where Modi referred to Muslims as "infiltrators" and employed various anti-Muslim tropes,<sup>200</sup> remains publicly available on his Facebook page, where it has garnered over one million views.<sup>201</sup>



Home Minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma have also utilized social media to broadcast anti-Muslim hate speeches delivered at election rallies and other public events. Their

speeches are widely disseminated across official and affiliated pages, reaching tens of millions of followers.

The frequency of live streamed speeches containing hate and dangerous rhetoric by state and local-level BJP leaders, far-right groups, and affiliated leaders has also increased significantly over the years. Live streams are particularly crucial for hate actors, as they allow them to circumvent platform rules on hate speech and amplify their messages in real-time. Research has shown that existing models of content moderation are less effective in tackling synchronous and live streamed content than static content.<sup>202</sup> In other contexts, the live stream features of social media sites, such as YouTube Live and Instagram Live, have been used to spread hate.<sup>203, 204</sup>

Apart from the national and state units of the BJP, the individual BJP leaders, far-right groups, and social media influencers have used social media platforms, especially Facebook, to live stream hate speeches in real time. BJP leader and minister Nitesh Rane delivered 29 hate speeches in 2024, out of which 24 were categorized as dangerous speeches with incitement to violence.<sup>205</sup> He first live streamed all the speeches on his Facebook page to his 379,000 followers,<sup>206</sup> and later shared snippets of his speeches with his 339,000 followers on Instagram<sup>207</sup> and 300,000 followers on X.<sup>208</sup> All his social media accounts carry a verified blue badge.



Each of Rane’s speeches constituted a clear outright violation of the community standards set by social media companies, all of which ban explicit calls for violence.

When it comes to dangerous speech and calls for violence, BJP legislator T. Raja Singh from Telangana ranks second after Rane. In 2024, Singh delivered 32 hate speeches at events across the country, including 22 instances where he incited violence, primarily against Muslims but also Christians. Of all the hate and dangerous speeches delivered, 16 speeches were initially shared on YouTube, while 13 appeared on Facebook. Singh no longer has official accounts on Facebook and Instagram, having been banned from both platforms in 2020 under Meta’s “dangerous individuals and organizations” policy for hate speech.<sup>209</sup> However, he and his supporters have circumvented the ban by creating an extensive network of groups and support pages in his name. These platforms frequently share details about his events and amplify his latest hate-filled and dangerous speeches.

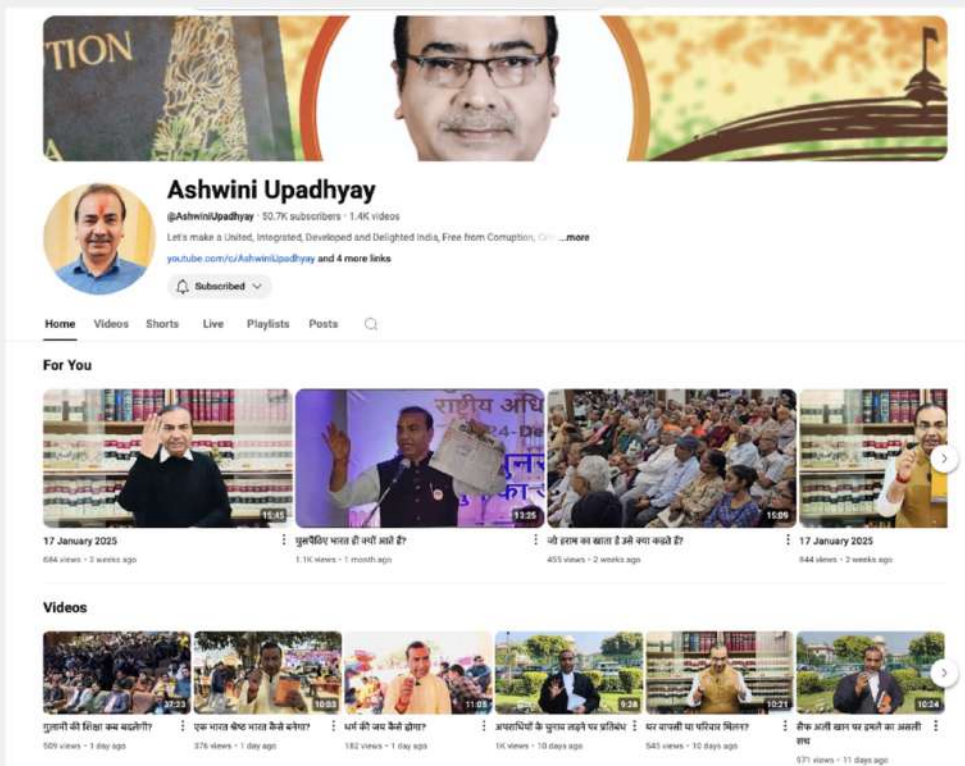
A Facebook group named “Raja Singh (Bhagyanagar) MLA” has 778.9K members,<sup>210</sup> while another group, “Raja Singh (Dhoolpet) MLA,” has 226.9K members.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, “RAJA SINGH YUVA SENA (RSYS)” has 10.3K members,<sup>212</sup> and “Tiger Raja Singh Official Group” has 28.7K members.<sup>213</sup>



