SOCIAL MEDIA AND HATE SPEECH IN INDIA

CS◉H

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The India Hate Lab (IHL) is a project of the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, D.C. CSOH is strongly driven by its mission to advance research and inform policies that combat hate, violence, extremism, radicalism, and disinformation.

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 the role of social media with regard to 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, with polling held in seven phases between April 19 and June 1, 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. 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.

FIGURE 1: HATE SPEECH TRENDS ACROSS STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

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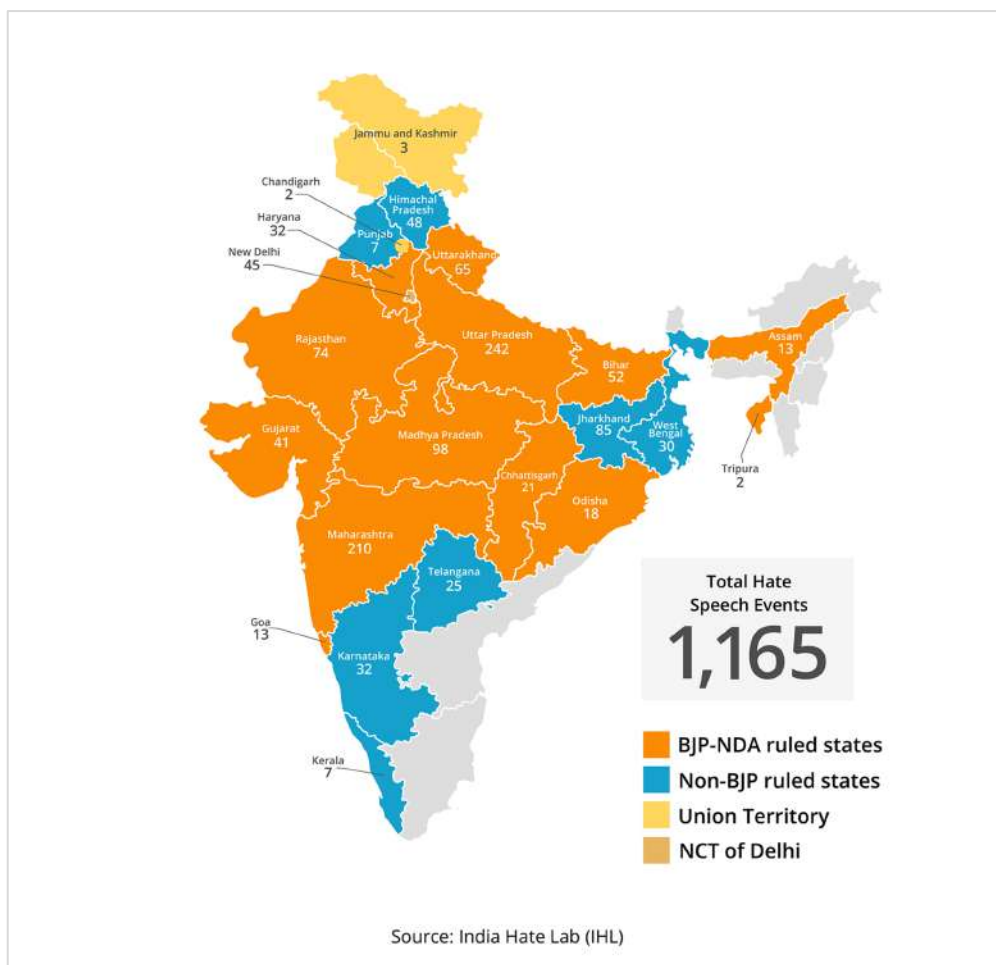
Religious minorities, in particular, were the target of these speeches, with 1,147 (98.5%) targeting Muslims—either explicitly (1,050) or alongside Christians (97)—while 115 (9.9%) targeted Christians, either explicitly (18) or alongside Muslims (97). There is some overlap, as these numbers indicate,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

