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HINDUS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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# **Executive Summary**

Since independence, Indian politics has been pulled by two competing visions for India: one guided the independence struggle to build India as a secular, pluralistic democracy and the other envisioned India as a Hindu, majoritarian nation. The India National Congress (INC) has been the face of the fight for secularism, and for most of Indian history was a dominant force in Indian politics. It has both been responsible for moments of democratic backsliding in India and, in this moment when democracy in India is at existential risk, a much more weakened party than it was a decade ago. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a Hindu nationalist political party, and Narendra Modi is a lifelong Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) member. Modi's rule since 2014 in India has been marked by Islamophobia, majoritarian violence, and rapid democratic backsliding.

Major national and regional opposition parties, including the INC, the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the Left Front, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Samajwadi Party, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), have formed an alliance ahead of the 2024 elections, known as the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA Alliance).

During the election, the parties have focused on a number of electoral issues. In the election, parties are forcing economic debates on economic growth vs. inequality, rising unemployment and inflation. Modi has made his administration's assertive foreign policy a rallying point for his base, and the BJP is running on national security issues, while brushing aside international concerns about the Indian

government's conduct before and during elections. A key part of the BJP's electoral message rests on the religious and cultural supremacist ideology that the BJP espouses. Finally, parties are demanding censuses and expanded reservations for casteoppressed communities and women. Ahead of the election, observers are concerned about the state of Indian democracy, especially regarding minority rights, freedom of the press, and the ability to dissent.

# **Democracy and Human Rights India Today**

Over the past decade, freedom of expression and democracy have been dramatically curtailed. Major human rights organizations have documented the rise of authoritarianism and majoritarianism, with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum warning that the combination of hatred and violence could lead to a mass atrocity event. Most of these organizations attribute India's human rights crisis to the BJP's Hindu nationalist ideology.

#### **Minority Rights**

During Modi's second term, the BJP's bigotry against religious and cultural minorities became a central feature of the government's politics. From Manipur and Kashmir to Uttar Pradesh, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Adivasis (or Indigenous peoples), and Dalits faced concerted violence. Communities that represent both religious and cultural minorities, such as the Kashmiri Muslim or Christian Kuki-Zomi communities, face the most intense violence from both the state and Hindu nationalist mobs.

## **Attacks on Civil Society and Press Freedom**

The BJP-led government has clamped down on the ability of Indians to dissent by weaponizing existing anti-terrorism and anti-corruption laws. The most commonly-used laws to silence critics are the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA), and the Preventing Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The conviction rate for UAPA is less than 2%. The FCRA has been weaponized to shut down organizations based in India that receive some foreign funding, like the Center for Policy Research, as well as large international organizations with operations in India, like Oxfam and Amnesty International.

## **Social Media and Propaganda**

A hallmark of the BJP's politics has been the party's savvy use of social media to energize voters and supporters. The BJP has used social media to propagate its agenda while cultivating troll armies to intimidate political critics into silence. At the same time, the Indian government has used surveillance technologies and censorship laws to silence dissent and shape the online media environment.

#### **Electoral Bonds**

In the name of democratizing money in Indian politics, the Indian government introduced the electoral bonds scheme. The scheme allowed individuals and corporations to donate unlimited amounts of money anonymously to political parties. The electoral bonds scheme led to a jump in campaign financing in Indian elections, disproportionately for the BJP. The Indian Supreme Court called the scheme a "distortion of democracy" and ruled electoral bonds unconstitutional.

#### **Voter Disenfranchisement**

Marginalized communities in any country face significantly larger obstacles to voting. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, ample evidence emerged that Muslim, Dalit, and Adivasi (or Indigenous) voters were systematically denied their right to vote. With the introduction of the CAA and new requirements for Indians to provide documentation of their ability to vote, undoubtedly even more voters from minority communities will be excluded from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

# **Criminalization of the Opposition**

In its trend of criminalizing dissent, the Indian government has ramped up legal harassment against opposition parties and lawmakers. The Indian government has weaponized laws like the PMLA (and the Enforcement Directorate, which investigates money laundering) and institutions like the Income Tax Department to cripple the opposition. In the months before elections, the Enforcement Directorate arrested Chief Ministers Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal and the Income Tax Department froze the Congress Party's assets.