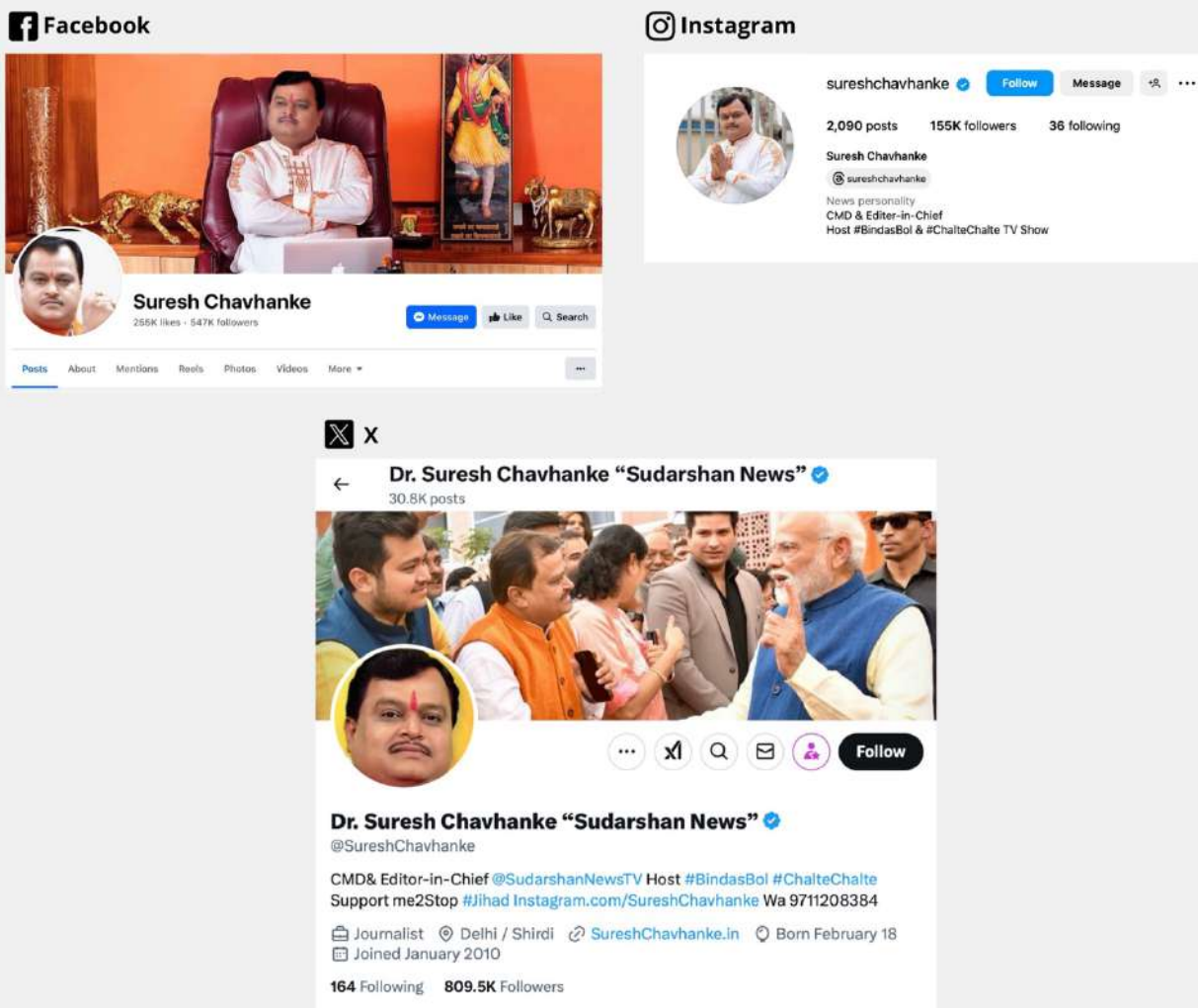
Beyond these, he has dozens of other pages, groups, and accounts in Hindi, with a collective following exceeding 100K. On Instagram, he and his supporters manage four main accounts under the usernames @rajasinghmla,<sup>214</sup> @t.usharajasinghofficial,<sup>215</sup> @t.rajabhaimla1,<sup>216</sup> and @t.rajabhaimla3,<sup>217</sup> with a combined following of 198.9K.