FIGURE 2: BREAKDOWN OF HATE SPEECH BY TARGETED COMMUNITIES

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)
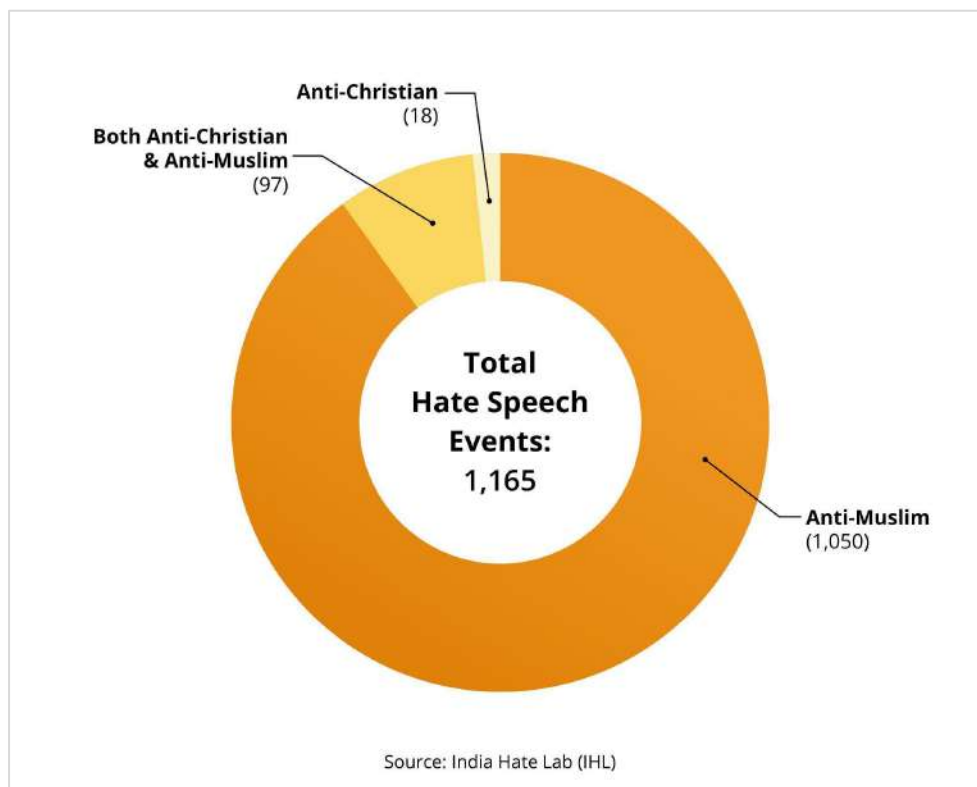
Dangerous speech—defined as speech that "increases the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group"—also saw a significant rise. A notable peak in hate speech occurred in May 2024, at the height of the election process. As was the case for the entire year, political leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (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 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.

Social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, and X (formerly Twitter)—were key instruments in enabling, amplifying, and mainstreaming

hate speech and extremist ideologies in India, as was the case globally.[2] In the Indian context, these platforms were 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 in the Indian context in 2024.

Hate speech in 2024 reflected longstanding Hindu nationalist tropes. All of these themes were reflected in, and amplified as a result of, social media discourse. Hate speeches frequently framed Muslims and Christians as "outsiders" in Hindu India and Muslims as a threat to Hindus. These speeches emphasized a 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.

The dynamics of hate speech in 2024 reflected both top-down and bottom-up trends. National leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, along with powerful regional figures such as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa 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.

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.

Viewed cumulatively, shifts in hate speech patterns in 2024, including on social media, 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. The role of social media in this process needs to be urgently recognized and addressed. In the rest of this report, we describe the key findings and methodology as they apply to the analysis of hate speech in India in 2024 generally, including on social media, before presenting a detailed and granular examination of the specific mobilization of social media for hate speech.

2. Key Findings

India Hate Lab (IHL) documented

1,165

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.

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).

22.2%
(259)

events featured dangerous speech, which includes **explicit calls for violence**.

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**.

● LIVE

Of **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**.

- BJP leaders and affiliated groups use Facebook Live, YouTube Live, and X Live to broadcast hate speech at election rallies and public events.

- BJP leaders, including **Prime Minister Modi, Amit Shah, and Yogi Adityanath**, have leveraged their massive digital following to amplify hate-filled election speeches.

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.

Hate speech content remains available even after removal due to re-uploading, repackaging into shorter clips, and dissemination across multiple platforms.