# **History of Indian Politics**

- India won its independence as a result of a peaceful, secular struggle. The ideological tenets of the Indian Republic emerged from the Indian National Congress's (INC) political importance in the independence struggle. The vision for India as a secular republic was enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and represents the idea of India as a pluralistic union between states rather than one nation. While the Indian government has often failed to live up to this image, including under India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, this idea has been a core organizing tenet in Indian politics. While the INC has been a dominant force in Indian politics, it has both been responsible for moments of democratic backsliding in India and, in this moment when democracy in India is at existential risk, a much more weakened party than it was a decade ago.
- Hindu nationalism, or the belief that India must be a Hindu nation, has been a political movement for almost a century. This ideology, which drew direct inspiration from similar European nationalist movements in the 1930s, has been an undercurrent in Indian politics since the Independence movement. While India was not formed as a Hindu nation, Hindu nationalists have shaped Indian history in dark ways. A Hindu nationalist assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, and the umbrella organization for the movement) has been banned several times throughout India's history.

 The RSS and other Hindu nationalist groups have been implicated in majoritarian pogroms, including most notoriously, in 1992 in Ayodhya, 2002 in Gujarat, and 2020 in Delhi. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a Hindu nationalist political party, and Narendra Modi is a lifelong RSS member. Modi's rule in India has been marked by Islamophobia, majoritarian violence, and rapid democratic backsliding.

• The major national and regional opposition parties, including the INC, the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the Left Front, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Samajwadi Party, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), have formed an alliance ahead of the 2024 elections, known as the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA Alliance). The INDIA Alliance aims to set up direct fights against BJP candidates in each voting district, focusing on issues like the economy, rising unemployment, and the BJP's treatment of minorities. While the INDIA Alliance reflects the plurality of the Indian opposition, it is also beset by the challenges - including infighting between rival parties and competing ideological visions for the future of India. In West Bengal, the TMC has opted out of seat-sharing agreements, and will be competing against both the BJP and the INDIA Alliance's INC/Left Front candidates. In Punjab, the AAP and INC have also decided against seat sharing agreements. In other parts of the country, the INDIA Alliance has been negotiating agreements until the last minute.

To hear perspectives from across the Indian political opposition, you can listen to Friends of Democracy's series, <u>Conversations on Indian Democracy</u>.

# **Major Issues and Electoral Dynamics**

**Economic Policies:** The BIP's welfare schemes and infrastructure projects are central to the party's economic appeal. However, the BJP has also made missteps, including its infamous demonetisation scheme and introducing laws that would have deregulated grain markets. The laws regarding the deregulation of grain sparked a massive protest of farmers across India. The farmers movement, led by Sikh farmers, forced the Modi government to roll back these laws. The movement, and subsequent protests, have forced all parties to discuss minimum guaranteed prices for crops. The protests also reflect the fact that many farmers, facing impossibly high debt, have died by suicide to get out of debt spirals. While the past decade has seen the rapid rise of India's billionaire class, it has also been marked by rising unemployment and enduring inequality. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Indians have seen spikes in vegetable and fuel prices, although grain prices have not seen a similar spike.

National Security and Foreign Policy: Modi has presented himself, in domestic Indian politics, as the man who has finally delivered India to the world stage. As "vishwaguru" or world teacher, he has effectively commanded the world's respect for India. This perception is reinforced by India's increasing strategic importance in US-led partnerships, like The Quad and I2-U2. Moreover, after a terrorist attack in Pulwama in 2019, voters viewed Modi as the leader most capable of protecting Indians from foreign attacks. While Modi projects a strongman image, however, the Indian Army has been losing land to the Chinese along the contested India-China border. The Indian Army and paramilitaries also have not adequately addressed internal

security challenges in Manipur. Instead, decades-long concerns about the Indian Army's human rights violations in Northeast India and Kashmir have endured, and Indian voters in these regions have successfully demanded that the Indian government roll back the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Finally, while Modi argues that efforts to silence dissidents in Canada and the US shows that he can hold his own against the West, these actions have demonstrated to Canadian and US policymakers that Modi's autocratic tendencies pose a direct national security threat to these countries.