Similarly, Delhi BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, who delivered 14 hate speeches in 2024, routinely broadcasts his hate speeches to his 664,000 followers on Facebook,<sup>218</sup> 61,600 followers on Instagram,<sup>219</sup> 50,700 subscribers on YouTube<sup>220</sup> and 654,700 followers on X.<sup>221</sup> Both his Facebook and X accounts hold a verified blue badge.



The owner and chairman of the far-right TV channel Sudarshan News, Suresh Chavhanke, has been a prominent purveyor of hate speech.<sup>222</sup> In 2023, he delivered 25 in-person hate speeches. In 2024, his activity intensified with 36 hate speeches, including four speeches that explicitly called for violence. Chavhanke’s hate speeches at in-person gatherings are amplified through his vast online presence. With a reach of 548,000 followers on Facebook,<sup>223</sup> 153,000 on Instagram,<sup>224</sup> and 805,400 on X,<sup>225</sup> he is one of the most prominent far-right voices on social media. Both his Instagram and X accounts hold a verified blue badge.



The official pages of Sudarshan News play a significant role in amplifying his speeches. The YouTube channel, with over 2.53 million subscribers,<sup>226</sup> and the Facebook page, with 234,000 followers, frequently live stream and upload videos of his hate speeches.<sup>227</sup>