Despite being **banned** under Meta's Dangerous Individuals and Organizations (DOI) policy, BJP legislator **T. Raja Singh** continues to have a strong presence on Facebook and Instagram (collective following of over 1.1 million) through an extensive network of proxy accounts, fan pages, and supporter groups.

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."[1]

This definition, widely used by organizations and scholars to study hate speech, provides a foundational framework for our analysis.[2] 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.[3]

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.[4] 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.[5]

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 (refer to the box below).

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.[6]

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.[7]

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.[8]

UPSC Jihad: The baseless belief that Muslims manipulate civil service exams (UPSC) to infiltrate India's bureaucracy.[9]

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.[10]

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. 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.[11] Facebook has over 581 million users in India,[12] while WhatsApp usage is projected to reach nearly 800 million users in India this year.[13] Instagram also boasts a 392 million user base in the country. Beyond Meta, YouTube remains a dominant platform, with 462 million users,[14] Telegram has nearly 84 million users,[15] while X (formerly Twitter) has a relatively smaller user base of 27.3 million in India.[16]

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.[17] Modi's BJP has employed a range of strategies—from shadow accounts[18] 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.[19] The party and its proxies also manage an extensive network of WhatsApp channels and groups.[20] 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.[21] 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.[22] 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.

## 4.1 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 3: HATE SPEECH ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Source: India Hate Lab (IHL)
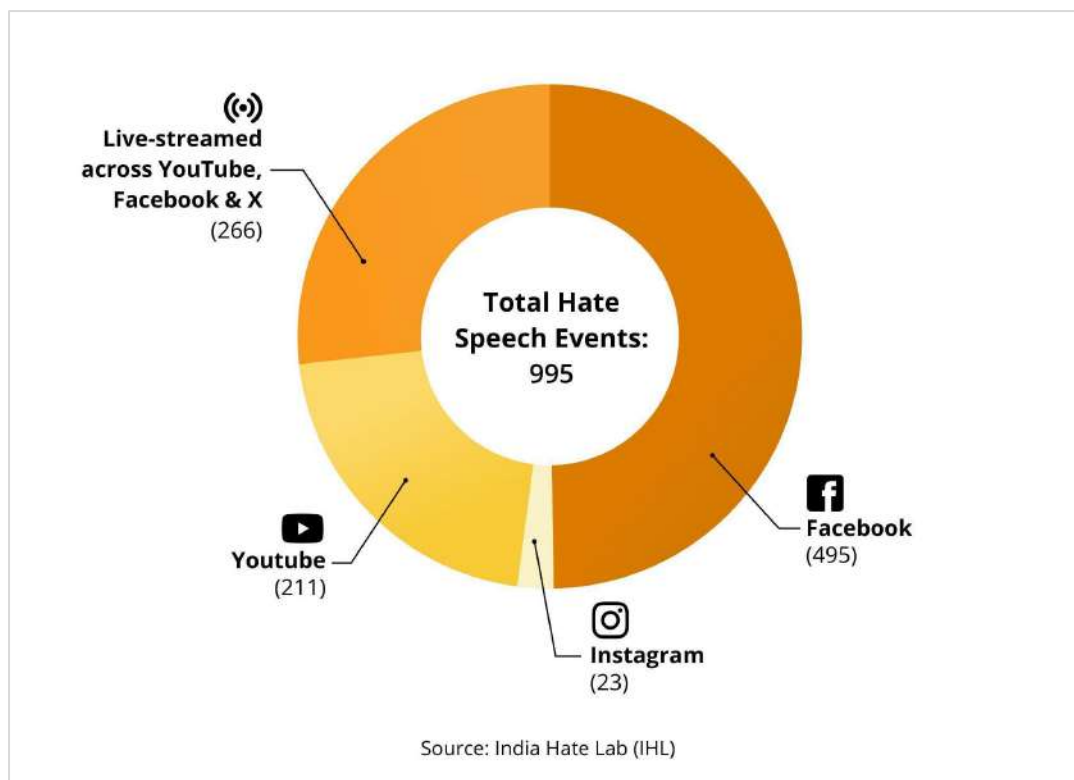
Among these, a significant proportion —495 hate speech events (approximately 49.8%)—were exclusively shared on Facebook, highlighting its dominant role in the dissemination of hateful speech videos. Another 23 incidents (2.31%) were first shared on Instagram, while the remaining 211 videos of hate speech 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 4: DANGEROUS SPEECH ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Youtube
(49)

