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Hamid Ansari, Jinnah's Portrait and Turmoil in AMU

Ram Puniyani

Recently (May 2018) Hamid Ansari, the ex-Vice President of India, was invited to Aligarh Muslim University to be honoured with life membership of AMU Students Union (AMUSU). He had due security with him, yet Hindu Yuva Vahini-ABVP activists managed to come close to his place of stay. The armed protesters alleged that a portrait of Jinnah had been put up to please Ansari, and that they will not allow Jinnah's portrait in AMU. The usual violence followed, a few Vahini volunteers were arrested, and most were later let off. This was followed by series of statements from Yogi Adityanath, who incidentally is also the founder of this Hindutva group, saying that portrait will not be allowed. Subramaniam Swami asked who will teach a lesson to AMU! The students of AMU are protesting the violence unleashed by Vahini and ABVP, and demanding that those responsible for the attack be arrested.

Many questions arise. First of all, how did the armed volunteers of Vahini and ABVP come near the place where Hamid Ansari was put up? One recalls the several attempts that have been made to humiliate this

distinguished scholar and diplomat who held the high office of the Vice President of India. His photo of not saluting the Republic day parade was made viral to create the impression that he is showing disrespect, an issue that died down only when it was realised that he was following the rule book as only the President takes the salute and no one else. When he was given farewell, Modi attempted to humiliate him by hinting at his being a Muslim and being attached to issues related to Muslims. Given this background, his being targeted in AMU is just the continuation of what the BJP-RSS combine has been attempting to do to Ansari in the past.

How did it come to happen that someone recalled that Jinnah's portrait is there on the AMU campus and on that pretext the armed volunteers sneaked into AMU campus? Has the portrait been put up yesterday? The portrait has been there since 1938, as AMU Students Union had conferred a rare honor on him by giving him life membership of AMUSU. The Hindutva activists issued the statement that Jinnah divided the country, so how could he be celebrated? The role played by

Jinnah in the freedom movement is not a linear one and is not uniform. He began as a part of the movement and was part of it in the beginning. He is credited with being the Chairman of the Reception Committee which welcomed Gandhi on his return from South Africa. He was the one who fought the case in which Bal Gangadhar Tilak was given the death sentence and it is due to his legal brilliance that he could save the life of Tilak. He was also the lawyer for the young revolutionary, Sardar Bhagat Singh and to cap it all he entered into a Hindu-Muslim unity pact with Tilak (Lucknow, 1916). India's nightingale Sarojini Naidu called Jinnah the 'ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity'.

There is another side to the story also. He dissociated from the national movement once Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement in 1920, in which for the first time the common people of the country participated in large numbers. This movement laid the foundation for the biggest ever mass movement in the history of the world. Jinnah was a constitutionalist and he felt that involving the common people in the struggle against the British is unwarranted. For the same reason, he opposed Gandhi's role in the Khilafat movement. He gradually dissociated from active involvement in the freedom struggle and left for London to practice law. It was only after this that he began associating with the Muslim League and gradually become a leader of it. Muslim League was given the status of being the representative of Muslims by the British. This was basically a motivated exercise by the British as the Muslim League was founded by Muslim Nawabs and Landlords, and had feudal

values inherent in it down to the core. His role as a leader of Muslim League and his Lahore resolution demanding a separate country for the Muslims—Pakistan—is what transformed him from a secular person into a communal leader.

To blame Jinnah alone for the partition of the country is a distorted presentation of the history of modern India. The roots of partition lie in the policies of the British who pursued the policy of 'divide and rule'. They were aided in this by communalists from both Hindus and Muslims. Savarkar was the first one to articulate that there are two nations in the country, the Hindu and the Muslim. As per this understanding, the country belongs to the Hindus, so the Muslim nation will have to remain subordinate to the Hindus. This is where Jinnah falls into the communal trap. The logic he puts forward is, if there are two nations in the country, why there cannot be two countries? So why not Pakistan?

Jinnah has been the subject of various biographies and interpretations. His August 11, 1947 speech in Pakistan Constituent Assembly wherein he stated that people are free to follow their own religion and that the State will not interfere in that, elaborates his secular values. Advani, quite late in his life, after having launched the biggest attack on secular values in the country by demolishing the Babri Mosque, realised that Jinnah was secular. He called Jinnah secular and paid with his career, as the RSS combine has built its entire ideology around the slogan of 'Hate Jinnah', it has presented Jinnah as a symbol of Indian Muslims and as a symbol of India's enemy, Pakistan!

With this AMU episode, Hindu

nationalist politics is looking to kill many birds with a single stone. First is to once again target Hamid Ansari, whom they can't approve of as his credentials are thoroughly secular. Second is to create yet another divisive issue in the form of the portrait of Jinnah on the AMU campus, thus adding one more emotive issue to the several they have manufactured so far. And third is to intimidate the AMU campus on lines of what they have attempted to do with JNU and Hyderabad Central University.

One can say that the Ghost of Jinnah, who can be called a 'Secular Soul in a Communal body', will keep visiting us again and again, what with the RSS combine seeking to keep popping up divisive issues one after the other!

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Culture Of Protest

Sandeep Pandey, Shobha Shukla and Bobby Ramakant

In an amazing display of goodwill, bus drivers of Ryobi group in Okayama, Japan have staged a protest not by striking work but by continuing to drive without charging fares from passengers. The Ryobi group is facing tough competition from another group Megurin, which is offering reduced fares to passengers. The intended message is that the Ryobi drivers value the interest of passengers more than their own. This mode of protest is winning accolades from people.

Protests, even if they are not violent, are usually associated with at least some form of aggression. It is the common belief of social-political organisations that only militant action can yield quick and decisive results. Pacifism is considered a sign of weakness. But time and again, peaceful actions have proved to be effective. Mahatma Gandhi, who is often criticised for his philosophy and strategy of non-violence by the right wing Hindutva groups in India, successfully built the most effective group among all groups which were trying to win independence for India from the British rule. The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the parent organisation of right wing groups, did not even participate in the freedom struggle. In fact, its Deputy Chief Minister in Bengal, Shyama Prasad Mukherji, suggested to the British that the Quit India Movement of 1942 should be crushed lest it would create disturbances in the country.

