

KEY FINDINGS

In 2024, religious freedom conditions in India continued to deteriorate as attacks and discrimination against [religious minorities](#) continued to rise. Prior to national elections in June, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, propagated hateful rhetoric and disinformation against Muslims and other religious minorities to gather political support. Such rhetoric fueled attacks on religious minorities that continued after the election, including vigilante violence, targeted and arbitrary killings, and demolition of property and places of worship. Authorities continued to exploit antiterror and financing laws, including the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) to crack down on civil society organizations and detain members of religious minorities, human rights defenders, and journalists reporting on religious freedom. The government also replaced its criminal code with new legislation, leaving religious minorities susceptible to targeting if it deemed them as “endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.”

In March, the BJP introduced rules for implementing the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), [offering](#) fast-track citizenship to non-Muslim minorities fleeing Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Several individuals remained in detention under the UAPA for peacefully protesting the CAA in 2019, including [Umar Khalid](#), [Meeran Haider](#), and [Sharjeel Imam](#). In combination with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), requiring all residents to provide proof of citizenship, the CAA sparked fear among Muslim communities that the authorities may strip them of their citizenship—as in July, when Foreigners’ Tribunals in Assam declared 28 Muslims “non-citizens” and sent them to deportation centers.

Throughout the year, various authorities, including the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), facilitated the expropriation and demolition of places of worship, including the construction of Hindu

temples atop razed mosques. Notably, in January, Prime Minister Modi led the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, which stands on the ruins of the Babri Masjid that a Hindu mob demolished in 1992. Following the consecration, attacks against religious minorities erupted across six states. Authorities also repeatedly violated Section 295 of India’s Penal Code, which criminalizes the destruction or damage of houses of worship, by bulldozing Muslim-owned property including mosques deemed “illegal.”

Authorities wielded discriminatory state-level anti-conversion laws and cow slaughter laws to target religious minorities. In June and July, police in Uttar Pradesh detained 20 Christians, including four pastors, under accusations of violating the state’s anti-conversion law. In July, the Uttar Pradesh government tabled a bill to strengthen that law, expanding punishment for conversion to life imprisonment, allowing anyone to file a First Instance Report (FIR) against suspected violators, and making religious conversion a nonbailable offense. Uttar Pradesh’s High Court subsequently sentenced Muslim cleric Kalim Siddiqui and 11 others to life in prison for allegedly participating in forced conversions. Additionally, Uttarakhand passed a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill requiring registration and allowing for greater policing of interfaith couples.

The Indian government also continued to expand its repressive tactics to target religious minorities abroad, specifically members of the Sikh community and their advocates. Journalists, academics, and civil society organizations documenting India’s religious freedom violations reported denial of consular services, including the revocation of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards as well as threats of violence and surveillance. International reporting and intelligence from the Canadian government corroborated allegations linking an official in India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and six diplomats to the 2023 assassination attempt of an American Sikh activist in New York.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- Designate India as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, for engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA):
 - Encourage the U.S. Embassy and consulates to incorporate religious freedom into public statements and speeches, as outlined in the U.S. Department of State’s [Guidelines to Support Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders](#).
- Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities, such as Vikash Yadav and RAW, for their culpability in severe violations of religious freedom by freezing their assets and/or barring their entry into the United States; and
 - government targeting religious minorities in the United States;
 - Conduct a [review](#) assessing whether arms sales to India, such as [MQ-9B Drones](#) under Section 36 of the [Arms Export Control Act](#), may contribute to or exacerbate religious freedom violations; and
 - Request and prioritize meetings with religious minority communities and faith-based civil society organizations during congressional delegations to India.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Reintroduce, pass, and enforce the [Transnational Repression Reporting Act of 2024](#) to ensure the annual reporting of acts of transnational repression by the Indian

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Country Update:** [Increasing Abuses against Religious Minorities in India](#)
- **Press Release:** [USCIRF Raises Alarm Over India’s Exclusionary Citizenship Amendment Act During Congressional Hearing](#)
- **Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief [Victims List](#) and [Appendix 2](#)**

Background

India is the world's largest democracy, with an estimated population of 1.4 billion. The majority population is Hindu (79.8 percent), with minority Muslim (14.2 percent), Christian (2.3 percent), and Sikh (1.7 percent) communities. Smaller religious groups include Buddhists, Jains, Baha'is, Zoroastrians (Parsis), and Jews. Article 25 of India's constitution grants all individuals freedom of conscience, including the right to practice, profess, and propagate religion.

