

The NATIONAL INTEREST FOUNDATION

[President Trump Visits India Amid a Wave of Religious Violence](#)

President Trump concluded his first trip to India as president amid the backdrop of violent clashes breaking out between Hindus and Muslims throughout the country. Over 20 people have been killed, and hundreds injured, in riots over India's contentious new citizenship law, the Citizenship Amendment Act. The law would provide Indian citizenship for minorities fleeing religious violence elsewhere in Southeast Asia, with the exception of Muslims. Hindu mobs in support of the new bill have been inciting violence during peaceful protests against the new law, and the situation has deteriorated rapidly in the last few days.

Trump began his visit to India by addressing a crowd of 100,000 in a campaign-style rally in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat. The president and first lady also received tours of the Taj Mahal and memorials to Mahatma Gandhi. President Trump dropped his frequent criticism of India's trade policies during the visit, and said he was optimistic he could reach a breakthrough on a deal with Prime Minister Modi that was mutually beneficial. The president also extolled his relationship with Modi, saying it "has never been as good as it is right now." Following face-to-face talks in New Delhi, Trump and Modi jointly announced agreements on defense and security, including an Indian promise to buy \$3 billion worth of American military products for its navy. When President Trump was asked about the ongoing religious riots taking place mere miles from where he was, he ducked the question and said he wanted to leave that to India. The president also praised Prime Minister Modi's commitment to religious freedom, despite the Modi Administration's repeated actions denigrating India's Muslim community.

The clashes between Hindus and Muslims mark some of the deadliest religious violence in India since 1984, when nearly 3,000 Sikhs were murdered in New Delhi by Hindu mobs. The violence began when right-wing politician Kapil Mishra led a rally in Delhi's Jaffrabad district and commanded the Delhi police to clear out people protesting against the CAA within three days or face consequences. Mishra tweeted a similar message and called for people to gather in the area. The first reports of violence surfaced later that day. Police officers have been accused of complicity in the violence by allowing Hindu gangs to attack Muslims unabated. Videos show police officers and paramilitary troops destroying CCTV cameras in Muslim neighborhoods and turning a blind eye to Hindu mobs committing violence against Muslims. A prominent mosque in northeastern Delhi was set on fire, and social media videos show youths scaling the mosque to destroy its minaret and plant a saffron flag, representative of right-wing Hinduism, in its place. Muslims in the Mustafabad district of Delhi have been forced to leave their homes after Hindu mobs began breaking in, assaulting people, and setting their houses on fire.

The response to the violence has been muted from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The BJP is a right-wing Hindu nationalist government that has longstanding policies to create a social hierarchy based on religion in India. Prime Minister Modi called for calm and renounced any form of violence. Delhi's High Court is currently hearing petitions to register a formal police complaint against three BJP leaders, including Kapil Mishra for their role in inciting the riots. The leader of India's opposition, Sonia Gandhi, demanded the resignation of Home Secretary Amit Shah. The violence has slowly abated, but Delhi remains extremely tense amid the BJP's reticence to bow to pressure from India's Muslim community.