Recently about 35–40,000 farmers belonging to All India Kisan Sabha associated with the

Communist Party of India (Marxist) organised a peaceful 180 km long march, demanding complete waiver of loans and electricity bills, implementation of Swaminathan Commission report and Forest Rights Act. The march started on 5 March 2018 from Nasik and ended at Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha in Mumbai on 12 March. After reaching Mumbai on March 11 and resting for the night, when they began the last leg of their march to the Vidhan Sabha on the final day, in a rare gesture the farmers began their march in the early hours of the morning, at 1 am, so that the morning office goes and children going to appear for the Board examinations would not face any commuting problem or harassment. This was in stark contrast to the usual mindset guiding even small marches that hold the traffic to ransom. A march is considered to be successful only if it can cause disruption of traffic. The AIKS march will be remembered for a long time for its display of civility and thoughtfulness.

In countries like India, corruption and negligence of duty is not only a norm but considered the ‘smart’ thing to do. The honest and diligent are ridiculed and/or not allowed to work and obstacles are created in their path. People in influential positions practice rampant nepotism, casteism and communalism. While merit takes a back seat, money power earns respect. It is interesting that most people in positions of power in our country today are still from upper caste background. While they oppose the policy of

caste based reservation on the pretext that it dilutes merit, it is this same set of people who promote mediocrity and corruption in public life. Their brains are put to work to camouflage corruption and to block genuine work at the behest of their political masters. It is not uncommon for a complainant to attract a false case if s(he) doesn't have political backing and for a resourceful and well connected criminal to go scot free. Laws and rules are bent to suit the interests of the influential and rich people. Political groups try to take advantage of the administrative-legal system to serve their vested interests. This is the model of governance that exists in India today.

Since merit is in general no longer a criterion, and political patronage is essential to become a part of the coveted system, even the education system has become thoroughly corrupted. Teaching is a work accorded the least priority in educational institutions and methods have been perfected by administrators, teachers and students-parents, under a willing political patronage, to beat the system. The whole emphasis is on getting high marks through foul means, if not fair, with scant regard for gaining knowledge.

Hence actions like those of AIKS come as a fresh air in the backdrop of a gloomy and depressing scenario. If we're to evolve into a mature and humane society then we'll not only have to value such actions but also to replicate them. The destructive mind must be replaced by a constructive

one. Selfish attitude must be replaced by a Samaritan one. Integrity and honesty must prevail over all kinds of corrupt practices. Love must replace hatred. A culture of respect for diversity must prevail over all kinds of caste, class, religious, gender, ethnic differences and biases. Every human being must be treated as being an equal member of society. Interest of self should be linked to higher level interests of society and nature.

There are many dedicated and committed individuals who, regardless of the discouraging environment around them, continue to give their best to society. But such collective actions are few and far between. People come together more easily for disruptive rather than charitable causes. It is a common belief that it is easier to mobilise people on sensational issues rather than on some society building agenda. This is the dominant political culture in India today. A society which otherwise considers itself to be peaceful and humanitarian has given in to sectarian and fundamentalist thinking. Controversy is news and genuine actions commonplace.

The recent actions of bus drivers in Japan and farmers in Maharashtra, India, hold some hope for a better future. They are proof that seeds of idea for a reformed society are alive and wait for an opportunity to germinate. The objective of all human activity, especially under adverse conditions when humans are likely to lose sanity, should be to create a supportive atmosphere so that the flower of humanity blooms.

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Sudhakar, My Friend

Mrinal Biswas

The icy hand of death has been laid on Sudhakar Prabhudesai. It was a cruel joke that he could not leave this world peacefully. I was told excruciating sufferings awaited him before he breathed his last. Sudhakar did not deserve that. I knew him for decades, he never caused pain to anybody, not even to anyone in the other animate world. It struck me odd that anybody coming east to Kolkata (then Calcutta) and seeing handpulled rickshaws fell terribly upset by seeing the plight of the hired men weaving through city streets with their carriages occupied by any of his kindred spirits. Man-pulled rickshaws were long back imitation vehicles of Japan and hardly affected our Calcuttans' sensibilities. Sudhakar felt repulsed. But this same friend of mine enlivened spirits of me Calcuttan when, in one of the heydays of loadsheddings (power-offs), he sat with me to take food in the evening under the light of candles. He smiled widely and said it was indeed a candle-lit dinner. We the host couple were relieved.

I met him in the late 60s of the last century at Ranchi at a meeting of the country's young socialists. My other Calcutta colleague was Biswanth Halder. Sudhakar came with Vijaya Pingle to represent Bombay (now Mumbai). Two Bombaiwallas and me Calcuttan became friends. This friendship expanded with others becoming part of the group in the course of time. Moreover, my link with *Janata* weekly solidified because Sudhakar was an important editorial

board member. Despite the long distance, this group of people kept in touch and even visits took place both ways. During the emergency, I met Sudhakar in a Bombay jail and my last meeting was while I on a reporter's journey halted at Bombay in the late 1980s. He grew long hairs and looked further emaciated.

Sudhakar Prabhudesai had a scintillating mind, was well versed, a good conversationalist and a good friend. His passing away means a part of myself is gone. I know his family members will find it difficult to a life without him. I also know that there are many others who share their deep sense of loss.

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Press Release**'Save National Heritage March' held from Meerut to Delhi**

Socialist Party (India) and Khudai Khidmatgar took out the 'Save National Heritage March' from martyrs' memorial, Meerut to Lal Qila, Delhi on May 10, 2018, in memory of the martyrs of 1857. Citizens of Meerut and Delhi participated enthusiastically in the March. In the morning on 10 May, tributes were paid to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev by garlanding their statues established in the campus of Chaudhary Charan Singh University. Tributes were also paid to Dhan Singh Kotwal, a prominent local leader of the 1857 revolt, whose statue is also established in the city. After that, people reached the martyrs' memorial and offered salute and tributes to the martyrs of 1857.