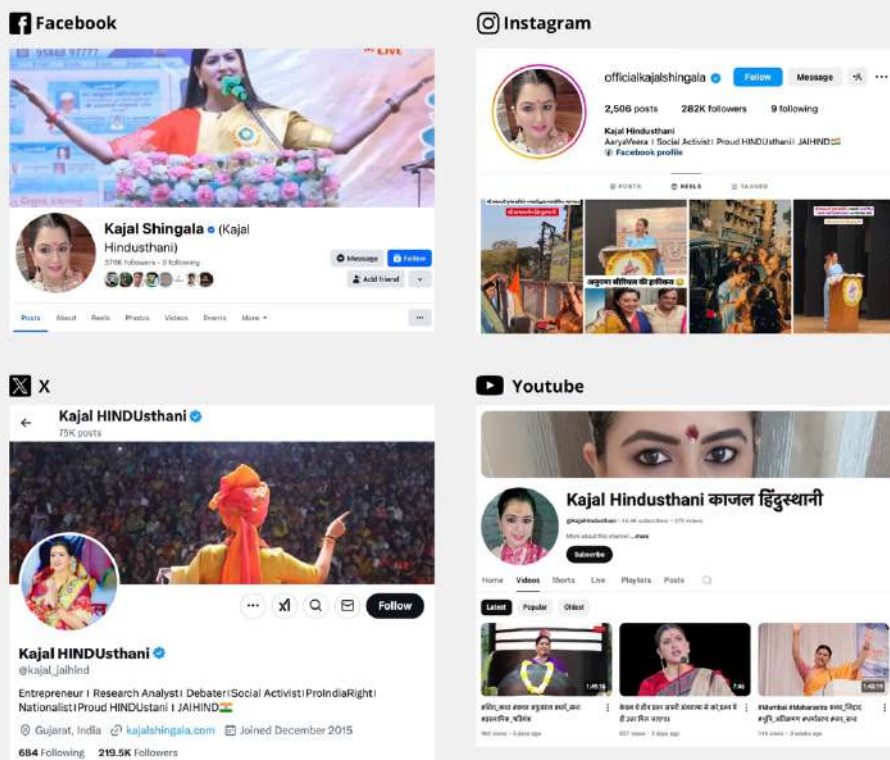
Shorter versions of these speeches are shared on Instagram (29,600 followers)<sup>228</sup> and X (692,000 followers).<sup>229</sup> His hate speeches are also disseminated through regional Facebook pages of Sudarshan such as Sudarshan News Jodhpur<sup>230</sup> and Sudarshan News Marathi,<sup>231</sup> which have a combined following of over 37,000. Further amplification of hate speeches occurs through two Facebook groups: “Sudarshan News” with 78,100 members<sup>232</sup> and “Sudarshan News Channelfans” with over 53,300 members.<sup>233</sup>



In 2024, Chavhanke’s hate speeches were primarily live streamed and shared on YouTube, with 30 out of 36 speeches first appearing on the Sudarshan News YouTube channel before being disseminated across his personal and organizational social media accounts. By regularly live streaming and uploading videos of his in-person hate speeches, he extends their reach far beyond the physical audiences at his gatherings.

Kajal Shingala, alias Kajal Hindustani, identifies herself as a Hindu nationalist influencer from Gujarat and has emerged as a prominent far-right voice, delivering anti-Muslim and anti-Christian speeches at events across the country. In 2023, she delivered 35 hate speeches, and in 2024, she delivered 23.

Although Shingala does not appear to have any formal affiliation with a specific organization, she enjoys a degree of recognition from officials.<sup>234</sup> She is followed by Prime Minister Modi on X and has shared the stage with BJP leaders on multiple occasions. With a significant online presence—boasting over 370,000 followers on Facebook,<sup>235</sup> 281,000 on Instagram,<sup>236</sup> 219,500 on X,<sup>237</sup> and 44,000 subscribers on YouTube<sup>238</sup>—Shingala routinely broadcasts hate speeches at in-person events to her followers. Of the 23 hate speeches recorded in our dataset, 12 were first shared on Facebook, while 10 were initially uploaded to YouTube. Among her social media accounts, Shingala’s Instagram and X profiles hold a verified blue badge.



Leaders of varying Hindu far-right groups have deployed an extensive network of organizational and individual accounts to live stream and disseminate recorded videos of their hate speeches delivered at in-person events.