Instagram
(6)

Total
Dangerous
Speech Events:
219

Facebook
(164)

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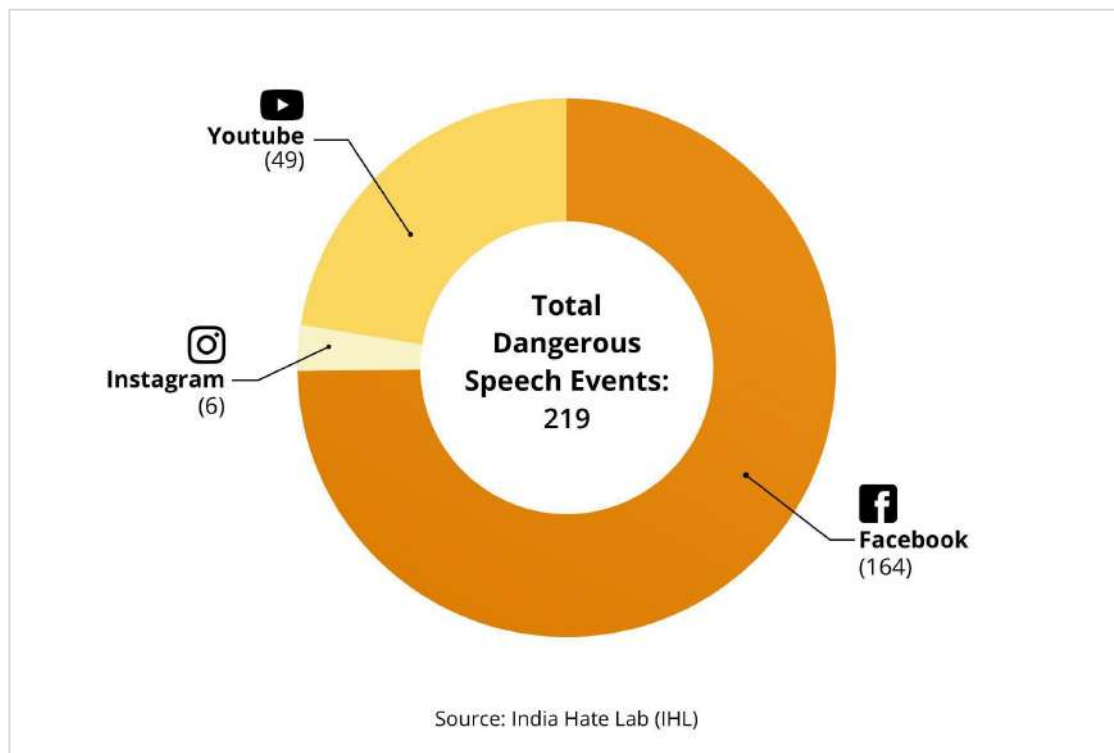
Out of the 259 recorded instances of dangerous speech—including explicit calls for violence—219 were first shared or live streamed on social media platforms. Among these, a significant majority—164 speeches (74.8%)—were initially shared on Facebook, while 49 speeches (22.4%) were first posted on YouTube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