A seminar was organised on the topic 'Why the Revolution of 1857 Should be Remembered'

in the famous 'Freedom Fighter Mohammed Miyan House' of Meerut city. Speaking in the seminar as the key speaker, senior journalist Arun Tripathi said that the Revolution of 1857 should be remembered for its two basic goals—Hindu–Muslim unity and anti-imperialism. A discussion was also held at the Sheikh-ul-Hindu Academy, in which many speakers highlighted the importance of the revolutionaries of 1857 and national heritage.

In the evening, the marches proceeded to Delhi, distributing pamphlets and addressing meetings on the way. Prominent citizens from all walks of life joined the march in Delhi. They marched from the Khooni Darwaza to Lal Qila raising slogans and distributing pamphlets. The 'Save National Heritage March' concluded at Lal Qila's main gate in the evening.

General public gathered in a large number at the venue. Dr. Prem Singh, President, Socialist Party (India), said that the Socialist Party, in a memorandum to the President of India, has demanded that the mortal remains of Bahadur Shah Zafar be brought to Delhi from Rangoon and a huge memorial in memory of the martyrs of 1857 be built. He further said that the Socialist Party will launch a nationwide campaign against the government's decision of selling the national heritage to corporate houses. He also informed the audience that the Socialist Party will hold a rally on the occasion of the Quit India Movement Day, 9 August, against the government.

**Dr. Prem Singh,
Socialist Party (India)**

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Dear India and Pakistan, Disarm NOW!**[Sign Citizens' Appeal on 20 Years of Nuclear Tests]**

We, the citizens of South Asia and beyond, urge India and Pakistan in the 20th year of the 1998 nuclear tests to put an immediate end to the arms race and competitive belligerence, and negotiate nuclear disarmament at the earliest. Far from providing any security, these 20 years have only witnessed an exacerbation of tensions and heightened warmongering, lending a disconcerting instability to the entire region.

While military expenses and weapons have increased exponentially—making both India

and Pakistan among the largest importers of weapons globally—armed conflicts and violence by both state and non-state actors have reached savage heights. The irony couldn't be more glaring that on the other hand, both countries have consistently slipped on most human development indices, including hunger, poverty, education, health, safety of women and children, minority rights and social and legal justice.

As highlighted by several experts, any nuclear exchange by India or Pakistan will annihilate the

entire region and impact the climate irreversibly, and will also have catastrophic global consequences. Millions of people in other countries of South Asia, having no say in the inhuman escalation, will face the impacts of a potential nuclear confrontation. South Asia, the world's most populous region, is the only region which has two nuclear-armed neighbours with a history of active conflicts, unending border skirmishes and wars.

In the past few years, the emergence of religious extremism and war-loving populist nationalism,

particularly during election seasons, in both countries, has made the situation more dangerous than ever. It was in the wake of such dangerous rhetoric and abiding conflicts that South Asia appeared in the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin Atomic Scientists that has now inched closest ever to midnight. Amid such rising tensions, India and Pakistan chose to remain outside the ambit of the historic Nuclear Ban

Treaty, adopted by the UN last year.

We urge leaders of both countries to negotiate disarmament and peace in all seriousness, sign the International Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and introduce immediate risk-reduction measures, including dialogues, both at the level of government and civil society. For even a semblance of peace in the region, it is imperative that jingoism and hate-mongering within politics

and mainstream media be stopped with immediate effect. 20 years is long enough to learn from the futile nuclear insanity and bluster that both countries have hitherto engaged in!

For those you interested in signing this appeal, please go to the website: <https://www.dianuke.org/dear-india-and-pakistan-disarm-now-sign-citizens-appeal-on-20-years-of-nuclear-tests/>

Letter to Editor

Anguish at Lack of *Shaleenta* in Public Life

Chandrabhaal Tripathi

Two events in April 2018 saddened me. The first occurred on April 13, 2018 at Gandhi Peace Foundation where my good friend, Prof. Anand Kumar, retired Professor of Sociology at JNU, prominent student leader at BHU, JNU and Chicago, twice President of FEDCUTA, socialist thinker and writer, was felicitated by his friends and admirers and four books of his in Hindi were released. I told him that I would attend the function. True to his *samskaras*, he wrote to me that in the present state of my health I should not take the trouble of going to GPF and that he would visit me soon and present me the above books. I reminded him that it would give me much pleasure in meeting him and some old friends at the function and that I had known his family since before his birth. I may mention that his grandfather, Sri Vishwanath Sharma, was a freedom fighter, a student of Acharya Narendra Deva and other stalwarts of Kashi Vidyapeeth, of which he was the Registrar for a long time. His father was two years older than me. His two uncles, Ranganath Sharma and Prof. Krishnanath, were my good close friends. We had elected Ranganath ji as the General Secretary of the All India Samajwadi Yuvak Sabha at its Foundation Conference at Kashi Vidyapeeth in 1953. Prof. Krishnanath, younger to me, was a well-known economist, socialist worker, follower of Buddhism and Dalai Lama and later President of the J. Krishnamurthy Foundation at Bengaluru.

The meeting on April 13 at GPF was chaired by the eminent lawyer Sri Shanti Bhushan. Several friends spoke in praise of Anand Kumar. I was shocked that the Chair of the meeting, Sri Shanti Bhushan, made some highly improper and irrelevant observations. He made the most unjudicious and irrelevant remarks about girl friends of two eminent socialist leaders. The whole affair left a bad taste in the mouth of many. The platform of GPF was the last venue to publicly discuss the love affairs of leaders. I was reminded of the great stress laid on *shaaleenata* in public life by my mentor, Acharya Narendra Deva.