Dhananjay Desai, the leader of the Hindu Rashtra Sena, frequently uses Facebook Live to broadcast his hate speeches to 80,000 followers on the platform.<sup>239</sup> Unsurprisingly, out of the 18 hate speech events attributed to Desai in our dataset, 16 were initially shared on Facebook. In addition to his presence on Facebook, where his account carries a verified blue badge, he has a following of 51,100 on Instagram.<sup>240</sup>



Desai was a primary accused in the 2014 murder of Mohsin Shaikh, a 28-year-old Muslim IT professional in Pune, Maharashtra. Shaikh was lynched by Desai's outfit members while returning home from prayers, targeted solely for his religious identity. In early 2023, following the BJP government's rise to power in the state, Desai was acquitted by the court.<sup>241</sup>



Pravin Togadia, chief of the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP) and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal (RBD), along with his fellow leaders utilizes an extensive network of AHP-RBD social media pages—spanning village units, city chapters, district chapters, state chapters, and individual leaders—to live stream and disseminate videos of hate speeches. In 2024, Togadia delivered 31 hate speeches, with 22 live-streamed or shared on Facebook (65,000 followers) and seven initially uploaded to YouTube.<sup>242</sup> His Instagram profile, which has 6,022 followers, carries a verified blue badge.<sup>243</sup>



Far-right Hindu monks have increasingly turned to social media as a powerful tool to expand their reach. Mahant Raju Das, a Hindu preacher and priest of Hanuman Garhi Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, frequently uses Facebook Live to broadcast his in-person hate speeches. He operates two Facebook accounts with a combined following of 134,000,<sup>244</sup> along with a YouTube channel with 2,660 subscribers<sup>245</sup> and an Instagram account boasting 193,000 followers.<sup>246</sup> One of his Facebook pages and his Instagram account carry a verified blue badge.<sup>247</sup> Das delivered 14 hate speeches, with 13 live-streamed or shared on Facebook and three initially uploaded to YouTube.<sup>248</sup>



Other monks, such as Swami Dipankar and Devikanand Thakur, are among the most prominent Hindu religious leaders who routinely engage in hate speech. Dipankar has a following of more than 1.7 million on Facebook<sup>249</sup> and 383,000 on Instagram,<sup>250</sup> while Devkinandan Thakur has four million followers on Facebook,<sup>251</sup> 1.4 million followers on Instagram,<sup>252</sup> and 5.3 million subscribers on YouTube.<sup>253</sup> Both religious leaders are known for promoting anti-Muslim conspiracy theories.

Swami Darshan Bharti, a religious leader from Uttarakhand, has been actively spreading anti-Muslim rhetoric in the state for years, including calls for ethnic cleansing. He has 57,000 followers on Facebook<sup>254</sup> and 5,666 followers on Instagram.<sup>255</sup> In 2024, he delivered four hate speeches, all of which were first shared on Facebook.



Some far-right monks who do not have personal profiles on social media rely on pages created by their disciples to disseminate videos of their hate speeches. Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, a militant monk from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, has repeatedly called for the genocide of Muslims.<sup>256</sup> One of his disciples runs a Facebook<sup>257</sup> and YouTube account,<sup>258</sup> Hindutva Mera Pehchaan, which has a combined following of 98,500 and frequently shares his speeches. Collectively, these accounts have shared over 2,000 videos to-date.

### 14.3 Failure to Enforce Community Guidelines

Meta's Community Standards define hateful conduct as "direct attacks against people — rather than concepts or institutions — on the basis of what we call protected characteristics," including religious affiliation.<sup>259</sup> The policy further states, "We don't allow hateful conduct on Facebook, Instagram, or Threads" and that the platform removes "dehumanizing speech, allegations of serious immorality or criminality, and slurs."<sup>260</sup> Additionally, Meta's Violence and Incitement policy prohibits language that "incites or facilitates violence and credible threats to public or personal safety," making such content subject to removal. Similarly, YouTube's Community Guidelines on Hate Speech explicitly prohibit "content that promotes violence or hatred against individuals or groups."<sup>261</sup>

Despite these clear policies, hate speech and dangerous speech continue to thrive on these platforms, raising serious concerns about the role of social media platforms in facilitating online hate, which can have dangerous real-world consequences for religious minorities in India.

