

Can the US trust Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

BY MOLLY SCHNEIDER
STAFF WRITER

Narendra Modi. You may know him as the new prime minister of India. But to many, he is the former Gujarat state chief minister who idly stood by as hundreds of mostly Muslim people were murdered in the Gujarat riots of 2002.

Much suspicion surrounds the Indian nationalist's handling of the situation. According to an article in USA Today, he encouraged the killing of Muslims by stirring

the crowds to riot and using police force to aid rioters in their violence towards Muslims.

"What he knew and his level of culpability in orchestrating the violence is certainly up for debate," said Jeremy Rinker, visiting assistant professor of peace & conflict studies, in an email interview. "But that he failed to adequately respond I believe is clear."

Because of suspicions like Rinker's, the U.S. refused Modi a visa back in 2005 while he was chief minister. Now that he is a prime minister he has no such problem. But while the U.S. government has let it pass, there are

those who remain devoted to making Prime Minister Modi pay for his actions.

According to a web article in The Economic Times, a non-profit human rights organization — The American Justice Center — decided to take action by attempting to serve him with a court summons for charges of crimes against humanity, extrajudicial killings, torture and inflicting mental and physical trauma on mostly Muslim victims.

Something like serving someone a summons does not seem like an impossible task, but according to an unnamed government official, quoted in an article by The American Bazaar, "Sitting heads of government enjoy personal inviolability while in the United States, which means they cannot be personally handed or delivered papers or summons to be the process of this."

"I was very frustrated with the Obama administration for so easily backing down on (both) his travel visa and criticism of his exclusivist past rhetoric," said Rinker. "Of course an Indian head of state must be able to travel, but this does not mean that you welcome him with open arms."

"I think it would have been prudent for the Obama administration to express reservations about his election and visit."

There were no such reservations, however, while he was in the U.S. During his visit, Modi met with President Obama, members of the United Nations and many of the top CEOs from U.S. companies like IBM, PepsiCo. and Google. In addition, he met with members of the Indian diaspora.

"The outpouring of support from the Indian diaspora while he was here was not surprising (wealthy Indians in this country are predominantly high-caste and pro-nationalist

leaning), but it was quite scary," said Rinker. "This blind acceptance of the 'new Modi' and the 'new modern India' is just devoid of fact and critical vision."

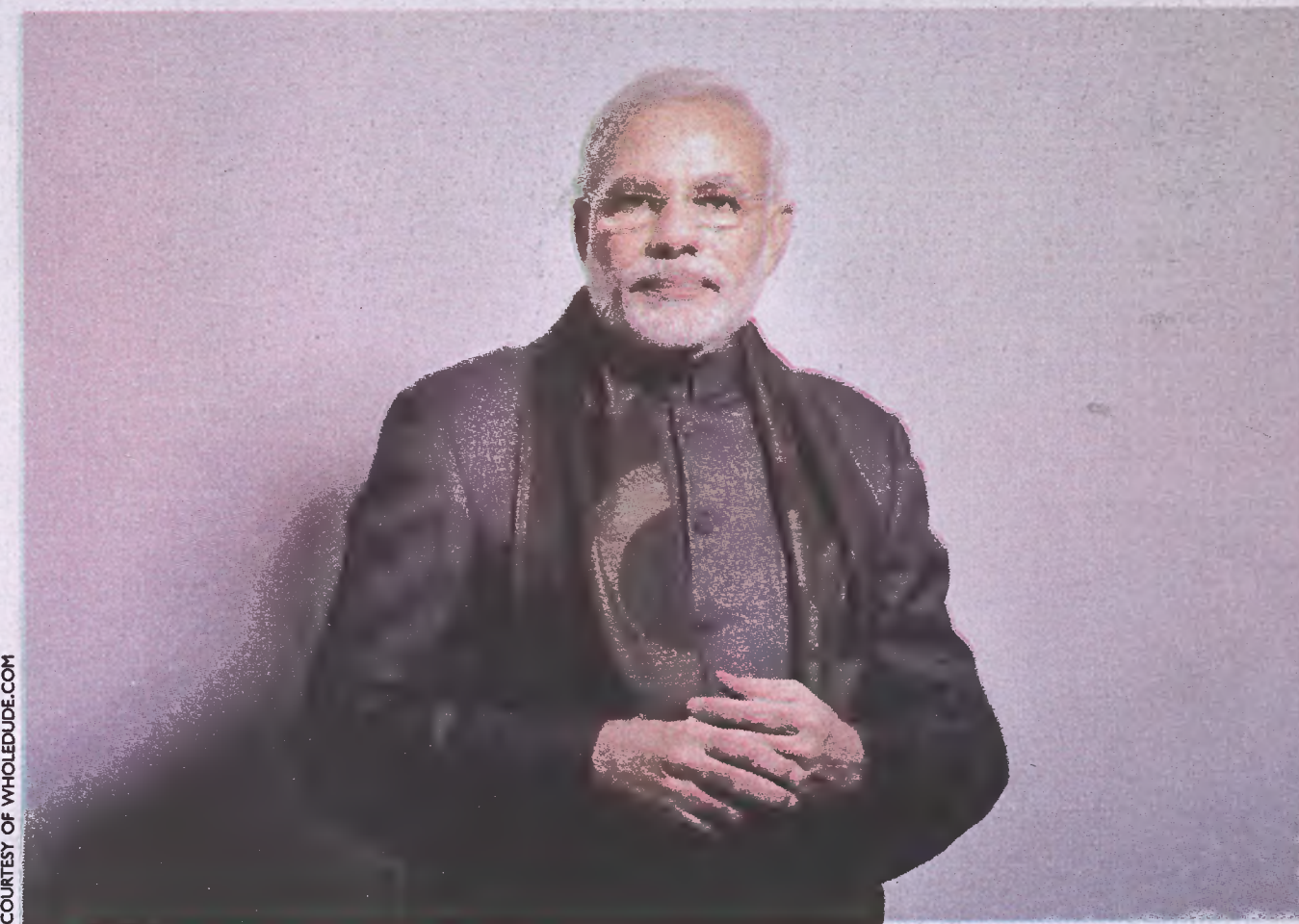
This warm welcome displays itself as more of a desire to improve relations with India, than a direct disregard of Modi's handling of the Gujarat riots in 2002.