The other occasion I wish to refer to was the cremation of my old and senior friend, Justice (Retd.) Rajendar Sachar, on April 20 at the Lodhi Road Electric Crematorium. It was attended by many prominent personalities from various walks of life. A retired professor of Hindi from Delhi University, an old socialist leader, repeatedly raised the slogan 'Socialist leader Rajendar Sachar amar rahen'. To me it was not appropriate to refer to the departed soul's political ideology on this occasion. I had known Sri Rajendar Sachar since 1963 as a Lohiaite and Secretary of Chandigarh Unit of Samyukta Socialist Party while I was posted there by the Government of India as Assistant Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Sri Sachar's subsequent life and rich contributions are varied and his personality cannot be restricted to the role of a socialist leader. However, this was still tolerable. But I was totally unprepared for the repeated slogans 'Gandhi-Lohia-Jayaprakash zindabad, zindabad' raised by the same friend. I wonder how this slogan befitted the solemn and poignant occasion. Mercifully, he did not raise the slogan at the cremation ground 'Socialist Party zindabad.' I found several senior Gandhian leaders like Sri Ramchandra Rahi and Sri Kumar Prashant among the mourners. I have no idea how they felt. But I reiterate that it only betrayed lack of *shaaleenata* in public life.

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Journalists Remain in the Cross Hairs

Geeta Seshu

As protests raged over the rape of minors and violence against marginalized communities, dalits, students, the climate for free speech reflected both a menacing intolerance for dissenting viewpoints and a crackdown on civil rights. Apart from the dangerous attacks on journalists, others were harassed and their personal details shared online, they were threatened and became victims of fake news as hate messages attributed to them went viral.

The judiciary, hitherto a reassuring protector of free speech, sent mixed signals as different courts ordered gags on media coverage, fined and penalized media houses for violating the law on disclosure of the identity of minor victims of sexual assault and took up petitions alleging contempt of court.

In February, in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home Hansraj Ahir said that in 2017, there were 15 attacks on journalists in which 26 people were arrested. Between 2015-17, there were 90 attacks on journalists and 108 people were arrested, the minister said, referring to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the last three years.

The figures are at complete variance with The Hoot's own research as the *The India Freedom Report: Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression in 2017* recorded a verified number of 46 attacks on journalists. While the minister said that the Home Ministry has no information on whether any

organisation or organisations were responsible for the attacks on media persons, the findings of *The Hoot* show that the perpetrators are only too well known.

Media freedom has continued to deteriorate in the first four months of 2018 in India.

The Hoot's 2017 report had documented the murder of three journalists which could be clearly linked to their journalism. In the first four months of 2018 as well, three journalists were killed in connection with their reporting, judging by what initial investigations show.

For 2017 we had documented 46 attacks on journalists and media workers. Between January and April 2018, there have been already 14 attacks all across the country.

Table: Types of Attacks on Journalists, Jan–March 2018

Category	No. of instances
Murders	03
Attacks	14
Arrests/Detention	03
Threats	05
Sedition	01
Defamation	07
Censorship	50
Govt policy (State & Centre)	08
Judicial orders	02
Privacy related	06
Contempt cases	02

Apart from these killings and attacks, the first four months of 2018 has also seen defamation

cases filed against journalists, a sedition case against a journalist and a clear push by both State and Central government and the judiciary, through regulatory policy as well as judicial orders, to curb free speech. There were also around 50 instances of censorship, and more than 20 instances of suspension of internet services, as well as the take down of online content. A Hoot investigation of the state of media freedom from January 1 to April 30, 2018 reveals that a range of actors, from politicians, businesspersons, members of Hindu right wing organisations, the police and paramilitary forces, government agencies like the Film Certification Board, the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry, different state governments, lawyers and even media organisations, have acted to undermine freedom of expression.

Killings

In two separate incidents, three journalists were killed when they were mowed down by vehicles. On March 26, two *Dainik Bhaskar* journalists, Navin Nishchal and Vijay Singh, were killed when their bike was hit by an SUV in Bhojpur, near Patna, Bihar. Police said the vehicle was driven by a villager leader Mohammad Harsu. He was arrested. Initial reports said that a heated argument between Harsu, husband of a former panchayat mukhia, and the reporters over a news report had preceded the accident. However, the investigation is not complete.

A day later, a television reporter

Sandeep Sharma was mowed down by a truck in Bhind, Madhya Pradesh. Sharma, who had done a sting operation on a sand mining mafia in Bhind, had told police that he had received threats to his life. The driver, Ranvir Singh, was arrested.

Attacks

There were 14 attacks on journalists in the first quarter of the year. In five of these instances, there were targeted attacks against journalists investigating or writing about an issue. In at least ten instances, the perpetrators were either members of Hindu right wing organisations or the police. An unidentified assailant hurled a petrol bomb at the residence of *Shillong Times* Editor, Patricia Mukhim. The latter said that she was targeted for a range of writings about issues that troubled society. Her most recent articles criticised rampant and illegal mining in Meghalaya.

Perpetrators of other targeted attacks included the timber mafia. Mob violence was sponsored by party workers of both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress, Hindu extremists and the police. In one instance, the Delhi police molested a woman journalist covering a student protest. They later apologised, stating that they mistook her for a student!

- January 1, 2018, Mumbai, Maharashtra: Protesters snatch *Republic TV* reporter Shравan Sen's camera.
- January 7, 2018, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: A Facebook post by Damayantee Dhar who reports for *The Wire* records an attack on herself and another reporter from the *Ahmedabad Mirror* on January 7 by a "mob of 15-20 Dalit men" headed by Keval

Rathod.

- January 23, 2018, Athiabari, Meghalaya: Timber mafia attack journalist Biplab Dey.
- January 31, 2018, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: Journalist assaulted by mob of Hindu Yuva Vahini activists.
- February 14, 2018, Kolkata, West Bengal: Senior journalist Navalkant Sinha assaulted by Hindu Samhati Workers in Kolkata;
- February 22, 2018, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh: Following a fight between a student and management of a private hostel over dues, when a news channel goes to cover the incident, the hostel management attacks the journalists.
- March 10, 2018, Assam–Mizoram border: Assam police thrashes Mizo journalists. Emmy Lawbei, journalist with a television channel, was mercilessly beaten up by the police though she showed her identity card to them.
- March 24, 2018, New Delhi: Delhi Police Officer molests female journalist; police said they mistook her to be a student.
- March 25, 2018, Malappuram, Kerala: Journalist N.C. Shareef was mercilessly beaten up and locked up by the Areekode police. Police claimed they didn't know he was a reporter.
- April 1, 2018, Khowai District: Tripura TV journalist Anup Debbarma severely assaulted by a BJP worker.
- April 8, 2018, Kavinagar, Ghaziabad: TV journalist Anuj Chawdhary shot outside his home by sharpshooters allegedly working for Shekhar Chaudhary, a former local councillor charged

with the murder of BJP leader Brijpal Teotia.