We assessed the effectiveness of Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube’s reporting tools in enforcing Community Standards on Violence and Incitement. Between January 16 and 17, we reported 183 videos containing dangerous speech, including explicit calls for or incitement to violence—135 on Facebook, 43 on YouTube, and 5 on Instagram. The reported content featured speeches delivered at in-person events in multiple regional languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Odia, and Malayalam.

As of **February 6, 2025**, only 3 of the reported videos have been removed by Facebook, while the remaining **98.4%** continue to stay up across different platforms despite clear violations of community standards.

Our findings align with numerous reports over the last decade that have documented social media platforms’ wilful disregard for addressing hateful and extremist content targeting religious minorities in India.<sup>262</sup> Despite having clear community standards, these platforms have repeatedly failed to act against hate speech, particularly when it originates from individuals and organizations linked to the ruling BJP and the broader Hindu nationalist ecosystem.<sup>263</sup>

The inaction of social media platforms in India can be partially attributed to the political ties of their leadership teams. A 2020 Wall Street Journal report exposed how Facebook India’s former policy head, Ankhi Das, had allegedly asked for the company to go easy on ruling party leaders who “violated hate speech rules with anti-Muslim posts.”<sup>264</sup> Although she left Meta in 2020, the platform’s links with the BJP and its affiliated groups have remained strong.

Meta India’s current vice president, Shivnath Thukral, has deep ties to the BJP. He previously held a stake in a company that worked for Modi, the Prime Minister’s Office, and the BJP.<sup>265</sup> Thukral also played a significant role in Modi’s 2014 election campaign, managing pro-BJP online campaigns and Facebook pages.<sup>266</sup> Time Magazine reported that former Facebook employees believe Thukral was hired due

to his proximity to the BJP, further raising concerns about Meta's alignment with the ruling party.<sup>267</sup>

Like Meta, YouTube has also failed to curb the spread of hateful content on its platform.<sup>268</sup> The Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) and Global Witness found that YouTube continues to allow hate speech to spread in both Hindi and English. The study analyzed 79 videos containing gendered hate speech, and, despite being reported, YouTube took action on only one video by adjusting its age restrictions while allowing the other 78 to remain on the platform.<sup>269</sup>

YouTube has also become a key platform for 'Hindutva Pop'—a genre of far-right music videos that incites hatred and violence against religious minorities.<sup>270</sup> These pop songs, often shared widely across YouTube, promote anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and glorify attacks on Muslims, making them a potent tool for digital radicalization. The platform's failure to take action against such content further underscores its complicity in enabling online hate and violence in India.

Despite 2024 being a major election year in India, there is little evidence that social media platforms took extra precautions to prevent their misuse for propagating online hate. Additionally, the online disinformation about violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, originating from India, fueled religious tensions in both countries. In the absence of effective platform accountability, civil society organizations (CSOs) must step in and demand greater accountability from Big Tech. CSOs play a critical role in ensuring that tech platforms uphold their commitments to human rights, user safety, and freedom of expression, especially as platforms often view trust and safety operations as cost centers. Steps in this direction should include mobilizing consumer forums, engaging researchers to push for platform transparency, and advocating for advertising budgets to be tied to platform safety measures.

## 15. Conclusion

In our 2023 hate speech report, we had warned that the 2024 elections would mark a critical turning point for hate speech in the country.<sup>271</sup> The report predicted a sharp rise in hateful rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and disinformation fueled by the electoral climate. Trends observed in previous state and national election campaigns had already indicated that 2024 would see a marked escalation in hate speech.