4.2 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,[23] remains publicly available on his Facebook page, where it has garnered over one million views.[24]
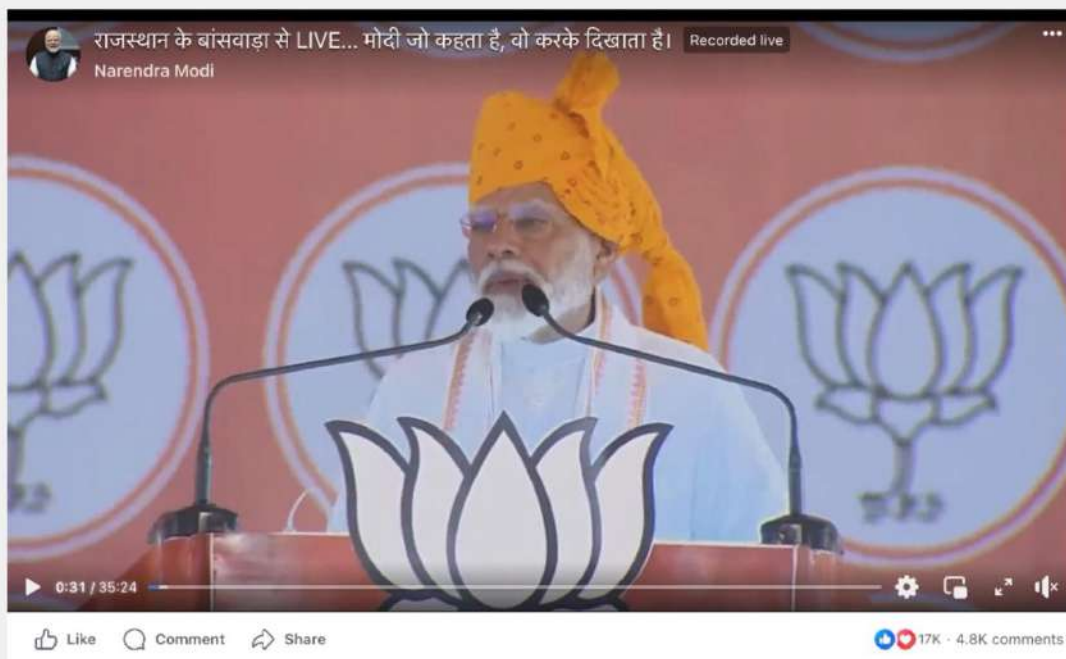
Home Minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma have also utilized social media to broadcast anti-Muslim hate speeches delivered at election rallies and other public events. Their speeches are widely disseminated across official and 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.[25] In other contexts, the live stream features of social media sites, such as YouTube Live and Instagram Live, have been used to spread hate.[26, 27]

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.[28] He first live streamed all the speeches on his Facebook page to his 379,000 followers,[29] and later shared snippets of his speeches with his 339,000 followers on Instagram[30] and 300,000 followers on X.[31] 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.[32] 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,[33] while another group, "Raja Singh (Dhoolpet) MLA," has 226.9K members.[34] Additionally, "RAJA SINGH YUVA SENA (RSYS)" has 10.3K members,[35] and "Tiger Raja Singh Official Group" has 28.7K members.[36]


