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**INDIA: Calls for Muslim genocide grow louder. Modi's silence is an endorsement.**

**Calls for Muslim genocide grow louder. Modi's silence is an endorsement.**

By Rana Ayyub

Washington Post (29.12.2021) – <https://wapo.st/3mLZRS6> – “The first time it was reported that our friends were being butchered there was a cry of horror. Then a hundred were butchered. But when a thousand were butchered and there was no

end to the butchery, a blanket of silence spread. When evil-doing comes like falling rain, nobody calls out 'stop!'"

These lines, written by the German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht, came to me as I heard the horrifying speeches delivered by Hindu nationalists during a religious conference this month, when leaders issued direct calls for genocide against Muslims.

"If 100 of us are ready to kill two million of them, then we will win," said Pooja Shakun Pandey, a leader of Hindu Mahasabha, a militant organization, at a conference in the city of Haridwar, 150 miles north of New Delhi. "Be ready to kill and go to jail."

At the same event, another Hindu seer invoked the crackdown against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar as a model for what can be done to drive Muslims away, a monstrous event that has been covered in the media.

The Dharma Sansad (Hindu convention) was attended by members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party. Videos of the packed event have been circulating on social media. Attendees made pledges to turn India into a Hindu nation. Unsurprisingly, the calls for violence and extermination have been met with silence by Modi and others – a silence that translates as an endorsement.

Inciting violence is a crime in India, but Pandey and the other speakers remain free. The police are supposed to be

investigating but have been very slow to act – since they know full well these leaders have the protection of the ruling political class.

In fact, these Hindu leaders have now been emboldened to form a paramilitary force of monks who they claim will lead an armed fight against the 220 million Muslim population in India.

Days after the conference, Tejaswi Surya, Modi's handpicked youth leader and a BJP member of parliament, called for bringing Indian Muslims and Christians back to Hinduism, "the mother religion." He then tried to walk back his comments.

What is happening in India, where calls for genocide and ethnic cleansing are a centerpiece of our political debates? Where the Hindu nationalist who assassinated Mohandas K. Gandhi, a global symbol of nonviolent resistance, is glorified by national leaders.

What is happening in India, where the majority Hindu community fails to repudiate acts of terror unleashed in its name? Where Muslims are lynched on the streets, where Christmas celebrations are attacked, where the government has blocked the charity of human rights icon and Nobel laureate Mother Teresa from receiving international donations.

What is happening in India, where Suresh Chavhanke, the influential owner of a right-wing nationalist news channel, calls for people to "fight, die and kill if required" to make

India a "Hindu nation" at an event on Dec. 19 in the national capital as the cameras rolled and the police looked on.

What is happening in India, where law enforcement is more likely to investigate journalists over tweets and the sons of critical public figures over alleged marijuana possession, than go after fanatics calling for mass murder?

What is happening in India, where the captain of the Indian cricket team, Virat Kohli, loses his position for defending a Muslim colleague who was targeted for his faith?

The answer is as loud and clear as the hate spewed at those events, as the mobs that have been given a free pass to attack minorities.

Not only does Modi's silence give encouragement to the most dangerous elements threatening India, but the silence of our allies is also enabling them.

During the "Summit for Democracy" hosted earlier this month by President Biden, Modi claimed to be a champion of free speech, rule of law and a secular and pluralistic ethos, but the world is seeing how he and his party are willing to rely on threats, dog whistles, intimidation and violence to consolidate control. All these calls for genocide are happening in the context of state elections. Is this the type of "democracy" Biden and other allies are championing?

Modi has cultivated this type of hate for decades. We know

what's happening in India now. I fear what will come next.

*Photo : Women from various districts are seen near cutouts of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally held by Modi on Dec. 21. (Ritesh Shukla/Getty Images)*

**Further reading about FORB in India on HRWF website**

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