- April 9, 2018, Alipore, West Bengal: Photojournalist Diplab Mondal covering Bengal Panchayat Poll Violence alleges assault by TMC goons.
- April 17, 2018, Umpling, Meghalaya: Petrol bomb attack on residence of Shillong Times editor Patricia Mukhim.
- April 20, 2018, Siliguri, West Bengal: TMC workers assault journalists when they go to Chayanpara in Siliguri to cover a scuffle between workers from TMC and the BJP.

Table: The Attackers

Delhi police	01
Hindu right wing orgns.	02
TMC workers	02
Unidentified assailants	02
Owners of private hostel	01
Assam Police	01
Kerala police	01
BJP workers	01
Dalit lawyer, activists	01
Timber gang	01
Sharpshooters of Former Councillor	01
Total	14

Threats and Harassment

Journalists were at the receiving end of threats from those identified as members of Hindu right wing organisations in three out of five instances. In another, a television journalist received death threats from unidentified persons following the channel's coverage of the Kasganj violence. In one instance, personnel of the CRPF accosted a tribal journalist in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh.

In four serious cases of online harassment, intimidation and death threats, journalists were trolled and their personal details shared on social media. A woman journalist found that her Twitter account was compromised by fake messages and morphed pictures were circulated. Journalists filed police complaints but no arrests have been made.

Table: Threats and harassment

CRPF	01
Unidentified persons	02
Temple trust office-bearers	01
RSS workers	01
Hindu right wing	01
BJP leader	01
Lawyer	01
BJP supporters	01
Total	09

Arrests and detentions

While journalists in the field were subjected to mob attacks, others were picked up by police when they went to cover protests, as in the case of two journalists from Kerala reporting on a 'caste' wall in a village. While restrictions on foreign media continued with the denial of visas to Australian journalists who had earlier done a story related to Gautam Adani, two foreign journalists were detained by Kerala police for covering a Valentine's Day celebration in a college. Other instances of arrests and detentions were for social media posts that satirized or were critical of politicians and political leaders. In Chennai the Central Crime Branch (CCB) on April 27 arrested a person who allegedly posted derogatory statement on Facebook against Electricity Minister P. Thangamani.

Sedition

On April 30, journalist Kamal Shukla was charged with sedition by the Katwali police station in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district for sharing a cartoon on social media on the rape of a minor girl in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, allegedly lampooning the country's judiciary and government on Facebook.

Shukla, editor of *Bhumkaal Samachar* and active in highlighting fake encounters in the area, is also head of the Patrakar Suraksha Kanon Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti which has campaigned for a law to protect journalists. He was booked for sedition on the basis of a complaint filed by a Rajasthan resident.

Defamation

Proceedings continued in five cases of defamation even as gags on the publication of the news reports were lifted in two cases—that of Jay Amit Shah against *The Wire* and that of Arindam Chaudhari against Caravan magazine. In the case of *Rising Kashmir* editor Shujaat Bukhari against *Manushi* editor and commentator *Madhu Kishwar*, the case went to trial.

A defamation case was filed by Fatima Nafees, mother of Jawaharlal Nehru University student Najeeb Ahmed, who has been missing since October 2016, against certain media houses for labelling her son an "ISIS sympathiser".

In another case, Congress leader Jagdish Tytler threatened to file a criminal defamation case against the creators of a sting video that purportedly linked him to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Tytler, who said his images were morphed, submitted a memorandum to the Home Ministry stating that he has registered a police

complaint.

Policy curbs and censorship

Amidst these attacks, the Union and State governments announced policies that would curb media freedom

The most active censoring agency was clearly the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), which announced several policy measures (and rolled back only one) to monitor the content of print, broadcast and online media.

In January, it announced that it has widened the ambit of district monitoring committees to cover the monitoring of content of private FM channels and Community Radio Stations (CRS) in addition to TV channels.

In April, the I&B Ministry announced fresh guidelines for penal action against accredited journalists who spread fake news but this sparked a furore and was withdrawn within 24 hours. However, it was followed up with the setting up of a committee comprising bureaucrats and members of the Press Council of India and the News Broadcasters Standards Authority to regulate online content.

Reports that the Ministry planned to radio-tag journalists who visited government offices were denied by the Ministry, but the news website which reported this stood by its report.

Censorship

Censorship of news, broadcast, online media and film continued unabated. There were 16 instances of news being censored, including curbs on news-gathering itself by various State governments and the Centre. These included restrictions on the movement of

journalists in government offices and the legislative assemblies, threats of penal action for news that allegedly contained ‘harsh words’ and even ostensible guidelines from the National Investigation Authority on the duties of a journalist!

<i>Censorship</i>	
Censorship – Film	26
Censorship – News	16
Censorship – Music	06
Censorship- Online media	03
Censorship –Broadcast	02
Censorship-Art	01

More than 20 films ran into trouble with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Both feature films and documentaries continued to languish between the CBFC, the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) and the courts.

Even court orders certifying films for commercial release and a name change did not ensure safe passage, as in the case of Padmavat, where members of the Rajput Karni Sena managed to get the governments of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat to ban the film in these states. The producer of the film Unfreedom chose to exhibit his film on an online video streaming platform to circumvent the censorship when his film was denied a certificate by the CBFC.