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,[37] @t.usharajasinghofficial,[38] @t.rajabhaimla1,[39] and @t.rajabhaimla3,[40] 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,[41] 61,600 followers on Instagram,[42] 50,700 subscribers on YouTube[43] and 654,700 followers on X.[44] Both his Facebook and X accounts hold a verified blue badge.
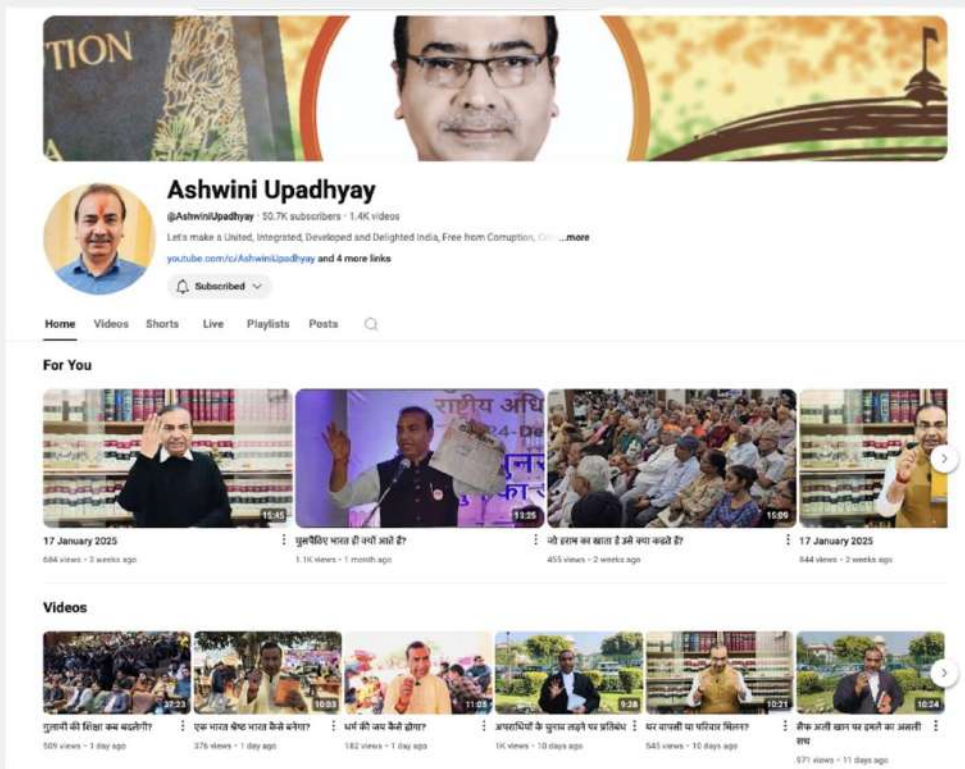
The owner and chairman of the far-right TV channel Sudarshan News, Suresh Chavhanke, has been a prominent purveyor of hate speech.[45] In 2023, he delivered 25 in-person hate speeches. In 2024, his activity intensified with 36 hate speeches, including four speeches that explicitly called for violence. Chavhanke's hate speeches at in-person gatherings are amplified through his vast online presence. With a reach of 548,000 followers on Facebook,[46] 153,000 on Instagram,[47] and 805,400 on X,[48] he is one of the most prominent far-right voices on social media. Both his Instagram and X accounts hold a verified blue badge.
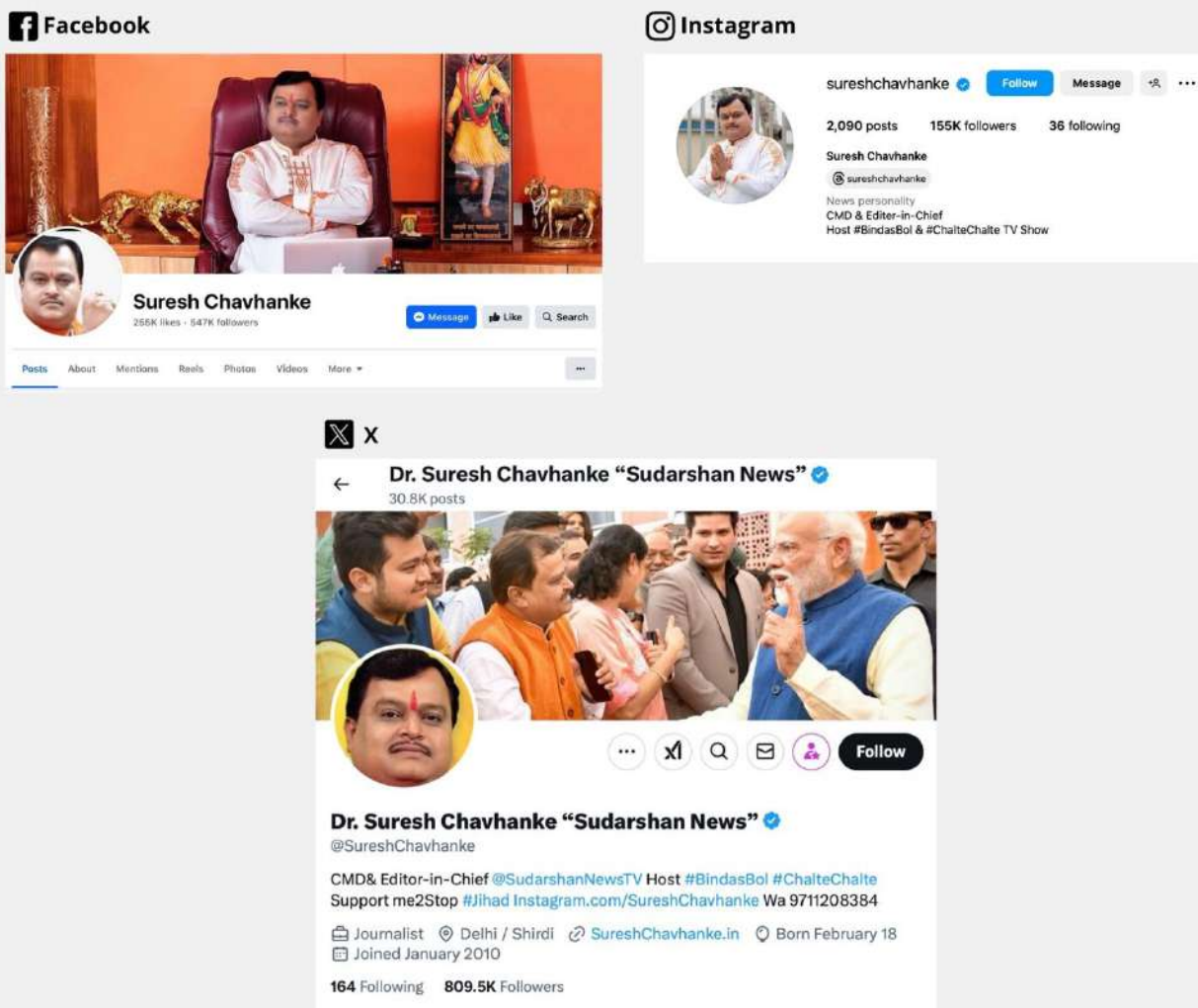
The official pages of Sudarshan News play a significant role in amplifying his speeches. The YouTube channel, with over 2.53 million subscribers,[49] and the Facebook page, with 234,000 followers, frequently live stream and upload videos of his hate speeches.[50]

