

India: Bloomsbury Withdraws Book on Delhi Riots Launched By BJP's Kapil Mishra

Saturday 5 September 2020, by [The Wire \(IN\)](#) (Date first published: 22 August 2020).

The book was launched on Saturday by BJP leader Kapil Mishra, whose communal speeches have been seen as one of the triggers for the riots.

New Delhi: Bloomsbury Books India announced on Saturday afternoon that it is withdrawing an upcoming book on the Delhi riots that has courted controversy, especially after it was announced that Bharatiya Janata Party leader Kapil Mishra would be the guest of honour at the book launch.

Delhi Riots 2020: The Untold Story was launched on Saturday at 4 pm. The lineup also included a slew of other pro-Hindutva activists, including Nupur Sharma of the web platform 'OpIndia' and filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri. The launch event took place despite the publishing house's decision.

"Bloomsbury India had planned to release *Delhi Riots 2020: The Untold Story* in September, a book purportedly giving a factual report on the riots in Delhi in February 2020, based on investigations and interviews conducted by the authors," the publishing house said in a statement emailed to *The Wire* on Saturday afternoon. "However, in view of very recent events including a virtual pre-publication launch organised without our knowledge by the authors, with participation by parties of whom the publishers would not have approved, we have decided to withdraw publication of the book."

"Bloomsbury India strongly supports freedom of speech but also has a deep sense of responsibility towards society," the publisher said.

While the statement says the book was to be launched in September, the official Bloomsbury Books India website says the book was published on August 10.

When the launch was first publicised, a large number of authors, publishers and human rights activists had criticised Bloomsbury for allowing Mishra – whose provocative and communal remarks against anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters is widely believed to have triggered the riots – to speak at the occasion. The hashtag #ShameOnBloomsbury began to trend at #30 at around 4 pm.

Other publishers also raised questions on how a book could have been written, fact-checked, edited and published so quickly, given the sensitivity of the issue, the fact that the riots took place in late February this year and the police investigation, itself mired in allegations of bias, has not even been completed.

Sudhanva Deshpande, who runs Leftword Books, released a statement saying that the book itself, and not just the event involving Mishra, was the problem.

"I'm asking Bloomsbury, as a leading publisher, to ask itself what editorial protocols permit such a book to be published in such a short time? Are you as publisher not responsible for at least elementary fact checking? Are you as publisher not culpable in

playing a part in the architecture of terror being created and deployed by the State and non-State actors to punish the victims of violence, and those who stand up for them?

Make no mistake about it. This book has nothing to do with the pursuit of knowledge, in which differences of opinion and interpretation are not just desirable, but essential. This book is part of a multi-pronged attack on India's secular fabric, on the idea of natural justice, on ethics, on rationality, on humanity, and, because we are talking in a publishing context, on knowledge itself.

This book has blood on its hands."

Authors, including those who have published with Bloomsbury India in the past, also expressed their shock.

I'm suspending my working relationship with [@BloomsburyIndia](#). I'm appalled by Bloomsbury's decision to platform and support fascist propaganda. I hope book bloggers in this community will give up the free books and do the right thing. This is unacceptable. Don't be an enabler. pic.twitter.com/s4eVHL8i4E

— षषषष (@sumaiyyabooks) [August 22, 2020](#)

I'm now ashamed at having contributed to a chapter in a [@BloomsburyIndia](#) book. When the history of our times is written, the role of publishers who colluded and published falsehoods to serve current powers will also be noted. Shame on you. You're no longer a credible publisher. <https://t.co/NIFrLWKplS>

— Jayati Ghosh (@Jayati1609) [August 22, 2020](#)

(Thread)[@BloomsburyIndia](#) is releasing a book on the Delhi Riots 2020 --- and guess who the Guest of Honours are:

KAPIL MISHRA, the hate-monger and brain-child of goli maaron saalon ko (shoot the bastards) slogan, who explicitly called for violence against Muslims and Dalits. pic.twitter.com/bC2HoFlmSg

— meena kandasamy || षषषषषषषष (@meenakandasamy) [August 21, 2020](#)

Just refused to review a book for Bloomsbury Academic. If Bloomsbury publishes a book that is full of lies about Delhi's academics, in full collusion with the Delhi RSS Police's attempt to arrest and interrogate academics, they shouldn't expect any academic co-operation. <https://t.co/D0WdXoObc2>

— N S (@nandinisundar) [August 22, 2020](#)

Before it announced the book's withdrawal, Bloomsbury had responded by saying that the launch event was not organised by the publishing house, and it had no prior knowledge of it.

Authors of the book had said that it is uncovering a 'Jihadist-Naxal' conspiracy. Author Sonali Malhotra also said the book was a must-read for parents whose children would be sent to universities, to know "...which universities would use them as cannon fodder for their own political agenda".

Author Monika Arora, an advocate at the Supreme Court, had also submitted a 'fact-checking report' on the riots in March, which was [published by the RSS mouthpiece *The Organiser*](#).

Mishra, 'guest of honour' at the launch, delivered a speech in north-east Delhi on February 23, 2020 that is widely seen as the trigger for the outbreak of the violence. As N.D. Jayaprakash wrote in *The Wire* as part of his critique of the fact-finding report by Monika Arora et al.,

"A summary of that speech, delivered standing alongside the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ved Prakash Surya (DCP North East Delhi), is very revealing. [According to *India Today* \(Delhi, February 27, 2020\)](#):

"On Sunday, Kapil Mishra had issued an ultimatum to the Delhi Police to clear the streets of the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protesters.

Mishra tweeted (roughly translated from Hindi) stating, **"Giving a three-day ultimatum to Delhi Police to clear the roads in Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh of protesters. Don't try to reason with us after this, because we won't pay heed."**

Kapil Mishra also attached a video with his tweet and wrote, **"We will maintain peace until Donald Trump is in India. After that, we refuse to listen to even the police if the roads are not cleared.... we will be forced to hit the streets."**

"The only action on the part of DCP Surya was to meekly walk away from the scene without even a warning to Kapil Mishra to not hold out any such threat that could lead to violence. Even if the anti-CAA protestors were wrong in blocking the road, the onus of maintaining law and order was on the police.

"As for the CAA supporters, they had every right to complain to the police against such a blockade and also express their support for the cause they uphold. But intimidating anti-CAA protestors was certainly not the way to demonstrate their stance."

Jayaprakash noted that the report authored by Arora and her colleagues chose "to overlook the provocative speech of Kapil Mishra" from its narrative of the Delhi riots.

It is not clear if this lacuna has been addressed in the book, which has now been withdrawn by Bloomsbury.

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