Who censored films

CBFC	22
Rajput KarniSena	02
MIB	01
Telangana government	01
Lawyers	01
MIFF	01
BJP Minister	01
SGPC	01
Total	29

Who censored news

MIB	01
Telangana government	01
Delhi High Court	01
District Magistrate, UP	01
NIA	01
Goa police	01
Former judge	01
MLA and Dalit activist/ journalists (Chennai)	01
Total	09

Who censored broadcasts

MIB	01
Total	01

Who censored online media

Media House	01
*Congress-I	01
*Reliance Industries	01
Total	03

Who censored music

Punjab government	01
Chennai police	01
Hindu Right wing religious groups	01
Muslim social organization	01
Lawyers	01
Total	05

Singer Sona Mohapatra filed a written application at Santacruz police station late on April 30, stating that she received a threat allegedly from Madariya Sufi Foundation, asking her to remove a new music video from all communication mediums for being “vulgar, hurting and insulting Islamic religious sentiments.”

Other censorships included the take down of content allegedly satirising the speech of the son of Reliance Industries Chairperson Mukesh Ambani from online news

sites, the takedown of videos of Congress-I President Rahul Gandhi and the termination of the services of a journalist for tweeting about fake news spread by the media house.

However, an order by the NBSA to Zee Television to apologise for, and take down, a video of a programme calling scientist and poet Gauhar Raza anti-national has not been complied with, marking yet another setback to media freedom.

Internet shutdowns

The Internet continued to be at the mercy of local district administrations and state governments, as internet services were suspended for varying periods due to protests or the outbreak of violence in 25 instances, seven of which were in Jammu and Kashmir. Internet shutdowns continued to be imposed through Section 144 as a law and order measure.

The most absurd of the shutdowns was in Srinagar when the authorities suspended internet services over rumours that Pakistani cricketer Shahid Afridi would address a gathering at the Jama Masjid.

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with four instances each, recorded internet shutdowns as district administrations suspended internet services during the nationwide bandh called by Dalit organisations against the Supreme Court's ruling on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. In West Bengal, internet services were suspended following violence during the Ram Navami celebrations.

Internet related censorship	
Internet shutdowns	22
Internet takedowns	02
Internet related arrests	05
Total	29

Apart from fears of regulation of online content, a Citizen Lab-Indian Express study revealed that websites of a range of groups, including human rights groups, NGOs, feminist groups and LGBT groups had been blocked with Netsweeper software.

The firm filtered content for ISPs in ten countries and at least 12 ISPs in India utilised its services. “A testing period between August 2017 and April 2018 saw ‘the highest number of blocked unique URLs’—1,158 out of 2,464—in India,” the report said.

Privacy, Aadhar, Surveillance

In a blatant move to curb any further investigations into the misuse of Aadhar, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) filed an FIR against the reporter and editor of The Tribune newspaper for their reports on the Aadhaar data leak reports. In the midst of concerns over Cambridge Analytica and Facebook’s breach of data,

the Indian Government issued two notices to the two companies and given them time till May 10 to furnish a reply.

However, the government’s own surveillance of citizens is still a matter of concern. In March, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry wrote to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to get all Direct To Home (DTH) operators to install a chip in new set-top boxes, which can give data about channels watched by the viewers and their duration.

Judicial orders

While the Bombay High Court lifted the gag on media coverage of the Sohrabuddin killing trial, the Delhi High Court imposed a ban on media coverage of the bribery case of former district judge I.M. Qudussi. The Delhi High Court also took up suo moto notice of the disclosure of the identity of child victims of sexual assault by media houses, imposed a Rs 1 lakh penalty

on 13 prominent media houses, and issued notices to other websites.

In the wake of the Loya judgement, though not expressly stated as such, the Supreme Court allowed a writ seeking contempt of court proceedings against comments or opinions expressed in the media allegedly critical of its judgements.

In favour of media freedom

Despite the ominous number and range of attacks on media freedom, the ongoing struggle to resist these curbs does yield results. In April, an injunction on the publication of a book on yoga guru and businessperson Baba Ramdev by Priyanka Pathak-Narain and published by Juggernaut Books was lifted by a district court in Delhi.

In January, the Bombay High Court lifted a gag order on media coverage of the Sohrabuddin trial following a petition filed by nine journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists.

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Trump’s Recycling Program

Rebecca Gordon

A barely noticed anniversary slid by on March 20th. It’s been 15 years since the United States committed the greatest war crime of the twenty-first century: the unprovoked, aggressive invasion of Iraq. The *New York Times*, which didn’t exactly cover itself in glory in the run-up to that invasion, recently ran an op-ed by an Iraqi novelist living in the United States entitled “Fifteen Years Ago, America Destroyed My Country,” but that was about it. The *Washington Post*,

another publication that (despite the recent portrayal of its Vietnam-era heroism in the movie *The Post*) repeatedly editorialised in favor of the invasion, marked the anniversary with a story about the war’s “murky” body count. Its piece concluded that at least 600,000 people died in the decade and a half of war, civil war, and chaos that followed—roughly the population of Washington, D.C.

These days, there’s a significant consensus here that the Iraq invasion was a “terrible mistake,” a “tragic

error,” or even the “single worst foreign policy decision in American history.” Fewer voices are saying what it really was: a war crime. In fact, that invasion fell into the very category that led the list of crimes at the Nuremberg tribunal, where high Nazi officials were tried for their actions during World War II. During the negotiations establishing that tribunal and its rules, it was (ironically, in view of later events) the United States that insisted on including the crime of “waging a war

of aggression” and on placing it at the head of the list. The US position was that all the rest of Germany’s war crimes sprang from this first “crime against peace.”

Similarly, the many war crimes of Dick Cheney and George W. Bush—the extraordinary renditions; the acts of torture at Guantánamo, Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and CIA black sites all over the world; the nightmare of abuse at Abu Ghraib, a US military prison in Iraq; the siege and firebombing (with white phosphorus) of the Iraqi city of Fallujah; the massacre of civilians in Haditha, another Iraqi city—all of these arose from the Bush administration’s determination to invade Iraq.