Shorter versions of these speeches are shared on Instagram (29,600 followers)[51] and X (692,000 followers).[52] His hate speeches are also disseminated through regional Facebook pages of Sudarshan such as Sudarshan News Jodhpur[53] and Sudarshan News Marathi,[54] 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[55] and "Sudarshan News Channelfans" with over 53,300 members.[56]

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.[57] 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,[58] 281,000 on Instagram,[59] 219,500 on X,[60] and 44,000 subscribers on YouTube[61]—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.
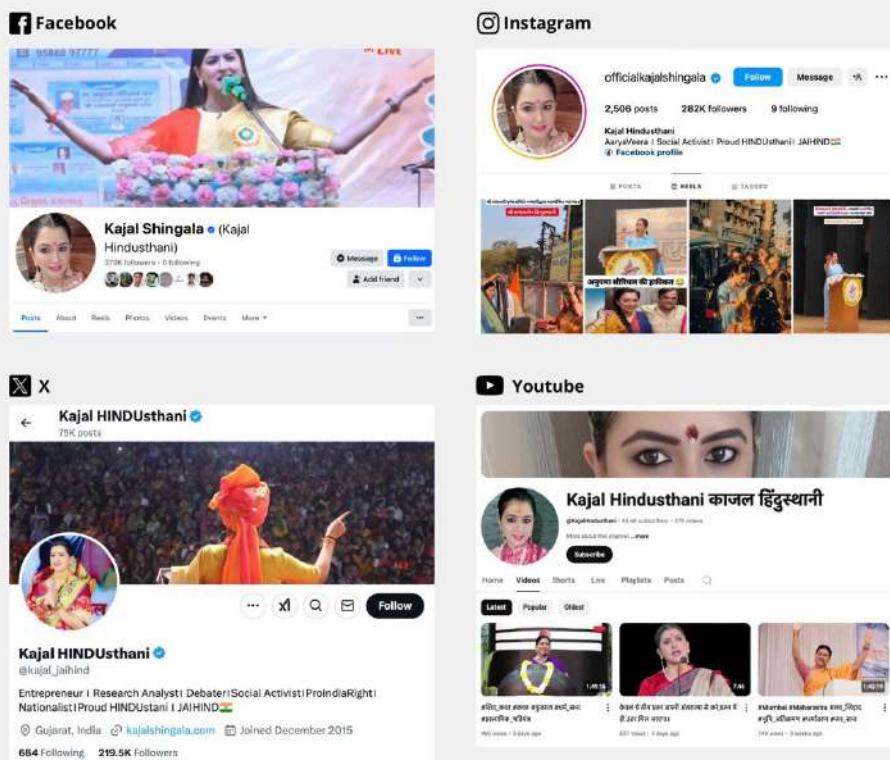
Leaders of varying Hindu far-right groups have deployed an extensive network of organizational and individual accounts to live stream and disseminate recorded videos of their hate speeches delivered at in-person events.

