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Thousands protest lynching of Muslims [and Dalits] in India

Saturday 1 July 2017, by [NAQVI Jawed](#) (Date first published: 29 June 2017).

NEW DELHI: When it gets unbearably hot in parts of India a cloudburst ends the long spells of suffocation and suffering.

The rain clouds visited Delhi all too briefly on Wednesday but they may have presaged the end of suffocation of another kind. Liberal intellectuals, worried teachers, harried Muslims, abused Dalits, persecuted Kashmiris and members of practically every ethnic group and religious community gathered in their thousands to protest against a state-watched culture of catching Muslims and Dalits and lynching them over alleged beef-eating or transporting of cattle.

Similar protests were held across other cities, including Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru. Organisers said this could be the beginning of a wider movement against the Modi government's three violence-filled years in office. "The government has been callous in its silence of collusion with the increasing spate of murders and public beating and humiliation of Muslims and Dalits," said saffron-clad Swami Agnivesh, a Hindu preacher.

Many wore black armbands to mark the protest. Others flashed "The Lynch Map of India" showing the dozen plus cities and regions where Muslims and Dalits have been lynched by mobs since the advent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rightwing Hindu revivalist government in May 2014.

A short distance from the Jantar Mantar venue of the protests, the vast lawns around the British-built India Gate were swarming with Muslim families from Delhi's Old Quarter, a happier spillover from the Eid festivities that were otherwise observed with a sense of loss and fear. Mr Modi's cabinet ministers had shunned a traditional iftar in the last week of Ramazan thrown by President Pranab Mukherjee.

Anti-Hindutva protesters have been encouraged by the fact that at last the foreign media seems to have seen that India's Hindu nationalist government was losing the plot to govern a secular nation.

Following a blistering critique by The Economist, The New York Times commented on the Modi-Trump meeting at the White House thus: "Mr Modi and Mr Trump have much in common, including a history of anti-Muslim rhetoric, a nationalist focus on homegrown manufacturing, a fraught relationship with the news media, and electoral campaigns that benefited from the proliferation of fake news."

"In Mr Modi's case, supporters of his party circulated fake videos in 2013 of two Hindus being lynched by a Muslim mob. The videos led to rioting that killed 44 people, displaced 42,000 others and split a historical voting alliance between lower-caste Hindus and Muslims. That helped give Mr Modi a substantial majority in the lower house of Parliament."

Wednesday's rallies were described by the organisers as spontaneous citizens' protests, but they had a sprinkling of leaders from the left who preferred to remain offstage. Their greater role and that of

the somnolent opposition could unfold in the coming days, some organisers believed

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P.S.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1342019/thousands-protest-lynching-of-muslims-in-india>