It was to secure “evidence” of a (nonexistent) connection between Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaeda attackers of 9/11 that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld upped the ante at Guantánamo in his infamous memo approving torture there. The search for proof of the same connection motivated the torture of Abu Zubaydah at a CIA black site in Thailand. If not for that long-planned invasion of Iraq, the “war on terror” might have ended years ago.

But Wasn’t That Then?

Fifteen years is an eternity in what Gore Vidal once called “the United States of Amnesia.” So why resurrect the ancient history of George W. Bush in the brave new age of Donald Trump? The answer is simple enough: because the Trump administration is already happily recycling some of those Bush-era war crimes along with some of the criminals who committed them. And its top officials, military and civilian, are already threatening to generate new ones of their own.

Last July, the State Department closed the office that, since the Clinton administration, has assisted war crimes victims seeking justice in other countries. Apparently, the Trump administration sees no reason to do anything to limit the impunity of war criminals, whoever they might be. Reporting on the closure, Newsweek quoted Major Todd Pierce, who worked at Guantánamo as a judge advocate general (JAG) defense attorney, this way:

It just makes official what has been US policy since 9/11, which is that there will be no notice taken of war crimes because so many of them were being committed by our own allies, our military and intelligence officers, and our elected officials. The war crime of conspiring and waging aggressive war still exists, as torture, denial of fair trial rights, and indefinite detention are war crimes. But how embarrassing and revealing of hypocrisy would it be to charge a foreign official with war crimes such as these?

Guantánamo JAG attorneys like Pierce are among the real, if unsung, heroes of this sorry period. They continue to advocate for their indefinitely detained, still untried clients, most of whom will probably never leave that prison. Despite the executive order President Obama signed on his first day in office to close GITMO, it remains open to this day and Donald Trump has promised to “load it up with some bad dudes,” Geneva Conventions be damned.

Indeed, Secretary of Defense James (“Mad Dog”) Mattis has said that the president has the right to lock up anyone identified as a “combatant” in our forever wars, well, forever. In 2016, he assured the

Senate Armed Services Committee that any detainee who “has signed up with this enemy”—no matter where “the president, the commander-in-chief, sends us” to fight—should know that he will be a “prisoner until the war is over.” In other words, since the war on terror will never end, anyone the US captures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Niger, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, or elsewhere will face the possibility of spending the rest of his life in Guantánamo.

Recycling War Criminals

Speaking of Mattis and war crimes, there’s already plenty of blood on his hands. He earned that “Mad Dog” sobriquet while commanding the US Marines who twice in 2004 laid siege to Fallujah. During those sieges, American forces sealed that Iraqi city off so no one could leave, attacked marked ambulances and aid workers, shot women, children, and an ambulance driver, killed almost 6,000 civilians outright, displaced 200,000 more, and destroyed 75% of the city with bombs and other munitions. The civilian toll was vastly disproportionate to any possible military objective—itsself the definition of a war crime.

One of the uglier aspects of that battle was the use of white phosphorus, an incendiary munition. Phosphorus ignites spontaneously when exposed to air. If bits of that substance attach to human beings, as long as there’s oxygen to combine with the phosphorus, skin and flesh burn away, sometimes right into the bone. Use of white phosphorus as an anti-personnel weapon is forbidden under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which the US has signed.

In Iraq, Mattis also saw to it that

charges would be dropped against soldiers responsible for murdering civilians in the city of Haditha. In a well-documented 2005 massacre—a reprisal for a roadside bomb—American soldiers shot 24 unarmed men, women, and children at close range. As the convening authority for the subsequent judicial hearing, Mattis dismissed the murder charges against all the soldiers accused of that atrocity.

Mattis is hardly the only slightly used war criminal in the Trump administration. As most people know, the president has just nominated Deputy CIA Director Gina Haspel to head the Agency. There are times when women might want to celebrate the shattering of a glass ceiling, but this shouldn't be one of them. Haspel was responsible for running a CIA black site in Thailand, during a period in the Bush years when the Agency's torture program was operating at full throttle. She was in charge, for instance, when the CIA tortured Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who was waterboarded at least three times and, according to the executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee's Torture report, "interrogated using the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques." (The report provided no further details.)

Haspel was also part of the chain of command that ordered the destruction of videotapes of the torture of Abu Zubaydah (waterboarded a staggering 83 times). According to the PBS show *Frontline*, she drafted the cable that CIA counterterrorism chief José Rodríguez sent out to make sure those tapes disappeared. In many countries, covering up war crimes would itself merit prosecution; in Washington, it earns a promotion.

More on Trump and Torture

Many people remember that Trump campaigned on a promise to bring back waterboarding "and a whole lot worse." On the campaign trail, he repeatedly insisted that torture "works" and that even "if it doesn't work, they [whoever "they" may be] deserve it anyway, for what they're doing." Trump repeated his confidence in the efficacy of torture a few days after his inauguration, saying that "people at the highest level of intelligence" had assured him it worked.

Trump's nominee to replace Rex Tillerson as secretary of state is former Tea Party congressman and CIA Director Mike Pompeo. Known for his antipathy to Muslims (and to Iran), he once endorsed calling his Indian-American electoral opponent a "turban topper."

Pompeo is as eager as Trump to restore torture's good name and legality, although his public pronouncements have sometimes been more circumspect than the president's. During his CIA confirmation hearings he assured the Senate Intelligence Committee of what most of its members wanted to hear: that he would "absolutely not" reinstitute waterboarding and other forms of torture, even if ordered to do so by the president. However, his written testimony was significantly more equivocal. As the *British Independent* reported, Pompeo wrote that he would back reviewing the ban on waterboarding if prohibiting the technique was shown to impede the "gathering of vital intelligence."

Pompeo added that he planned to reopen the question of whether interrogation techniques should be limited to those—none of them

considered torture techniques—found in the Army Field Manual, something legally required ever since, in 2009, President Obama issued an executive order to that effect. ("If confirmed," wrote Pompeo, "I will consult with experts at the [Central Intelligence] Agency and at other organisations in the US government on whether the Army Field Manual uniform application is an impediment to gathering vital intelligence to protect the country.") Unlike many of Trump's appointees, Pompeo is a smart guy, which makes him all the more dangerous.