The BJP has led the Indian government since 2014 and was reelected in June. Throughout its 10 years in power, it has increasingly enforced sectarian policies seeking to establish India as an overtly Hindu state, in contrast with the secular principles of the constitution.

Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation

Ahead of the June elections, government officials wielded hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric against Muslims and other religious minorities. Prime Minister Modi repeatedly claimed that the opposition party would "wipe out [the] Hindu faith from the country" and he referred to Muslims as "infiltrators." Union Home Minister Amit Shah similarly claimed that opposition leaders would impose Shari'a if elected—despite the fact that the opposition election manifesto included no such mention. Such misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech by government officials frequently fueled and incited various forms of attacks against religious minorities. Attacks against Muslims in Mira Road, for example, erupted following inflammatory speeches by two Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Nitesh Rane and Geeta Jain.

Anti-Conversion Laws

Throughout the year, 12 out of 28 states attempted to introduce or strengthen existing [anti-conversion laws](#). In February, the state of Chhattisgarh announced it would introduce legislation to address "illegal conversion," claiming that Christian pastors forcibly converted Hindus. The Assam government similarly passed the Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, banning individuals or groups from performing "nonscientific" healing, such as prayer, to treat illnesses. In April the government of Gujarat issued a circular mandating that Hindus wishing to convert to Buddhism, Sikhism, or Jainism obtain approval from their district magistrate under the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act.

In June, the BJP-led government in Rajasthan withdrew its 2008 anti-conversion law in favor of new legislation aimed at "curbing alleged cases of 'love jihad,'" a harmful conspiracy theory that disproportionately impacts Muslims. Similarly, Assam's Chief Minister announced in August that his government was drafting a law to ensure stricter punishment for "love-jihad," including life in prison. Authorities in Uttar Pradesh enforced such harsh punishments, as a fast-track court sentenced a 25-year-old Muslim man to life in prison for allegedly conducting religious conversions.

Attacks against Religious Minorities

In 2024, violent attacks against religious minorities and places of worship persisted with impunity. In August, a Hindu mob of over 200 people attacked 18 Christian families in Chhattisgarh as police did not intervene. In December, eight village councils in Chhattisgarh passed a joint resolution requiring Christians to renounce their faith or leave the village. In the northeastern state of Manipur, deadly clashes between the Christian Kuki community and the majority Hindu Meitei community contributed to a hostile climate that prevented religious communities from congregating. In November, four individuals were killed in Uttar Pradesh following a dispute over whether a 16th century mosque was built over the site of a Hindu temple.

Additionally, Muslims continued to face communal violence under the guise of imposing cow slaughter laws. An estimated dozen attacks involving "cow vigilantism" took place following national elections, including one in August in which a group of cow vigilantes beat a Muslim migrant worker to death, falsely accusing him of eating beef. A day later, a group of Hindu men violently attacked a 72-year-old Muslim man because they believed he was carrying beef in his bag. The same month, a group of "cow protectors" shot and killed a 19-year-old Hindu student, believing he was a Muslim smuggling cows.

Key U.S. Policy

In 2024, the U.S. and Indian governments continued to strengthen their bilateral relationship, despite [concerns](#) over religious freedom violations. In February, then Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Chair Ben Cardin (D-NJ) [considered](#) placing a hold on the sale of MQ-9 drones to India in response to that country's use of transnational repression. In March, then State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller [expressed](#) concern about the CAA. Additionally, during a September SFRC [hearing](#) on laws against nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) criticized India's use of the FCRA to restrict NGOs from receiving foreign funding.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) continued its investigation into the 2023 plot to kill a U.S.-based Indian American Sikh activist. In September, a New York district court issued summons to the Indian government's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and former RAW chief Samant Goel. In October, DOJ published a second [indictment](#), alleging the involvement of an Indian government employee, Vikash Yadav, in the assassination attempt. The same month, India's Enquiry Committee [traveled](#) to Washington, D.C. as part of the ongoing investigation.

In September, then Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu [traveled](#) to India to co-chair the [U.S. India 2+2 Dialogue](#); he [returned](#) to the country in December to discuss security and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Later that month, then President Joseph R. Biden hosted members of the Quad, including Prime Minister Modi. The [agenda](#) focused on addressing natural disasters, technology, and health security but failed to address human rights issues in depth.