The analysis of hate speech events in 2024 confirms this disturbing reality. Hate speech, spanning various hateful themes and narratives, including dangerous speech—a subset of hate speech—rose significantly. It has now become deeply embedded in India's political culture, institutional structures, and social fabric. Human Rights Watch and other rights organizations have highlighted how hate speech was central to Modi's election campaign.<sup>272</sup>

Hate speech in India also mirrored global trends, including the exploitation of social media for hate propagation, the spread of conspiracy theories, growing anti-democratic sentiment, and intensified backlash against minorities. The pervasiveness of Hindu nationalist ideology was evident at all levels—local, state, and national politics, within bureaucratic and institutional structures, and across society at large.

This report has exhaustively documented how hate speech actors operated with impunity, benefitting from government inaction and the complicity of social media platforms. The Election Commission of India (ECI) proved either unwilling or unable to take meaningful action against those violating electoral norms.<sup>273</sup> While the ECI did request that X take down an anti-Muslim video posted by the BJP's Karnataka unit, this was an exception rather than the rule.<sup>274</sup> Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of India rejected petitions urging the ECI to act against hate speech perpetrators, further emboldening political, non-political, and religious figures engaging in inflammatory rhetoric.<sup>275</sup>

The complicity of Big Tech in enabling hate speech was evident in its utter unwillingness to prepare for or allocate resources to counter the near-certain misuse of social media platforms for spreading and amplifying hate speech during the 2024 Indian general and state elections. A report found that Meta approved fourteen political advertisements during the election period that explicitly called for the killing of Muslims.<sup>276</sup>

The weaponization of hate speech against minorities in electoral and non-electoral contexts has been widely documented across India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Brazil, and the United States over the past decade.<sup>277</sup> Despite this, social media platforms failed to take preventive measures, ignoring well-established patterns of hate speech proliferation during elections. Beyond the fear of antagonizing the Modi government, the leadership of these platforms—both in India and at their parent companies—had no justifiable excuse for failing to prepare for the foreseeable exploitation of their platforms to promote hate speech.

In India's current political climate, the rewards for hate speech, coupled with de facto immunity for extremist Hindu far-right leaders, have created a strong incentive for both established and aspiring leaders to engage in inflammatory rhetoric. Over the last decade, the Modi government has actively rewarded politicians like Kapil Mishra<sup>278</sup> and T. Raja Singh<sup>279</sup> for delivering hate speeches, signaling that communal incitement can be a pathway to political advancement. Hate speech has become a mechanism for rising Hindu nationalist leaders to gain visibility on the national stage and capture the attention of the BJP's top brass. A prime example is Nitish Rane, a BJP legislator from Maharashtra, who was among the most prolific purveyors of dangerous speech in 2024 and was subsequently rewarded with a Cabinet Minister position in the BJP-led Maharashtra government.

Moreover, the BJP's politicization of religious identity has reshaped public discourse on Muslim identity to such an extent that leaders from opposition parties largely refrained from categorically condemning hate speech against Muslims.

The persistence of hate speech targeting minorities—and its sharp escalation in the lead-up to the 2024 elections—suggests a deeply troubling trajectory. Hate speech is no longer just an instrument of communal polarization but is becoming increasingly normalized as a standard feature of Indian political culture and electoral campaigns. It reflects the continued erosion of democratic norms and the weakening of institutions under successive Modi-led BJP governments. This decline has been exacerbated by a biased mainstream media, the widespread use of social media to spread misinformation, disinformation, and abuse against minorities, and the deep entanglement of the BJP with state institutions, effectively transforming government agencies into instruments of the ruling party. The lack of public outrage over hate speech—whether during elections or in everyday political discourse—further suggests broader social acceptance and normalization of the sentiments expressed in such rhetoric.

In sum, the degradation of Indian political life through the mainstreaming of hate speech signals a new low in India's political culture, one with grave implications for the security, psychological well-being, and fundamental sense of belonging of religious minorities in the Indian republic. Given these disturbing realities, combating hate speech targeting religious minorities has become an urgent imperative—not only for the protection of vulnerable communities, but for the preservation of India's democratic fabric itself.



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