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.[62] 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.[63]

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.[64]

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.[65] His Instagram profile, which has 6,022 followers, carries a verified blue badge.[66]

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,[67] along with a YouTube channel with 2,660 subscribers[68] and an Instagram account boasting 193,000 followers.[69] One of his Facebook pages and his Instagram account carry a verified blue badge.[70] Das delivered 14 hate speeches, with 13 live streamed or shared on Facebook and three initially uploaded to YouTube.[71]

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[72] and 383,000 on Instagram,[73] while Devkinandan Thakur has four million followers on Facebook,[74] 1.4 million followers on Instagram,[75] and 5.3 million subscribers on YouTube.[76] 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[77] and 5,666 followers on Instagram.[78] 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.[79] One of his disciples runs a Facebook[80] and YouTube account,[81] 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.

4.3 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.[82] 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." [83] 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." [84]

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.[85] 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.[86]

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." [87] 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.[88] Thukral also played a significant role in Modi's 2014 election campaign, managing pro-BJP online campaigns and Facebook pages.[89] 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.[90]

Like Meta, YouTube has also failed to curb the spread of hateful content on its platform.[91] 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.[92]

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.[93] 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.

5. Conclusion

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. A report found that Meta approved fourteen political advertisements during the election period that explicitly called for the killing of Muslims.[94] Additionally, the online disinformation about violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, originating from India, fueled religious tensions in both countries.

Social media not only provides a platform to the hate speakers, but also bestows markers of legitimacy upon them through 'verified' accounts. Apart from official accounts, hate-speech is also propagated through fan pages and accounts. Despite many platforms having the required policy to bar dangerous organizations and individuals from using their services, there is clearly an uneven implementation of policies.

The weaponization of hate speech against minorities in electoral and non-electoral contexts has been widely documented across India, Myanmar,[95] Sri Lanka, Brazil, and the United States over the past decade. 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 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.

6. Recommendations

Civil Society Organizations 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. CSOs must vigilantly monitor and advocate against any cost-cutting measures that undermine these commitments. They can leverage their resources to identify and document trends in hate speech, mis/disinformation, online harassment, and bullying. Regular reporting on these trends can help build consensus on the urgent need to regulate platforms that enable the spread of hate and disinformation.

CSOs must advocate for policy reforms that hold platforms accountable to human rights standards, rather than granting governments excessive control over online content. For example, while UK, European Union, Australia, and Canada have enacted online safety laws that empower citizens, India's "Intermediaries Rules" primarily enable the government to dictate content removal, stripping citizens of agency. CSOs should push for legislation that allows individuals to address online hate directly, without relying on government intervention.

Additionally, CSOs can promote cross-sector collaboration by engaging policymakers, researchers, and industry leaders to develop rapid response protocols and inform evidence-based policy decisions. In parallel, digital literacy programs should be prioritized to educate users on how content is recommended and how their interactions influence the spread of content, thereby building resilience against online hate and disinformation.

Advertisers and industry associations hold significant leverage over social media platforms, given the reliance of the latter on advertising revenue. For instance, Meta's ad revenue in India for the financial year ending March 2024 was approximately ₹505 crores, highlighting the financial stakes involved. Advertisers should demand strong ethical commitments from platforms, linking ad budgets to the implementation of robust safety measures. By benchmarking ad spending against platform performance on key indicators like hate speech and disinformation, advertisers can incentivize platforms to take these issues seriously. Public-facing reports by CSOs and researchers can serve as valuable tools for advertisers to monitor platform performance and demand greater control over ad placement to avoid association with harmful content.

Furthermore, platforms must go beyond enforcing generic guidelines and address the specific Indian context of hate and disinformation in their policies and actions. Immediate action should include banning hateful and extremist Hindu nationalist accounts, which pose a significant risk to Indian users.

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Understanding, Preventing, and Combating Organized Hate.