When President Trump lists his triumphs, often the first one he mentions is the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch as a Supreme Court justice. Gorsuch, too, played a small but juicy role in the Bush torture drama, drafting the president's signing statement for the Detainee Treatment Act when he worked in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel back in 2005. That statement officially outlawed any torture of "war on terror" detainees, and yet left open the actual practice of torture because, as Gorsuch assured President Bush, none of the administration's self-proclaimed "enhanced interrogation techniques" (including waterboarding) amounted to torture in the first place.

Still, of all Trump's recycled appointments, the most dangerous of all took place only recently. The president fired his national security advisor, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, and replaced him with John Bolton of Iran-Contra and Iraq invasion fame.

Under George W. Bush, Bolton was a key proponent of that invasion, which he'd been advocating since at least 1998 when he signed an infamous letter to Bill Clinton from

the Project for a New American Century recommending just such a course of action. In 2002, Bolton, while undersecretary of state for arms control, engineered the dismissal of José Bustani, the head of the U.N.'s Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was involved in overseeing Iraq's disarmament process. A former Bolton deputy told the New York Times that Bolton was dismayed because Bustani "was trying to send chemical-weapons inspectors to Baghdad in advance of the US-led invasion." Presumably Bolton didn't want the U.N. trumpeting the bad news that Iraq had no active chemical weapons program at that moment.

Nor has Bolton ever forgotten his first Middle Eastern fascination, Iran, although nowadays he wants to attack it (along with North Korea) rather than conspire with it, as President Reagan and he did in the 1980s. He's argued in several editorials and as a Fox News commentator—wrongly as it happens—that it would be completely legal for the United States to launch first strikes against both countries. Naturally, he opposes the six-nation pact with Iran to end its nuclear weapons program. When that agreement was signed, the New York Times ran an op-ed by Bolton entitled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran." It should (but doesn't) go without saying that any first strike against another country is again the very definition of the initial crime on that Nuremberg list.

Recycling War Crimes

We can't blame the Trump administration for the decision to support Saudi Arabia's grim war in Yemen, a catastrophe for the

civilians of that poverty-stricken, now famine-plagued country. That choice was made under Barack Obama. But President Trump hasn't shown the slightest urge to end the American role in it either. Not after the Saudis threw him that fabulous party in Riyadh, projecting a five-story-high portrait of him on the exterior of the Ritz Carlton there. Not after his warm embrace of Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman during his recent visit to the United States. In fact, at their joint press conference, Trump actually criticised former president Obama for bothering the Saudis with complaints about human rights violations in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia itself.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to fund and support the Saudi military's three-year-old war crime in that country, providing weaponry (including cluster bombs), targeting intelligence, and mid-air refueling for Saudi aircraft conducting missions there. The conflict, which the New York Times has called "the world's worst humanitarian crisis," has killed at least ten thousand people, although accurate numbers are almost impossible to come by. As of December 2017, the Yemen Data Project had catalogued 15,489 separate air attacks, of which almost a third involved no known military targets and another 4,800 hit targets that have yet to be identified. Hospitals and other health facilities have been targeted along with crowded markets. Government funding for public health and sanitation ended in 2016, leading to a cholera epidemic that the *Guardian* calls "the largest and fastest-spreading outbreak of the disease in modern history."

Through the illegal blockading of Yemen's ports, Saudi Arabia and its allies have exposed vast numbers of Yemenis to the risk of famine as well. Even before the latest blockade began in November 2017, that country faced the largest food emergency in the world. Now, it is in the early stages of a potentially devastating famine caused entirely by Saudi Arabia's illegal war, aided and abetted by the United States. In addition, Trump has increased the number of drone assassinations in Yemen, with their ever-present risk of civilian deaths.

Yemen is hardly the only site for actual and potential Trump administration war crimes. In response to requests from his military commanders, the president has, for instance, eased the targeting restrictions that had previously been in place for drone strikes, a decision he's also failed to report to Congress, as required by law. According to Al-Jazeera, such drone strikes in countries ranging from Libya to Afghanistan will no longer require the presence of an "imminent threat," which means "the US may now select targets outside of armed conflict," with increased risk of hitting noncombatants. Also relaxed has been the standard previously in place "of requiring 'near certainty' that the target is present" before ordering a strike. Drone operators will now be permitted to attack civilian homes and vehicles, even if they can't confirm that the human being they are searching for is there. Under Trump, the CIA, which President Obama had largely removed from the drone wars, is once again ordering such attacks along with the military. All of these changes make it more likely that Washington's serial aerial

assassinations will kill significant numbers of civilians in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and other target countries.

Defense Secretary Mattis has also loosened the rules of engagement in Afghanistan by, for example, removing the “proximity requirement” for bombing raids. In other words, US forces are now free to drop bombs even when the target is nowhere near US or Afghan military forces. As Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee last October,

If they are in an assembly area, a training camp, we know they are an enemy and they are going to threaten the Afghan government or our people, [Gen. John Nicholson, commander of US Forces Afghanistan,] has the wherewithal to make that decision. Wherever we find them, anyone who is trying to throw the NATO plan off, trying to attack the Afghan government, then we can go after them.

Under such widened rules for air strikes—permitting them anytime our forces notice a group of people “assembling” in an area—the chances of killing civilians go way up. And indeed, civilian casualties rose precipitously in Afghanistan last year.

And then there’s always the chance—the odds have distinctly risen since the appointments of two raging Iranophobes, Pompeo and Bolton, to key national security positions—that Trump will start his very own unprovoked war of aggression. “I’m good at war,” Trump told an Iowa rally in 2015. “I’ve had a lot of wars of my own. I’m really good at war. I love war in a certain way, but only when we win.” With Mike Pompeo whispering in one ear and John Bolton in the

other, it's frighteningly likely Trump will soon commit his very own war crime by starting an aggressive war against Iran.

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