

Boris Johnson's Disgraceful Silence on India's Prime Minister Modi's Anti-Muslim Campaign

Under Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi, India has embarked on a dark path - and the UK knows it. Yet a potential trade deal will ensure Johnson's silence on the matter

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There's something that makes me sick in the stomach about Boris Johnson's trip to India.

We've seen the obligatory pictures of Johnson on a rickshaw. We've read the carefully briefed articles by lobby correspondents about differences with Narendra Modi over [Russia](#) and [Ukraine](#).

We've studied the photos of a relaxed Johnson briefing a huddle of British journalists on his plane. And being received by an official delegation getting off the plane. And, of course, we've read the informed speculation that a [trade deal will be struck](#).

But we've not read a word from the British press about Modi's systematic, organised, murderous persecution of [India's 200 million Muslims](#). And I'd be astonished if we hear a word on the subject.

On Wednesday, Johnson [arrived in Gujarat](#), Modi's political base. He announced new [India investment deals](#) in science and technology. A routine exchange of political favours. But the British prime minister courteously made no reference to the [Gujarat pogrom](#), which left more than 1,000 dead 20 years ago, with [Modi accused of fanning the violence](#).

If this terrible event had been an isolated episode, fair enough. But it has gone on to set the pattern for Modi's premiership.

Anti-Muslim narrative

In the eight years he has been Indian prime minister, Modi has repudiated the multi-faith India embraced by the nation's founding fathers, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Remember that Modi has been [a member](#) of the Nazi-influenced [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS), out of which his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has grown, since he was a boy.

Under his leadership, [a terrifying anti-Muslim narrative](#) has emerged. Modi's BJP follows a Hindu nationalism that sees India's 200 million Muslims as foreigners and invaders.

Arundhati Roy, the Booker Prize-winning novelist, [has recently claimed](#) that the situation for Indian Muslims is approaching genocidal and that India may be broken up.

In December, an event was held in the northern Uttarakhand state at which participants [urged](#) the mass killings of Muslims. "Even if just a hundred of us become soldiers and kill two million of them, we will be victorious," one woman said about Indian Muslims. A video of the event went viral.

The meeting was attended by at least one member of Modi's BJP. Another delegate, Prabodhanand Giri, often photographed with senior BJP members, [declared that](#) "like Myanmar, the police, politicians, the army and every Hindu in India must pick up weapons and do this cleansing".

As in other countries, the government and sections of the media accuse Muslims of disloyalty. In a farcical case in point, Indian Muslims [were arrested](#) for celebrating Pakistan's cricketing defeat of India in November 2021.

A dark path

The Indian government is seeking to alter the demography of India's Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir, by [encouraging](#) Hindus to move there. The state has been under a dense military occupation for decades; most Kashmiris do not wish to be part of India. In August 2019, Prime Minister Modi [revoked](#) Kashmir's historical semi-autonomous status.

That same year, Modi's Citizen Amendment Act [excluded](#) Muslim refugees from citizenship. Arundhati Roy [wrote](#) that Modi was enacting "India's version of Germany's 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which deprived Jews and other minorities of their citizenship rights".

There is no doubt that India under Modi has embarked on a dark path. The BJP's president, Amit Shah, [has compared](#) migrants from Bangladesh to "termites", drawing comparisons with Nazi language about Jews in the 1930s or the language used about the Tutsis during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Gregory Stanton, the founder and director of Genocide Watch, recently warned the US Congress there were early "signs and processes" of genocide in the Indian state of Assam and Indian-administered Kashmir. Stanton, who warned about the Rwandan genocide three years before it happened in 1994, [drew parallels](#) between Modi's policies and Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims ahead of the 2017 slaughter.

The Holocaust Memorial Museum in the United States is [on record](#) as stating that India is the second most likely country to experience mass killings in 2022. Total silence about this from the British government, and the accompanying press party.

Threat of genocide?

To be fair, Boris Johnson is in India to bring home a trade deal, and he cannot afford to jeopardise that cherished prize. Nor can we reasonably expect the United Kingdom to solve all of the world's problems.

Nevertheless, in high-profile negotiations of this sort, I think it is fair to expect a British prime minister to raise concerns about India's treatment of Muslims, highlight them publicly and report back not just to the British parliament but also to the international community.

All the more so because Johnson can't claim ignorance. Modi's assault on Muslims is well-documented by the relevant international organisations. We can therefore be confident that the British High Commission in Delhi, however silent, knows all about it. British foreign correspondents, too.

In Johnson's defence, Labour leader Keir Starmer has been silent, too. He did not raise the persecution of India's Muslims when he had the chance at yesterday's prime minister's questions. To sum up, this week, Boris Johnson stepped foot in Narendra Modi's India. It contains 1.4 billion souls, 200 million of whom are Muslims. According to good judges, under Modi they face the threat of genocide.

Yet not a word from Johnson, his Labour opponent Starmer, or the British political press.

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