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#Notinmyname: Growing 'Citizen's Movement' Builds in Modi's India to Protect Muslims

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A government that strips people of their dignity, what else is left to say," Saba Dewan told teleSUR.

A new campaign #Notinmyname is sweeping India and some major international cities, with protests set for Wednesday, against the recent streak of Muslim killings near the Indian capital.

The campaign was started just three days ago by a Saba Dewan New Delhi-based filmmaker, along with her partner, Rahul Roy, also a filmmaker and Sanjay Kak, a left-wing activist and filmmaker, with protests against the Muslim hate crimes planned for the cities of Delhi, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Allahabad, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Trivandrum.

The organizing has even crossed boundaries and reached cities like London, Toronto, and Boston that are also holding protests.

Three brothers had come to New Delhi to shop for the festival of Eid and were on their way back home in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura Thursday. A small argument over the seat on the train turned to religious slurs as the boys were taunted for being beef-eaters, one of the brothers, Shabir, 23, told The Indian Express from a hospital bed.

They were slapped, one of them even got his beard pulled. According to the first information report filed by the police, the group of 10 to 12 young Hindu men pulled out knives and stabbed the brothers. A photo from the incident shows the blood-drenched compartment. One of the brothers, 15-year-old Junaid succumbed to death in his brother's arms.

It led Dewan to tears. "Junaid's killing was completely shattering. That really agitated me. I thought if someone will not speak up, I'll protest."

Dewan made up her mind. She said, fine, "if no one else, I'll protest. I'll say not in my name. Stop it (the violence)."

Dewan turned to Facebook, expressing a need to protest the heinous mob lynching, she created an event page along with her filmmaker partner Rahul Roy and a friend Sanjay Kak.

"In that emotional moment, I wrote on Facebook, asking shouldn't we all be protesting as citizens."

Dewan got an overwhelming response and over 5,000 people in New Delhi-chapter of the protest alone are expected to join the protest, according to the event's Facebook page. Families of victims including Junaid's are expected to join the protest that'll take place in the heart of the city.

Following the terrifying lynching of Junaid, and several others, Muslims all over India observed #BlackEid. Grieving the Muslim lynchings, thousands of worshippers marked the end of the holy

month of Ramadan wearing black armbands during the special prayers as a mark of solidarity with the victims of the religious hate crime.

Junaid's death was met with a deafening silence from the ruling right-wing Bhartiya Janta Party. Just a day after he was brutally beaten to death, not a single BJP minister showed up at the president's traditional Iftar, a religious observance of Ramadan where community breaks the fast together, held at the president's house, Rashtrapati Bhavan.

When in April, a 55-year-old dairy farmer Pehlu Khan was lynched for transporting cattle, not a single BJP minister condemned the act. But what infuriated the BJP ministers was the public slaughter of a calf by the opposition party, Congress' workers in Kerala.

"The attacks are at the level of systematic violence and the state is maintaining complete silence and that is the most worrying part as that is creating a sense of impunity for all those people who can go out and lynch a Muslim," Dewan told teleSUR.

The spate of lynchings has moved the collective consciousness of many progressive groups and activists in India and abroad.

"The campaign evolved organically and I think there are many people out there who were repulsed by what's happening and have decided to join in, it's a citizen's movement and is gathering momentum," Dewan said.

"People care, we care about our fellow citizens and there are many of us, not one, not few, but many who want India to be secular, inclusive and which doesn't discriminate between its citizens. And that's the more important message that is coming through."

"This movement is happening simultaneously and it's not as if someone is igniting it. It also means that we will not give in to the narrative of hate, spun by the ruling elite."

Communal violence is not new to India, in fact, its birth was based on the horrendous animosity between Hindus and Muslims that led to one of the world's largest exoduses, the partition of 1947 that divided India and Pakistan.

"We don't seem to learn from our history. The wounds of the '47 partition but instead of learning from it, the hatred has become manifolds more. We have a legacy of communal hatred and animosity."

"Junaid's village is next to us in Delhi, it was very revealing what some of the villagers said," Dewan continued, "They said, 'We feel shame for the fear we feel' and that is a loss of dignity and I can't think of anything more terrible."

"A government that strips people of their dignity, what else is left to say," Dewan added.

India Hate crimes Muslims Islamophobia Right-wing violence

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P.S.

* Telesur. 27 June 2017:

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Growing-Citizens-Movement-Builds-in-Modis-India-to-Protect-Muslims-20170627-0035.html>