Religious and Cultural Issues: The BJP is a fundamentally Hindu nationalist party and has trafficked in casteist, anti-Indigenous, xenophobic, and Islamophobic rhetoric and policies. The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomous status formed core planks in the BJP's 2019 political campaign and will be embraced as wins by BJP voters. In campaign speeches, Modi has used Islamophobic dog whistles against opposition parties. Indian political observers consider Modi's inauguration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir as the beginning of the BJP's electoral campaign. The BJP has also faced allegations of voter marginalization, and Modi himself has been dogged by allegations that he has encouraged anti-minority violence in Gujarat in 2002, Delhi in 2020, and Manipur starting in 2023. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has ranked India as one of the 15 countries at highest risk for mass atrocity for the last decade, thanks to rising Islamophobia and majoritarianism during Modi's reign.

Caste Issues: Caste politics are central to winning voters, especially in North India, where parties like the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party have helped shape the political landscape for decades. While the Samajwadi Party joined the INDIA Alliance, the BSP has decided to contest elections on its own. Both the Congress Party and BJP have also recognized the power of caste-based politics. The current Congress president, Mallikarjun Kharge, could become India's first Dalit Prime Minister, and the party and INDIA Alliance platform includes demands for a caste census and expanded reservations for caste-oppressed communities, including those from communities without previous protections, like Otherwise Backward Castes (OBC). Modi's OBC background is a core component of the BJP's substantial outreach to caste-oppressed communities, which the BJP has counted on against the historically upper-caste dominated Congress Party.

Women's Empowerment: All political parties have touted their support for women's rights as critical to their success, but these achievements have been insufficient to achieve real gender equity. Women are underrepresented in the highest levels of political participation across the board. While there is political support for reserved seats for women politicians, political parties differ in how to ensure that lower caste women are not sidelined in these decisions. Additionally, while the BJP has given a decadelong timeline to implement the women's reservations scheme, opposition parties have demanded immediate implementation of the scheme. The BJP has also touted that economic schemes have improved job opportunities for women, and Modi has

invoked "nari shakti" or women's power as a political rallying cry. However, gender-based violence has surged, particularly in BJPcontrolled states, and physical and digital violence are a hallmark of the Hindu nationalist targeting of minority women. And while the Indian Supreme Court has moved the Indian government to protect gender rights, including the right to abortion, the BJP has repeatedly blocked efforts to criminalize marital rape, guarantee rights to third gender individuals, and legalize same-sex marriage.

The election will be a critical indicator of the health of Indian democracy, especially regarding minority rights, freedom of the press, and the right to dissent.

To understand the logistics of the world's largest elections, the political players, and the key issues in depth, check out the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's India Elects hub.



## **Democracy and Human Rights in India Today**

Over the past decade, freedom of expression and democracy have been dramatically curtailed. Major human rights organizations have documented the rise of authoritarianism and majoritarianism, with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum warning that the combination of hatred and violence could lead to a mass atrocity event. Most of these organizations attribute India's human rights crisis to the BJP's Hindu nationalist ideology.

- <u>Freedom House</u> has documented, in its annual Freedom in the World report, how India is now categorized as "Partly Free" and the particular assaults the Indian government has carried out against the right to dissent.
- For the past three years, the <u>Varieties of Democracy Institute</u>
  has categorized India as an electoral autocracy, and has
  labeled India as one of the fastest autocratizing countries in
  the world.
- The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has labeled India as consistently at high risk for a mass atrocity event in its <u>Early</u> <u>Warning Project</u> and has now released a <u>policy brief</u> with urgent steps for the Indian government and partners to take to prevent mass atrocities in India.
- In the <u>Journal of Democracy</u>, Ashutosh Varshney and Connor Staggs draw parallels between the political and social dynamics of the current Hindu nationalist government in India and the Jim Crow Southern United States.

# **Minority Rights**

During Modi's second term, the BJP's bigotry against religious and cultural minorities became a central feature of the government's politics. From Manipur and Kashmir to Uttar Pradesh, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Adivasis, and Dalits faced concerted violence. Communities that represent both religious and cultural minorities, such as the Kashmiri Muslim or Christian Kuki-Zomi communities, face the most intense violence from both the state and Hindu nationalist mobs.

- The <u>US Commission on International Religious Freedom</u> has, for four years, recommended that India be designated as a Country of Particular Concern for religious freedom violations. USCIRF's recommendation reflects the organization's conclusion that the Indian government has facilitated the persecution of religious minorities in India. USCIRF
- The <u>South Asia Justice Campaign</u> has developed the India Persecution Tracker to catalog incidents of religious and cultural persecution in India. The project seeks to record evidence that the Indian government has engaged in the crime against humanity of persecution.
- In 2019, the Indian Parliament passed new changes to India's citizenship laws to fast-track citizenship for non-Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has been roundly criticized as a blatant effort to fuel Islamophobic xenophobia and, when paired with the proposed National Registry of Citizens, would strip Indian Muslims of their citizenship.

- One of the most potent symbols of BJP control, especially at the state and local level, has been bulldozers, which have been used to raze the houses of "wrongdoers," usually Muslim families and even entire neighborhoods. <u>Amnesty</u> <u>International</u> released a comprehensive report on the cruelties of "bulldozer justice," especially for Indian Muslims.
- <u>Human Rights Watch's 2024 rep</u>ort on India focused on the continued Hindu nationalist violence and hatred against religious and cultural minorities. As HRW also notes, authorities in BJP-controlled states refused to investigate anti-minority crimes and instead criminalized the very targets of majoritarian violence.
- Manipur has been a particular center of anti-Indigenous and anti-Christian violence by majoritarian, Hindu nationalist forces. The <u>International Crisis Group</u> provided an overview to a multi-faceted conflict that has killed hundreds and led to the displacement of thousands. Notably, the Modi government has refused to address the violence, and instead has provided political support to Chief Minister Biren Singh, who has been <u>accused</u> of fueling the violence and <u>supporting</u> Hindu nationalist extremists in the conflict.

## **Attacks on Civil Society and Press Freedom**

The BJP-led government has clamped down on the ability of Indians to dissent by weaponizing existing anti-terrorism and anti-corruption laws. The most commonly-used laws to silence critics are the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA), and the Preventing Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The UAPA and related anti-terrorism laws are considered "no bail laws" since they allow judges to deny bail for up to seven years before a trial. The conviction rate for UAPA is less than 2%. The FCRA has been weaponized to shut down organizations based in India that receive some foreign funding, like the Center for Policy Research, as well as large international organizations with operations in India, like Oxfam and Amnesty International.

- The <u>American Bar Association</u> released a report documenting how the Indian government has abused the UAPA, PMLA, and FCRA, in particular, to shut down dissent. By weaponizing these laws, the Indian government has violated its commitments to the Financial Action Task Force.
- In 2022, <u>Hindus for Human Rights</u> Senior Policy Director, Ria Chakrabarty, wrote about the use of the UAPA, in particular, to criminalize political dissent. Since then, conditions have worsened for political critics in India.

- One of the most egregious cases of human rights defenders being arrested under the UAPA is the <u>case of the Bhima Koregaon 16</u>. The BK-16 have been targeted for advocating on behalf of India's Dalit and Adivasi communities. In 2018, police arrested the BK-16 for supposedly conspiring with Maoist insurgents in Maharashtra to overthrow the Indian government. However, <u>digital forensics investigators reported</u> that hackers with links to local police planted evidence linking the BK-16 to insurgents. Hackers also used <u>Pegasus spyware</u> to monitor the BK-16. As of 2024, 6 of the 16 have been released, with two being released on the merits of the case (i.e. the Supreme Court could not find any evidence of terrorist activities). One individual, <u>Father Stan Swamy</u>, died in jail due to inhumane conditions.
- The Intercept profiled one of India's most visible political prisoners, Umar Khalid. Khalid, who was arrested alongside student leaders protesting the CAA, has become a symbol for the anti-CAA movement and the violence that Muslims faced in Delhi during pogroms in 2020. Like many other political prisoners, Khalid is in jail under the UAPA.
- The Indian government has suspended the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) accounts of many organizations, <u>effectively weaponizing</u> FCRA accounts against its critics. <u>Amnesty International</u> and <u>Oxfam</u> were two international organizations that lost their FCRAs, but organizations like the <u>Centre for Policy Research</u> and the

<u>Evangelical Fellowship of India</u> have also lost their FCRAs. FCRAs are vital for many organizations to function in India, and after Amnesty lost its FCRA, it <u>shut most of its India operations</u>.

- Reporters without Borders has documented the fall in press freedom over the last decade in India, with India now ranked 161st in the world for press freedom - lower than neighboring countries Pakistan and Sri Lanka. RSF has attributed this fall in press freedom to increased partisan media coverage, violence against journalists, and concentration of media ownership among oligarchs.
- The <u>Center to Protect Journalists</u> has ranked India as the number 12 country for impunity for killers of journalists. CPJ also estimates that India is one of the deadliest countries for journalists today.
- In 2023, <u>Indian tax authorities raided</u> the BBC's Mumbai and Delhi offices in retaliation to the BBC's documentary that criticized Modi. <u>In 2024</u>, the BBC was forced to hand over control of its Indian-language news services to an Indian company, Collective Newsroom.
- Indian newsrooms that are critical of Modi regularly face raids from various parts of the Indian government. Raids against <u>The Wire</u> and <u>Newsclick</u> have led to <u>international</u> condemnation.

- In 2022, Gautam Adani, one of Modi's closest allies and one
  of India's richest men, initiated a <u>hostile takeover</u> of NDTV,
  which was considered, at the time, the last independent
  cable news channel.
- While We Watched is a documentary that follows one of India's most prominent journalists, Ravish Kumar, as he makes a last stand for independent journalism on cable news. His courage in the face of an increasingly dangerous fight (including regular death threats) is contrasted with NDTV's falling fortunes in the weeks before Adani's takeover.
- In February 2024, now-Rajya Sabha Minister of Parliament for the Trinamool Congress Party Sagarika Ghose <u>wrote an essay</u> explaining why she decided to leave journalism behind to pursue a career in politics. According to Ghose, journalists have no opportunity to dissent in today's India.



## Social Media and Propaganda

A hallmark of the BJP's politics has been the party's savvy use of social media to energize voters and supporters. The BJP has also used social media to propagate its agenda while cultivating troll armies to intimidate political critics into silence. At the same time, the Indian government has used surveillance technologies and censorship laws to silence dissent and shape the online media environment.

- In an eight-part investigation, the Washington Post details the various strategies that the Indian government and its political allies have used to spread propaganda, intimidate critics and companies, and ultimately dictate the online discourse about Indian politics.
- <u>TIME Magazine</u> reported in 2022 that Meta, under the influence of the Indian government, forced Facebook to redact part of its Human Rights Impact Assessment of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in India. This was the second HRIA, after an HRIA to understand Facebook's role in the Rohingya genocide
- In 2024, Global Witness and Access Now discovered that YouTube was approving advertisements in Hindi, English, and Telugu that violated YouTube's own advertising and misinformation policies. Social media companies, especially YouTube and Twitter, have been criticized for complying with orders by the Indian government to censor critical content and even tipping the scales for the ruling government.

- <u>American civil rights organizations</u> have had <u>some</u> or <u>all</u> of their <u>content</u> withheld in India, based on their criticisms of the Indian government.
- Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, <u>Human Rights Watch</u> expressed "concerns that Indian authorities exert considerable control over the digital ecosystem that can make for an uneven playing field."

#### **Electoral Bonds**

In the name of democratizing money in Indian politics, the Indian government introduced the <u>electoral bonds scheme</u>. The scheme allowed individuals and corporations to donate unlimited amounts of money anonymously to political parties. The electoral bonds scheme led to a jump in campaign financing in Indian elections, disproportionately for the BJP.

- In 2024, <u>the Indian Supreme Court</u> struck down the electoral bonds scheme, calling it unconstitutional and undemocratic. The Supreme Court also ordered the State Bank of India to reveal donors of electoral bonds to increase transparency.
- After the Supreme Court ordered the Election Commission and the State Bank of India to disclose donors and recipients in the electoral bonds scheme, independent news outlets in India formed a consortium to understand the scale and scope of the scheme. <u>Project Electoral Bond</u> is trying to introduce transparency in Indian campaign finance and uncover how the electoral bonds scheme may have encouraged corruption.

• As <u>Milan Vaishnav</u> notes, despite the celebration of the end of electoral bonds, India's status quo campaign finance laws still do not sufficiently address concerns about transparency and corruption.

#### **Voter Disenfranchisement**

Marginalized communities in any country face significantly larger obstacles to voting. This is just as true for communities of color in the United States as it is for Muslim and caste-oppressed communities in India. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, ample evidence emerged that Muslim, Dalit, and Adivasi voters were systematically denied their right to vote. With the introduction of the CAA and new requirements for Indians to provide documentation of their ability to vote, undoubtedly even more voters from minority communities will be excluded from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

- In 2023, <u>Ashoka University professor Sabyasachi Das</u> analyzed data from close elections during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in several districts in BJP-controlled states in India. In his analysis, Das found the data was consistent with vote manipulation due to suppression and purging of Muslim voters.
- In 2019, <u>Soumya Sankar</u> reported that millions of voters, disproportionately Muslim, Dalit, and women voters, were cut from the voter rolls ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

 In response to the Indian government's new rules in 2024 to implement CAA, <u>Angana Chatterji</u> delved into how, under the current government, Indian citizenship hinges on Indians' religious identity.

# **Criminalization of the Opposition**

In its trend of criminalizing dissent, the Indian government has ramped up legal harassment against opposition parties and lawmakers. While isolated incidents, like the expulsion of TMC MP Mahua Moitra for allegedly accepting bribes or the disqualification of INC MP Rahul Gandhi for making a joke about Modi, are well-known, systematic attacks on opposition have only recently garnered international attention. The Indian government has weaponized laws like the PMLA (and the Enforcement Directorate, which investigates money laundering) and institutions like the Income Tax Department to cripple the opposition. Opposition leaders have said that party members have defected under threat of legal harassment and jail time, while those who defect to the BJP or align with the BJP will see criminal cases against them disappear. In the months before elections, the Enforcement Directorate arrested Chief Ministers Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal and the Income Tax Department froze the Congress Party's assets.

 <u>Hindus for Human Rights</u> demanded free and fair elections, due process for jailed opposition leaders, and a level playing field for political opposition ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

- In December, <u>HfHR condemned</u> the suspension of 150 opposition Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, after the MPs asked questions about why the Parliament had experienced a security breach.
- When Parliament suspended 150 MPs, the ruling party rammed through massive reforms to India's criminal code, Indians' right to digital privacy, and the governance of India's election commission. By passing these structural changes while ¾ of the Indian opposition was suspended, the BJP was able to avoid debates on unpopular provisions in these laws.
- <u>In Maharashtra</u>, a critical number of Members of the Legislative Assembly defected from the ruling coalition to form a coalition with the BJP, and effectively turned control of the state to the BJP. <u>In Bihar</u>, the Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, defected from the INDIA Alliance to join the BJP's alliance.
- After Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren were arrested under the PMLA, <u>Amnesty International</u> condemned the attacks on India's political opposition and described the crackdowns as reaching "a crisis point."
- In response to an announcement by the Congress Party that its bank accounts had been frozen by the Indian government, <u>Freedom House</u> called into question the freeness and fairness of elections where the playing field is tilted against India's political opposition.

• In response to questions about the US's response to attacks on opposition in India, <u>the US government</u> has insisted that opposition parties and leaders are given fair legal treatment.



# **Further Reading and Resources**

<u>Under Modi, India's Democracy Is on Its Last Legs</u> [Foreign Policy]

<u>Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest</u> [Carnegie Endowment]

India's 2024 General Election: What to Know [CFR]

Modi Flexes Muscle as Elections Approach [Foreign Policy]

India-Elections-Democracy-Economy-Defense [Foreign Policy]

A Hindu Nationalist Foreign Policy [Foreign Affairs]

<u>India as It Is</u> [Foreign Affairs]

<u>India's Feet of Clay</u> [Foreign Affairs]

Flagrant fraud: On the Chandigarh mayoral election [The Hindu]



By Ria Chakrabarty
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