"I think America and Britain were in a political no-win situation with Modi," said Heather Hayton, director of the honors program, associate professor of English and creator and leader of Guilford's annual summer study abroad program to India and the Himalayas. "We had just horribly mishandled the situation in New York with the arrest of an Indian pseudo-diplomat and needed to get Indian-U.S. relations back on track."

According to an article in Forbes, Modi's visit to the U.S. could yield rich benefits for both countries. So in an effort to smooth things over, the Obama administration felt it vital to accept Modi's visa in order to create better bilateral relations.

This relationship is mutually beneficial, and Modi could gain a lot from a strong relationship with the U.S. His new campaign promises good governance, but his handling and displacement of responsibility for the riots does not bode well for India's security. And, according to senior Kunga Denzongpa, an Indian citizen, Modi is repeating a common pattern.

"I have heard mixed views from people (on Modi)," said Denzongpa. "The Indian youth definitely seem to be more drawn towards his ideas. However, like every other politician, Modi seems to be full of promises but short of actions."



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Class action lawsuit filed against Miss. county

BY MATTHEW JONES
STAFF WRITER

Oct. 18 marked 11 months of waiting for Octavious Burks.

Burks spent that time inside the Scott County Detention Center in Forest, Mississippi, waiting for a grand jury indictment and a public defender.

On Sept. 23, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class action lawsuit against Scott County on behalf of Burks and Joshua Bassett, another inmate who spent nine months in the same jail. The lawsuit alleges that the county violated the inmates' constitutional rights to counsel, a speedy trial and a fair bail hearing.

"The ACLU is upset that these people have languished in jail for eight to 10 months without ever being represented by a lawyer," said Jerry Joplin, professor of justice & policy studies. "That sounds legitimate to me. Somebody should not lose their liberty just because they've been accused of a crime."

Both Burks and Bassett made initial appearances before Justice Court Judge Bill Freeman on the days of their respective arrests, Nov. 18, 2013 and Jan. 3, 2014. In these initial appearances, the judge combined several business items into one shorter session. But in most other places, judges handle those tasks in as many as four separate hearings.

"These guys were taken to court with only the arresting officer, one judge and no lawyer present, and they did the initial appearance, the preliminary hearing and the bail hearing all at one time," said Joplin.

In the suit, the ACLU alleges that this practice violated the plaintiffs' rights to a fair bail hearing. The group charges that Burks and Bassett should have had access to a lawyer and that the judge did not appropriately take their financial status into account when setting their bail.

"The 14th Amendment provides against unreasonably high bails," said Early College senior Porter Jones in an email interview. "Otherwise, judges could essentially hold every poor individual in jail without even giving them a (fair) chance at bail."

Neither Burks nor Bassett could make their respective \$30,000 and \$100,000 bail set at their hearings.

"I only draw a little over \$600 a month," said Bassett's mother Brenda in an interview with The New York Times. "I would give everything I have to get my son out of this mess. But, I don't have anything."

After the hearing, both Burks and Bassett filed requests for a public defender from the

senior circuit judge, Marcus Gordon, as allowed by Mississippi law. Although he approved their requests, Gordon refused to appoint an attorney until a grand jury indicted them.

"The reason (for this) is the public defender would go out and spend his time and money and cost the county money in investigating the matter," said Gordon in a brief interview with The New York Times. "And then, sometimes, the defendant is not indicted by the grand jury."

But Mississippi is one of several states including North Carolina that do not have limits on how long a defendant can be held without an indictment. This allows long delays between the time a defendant is arrested and the time he receives a lawyer.

"That means no one is advocating for their interests, including filing and arguing motions for a bond reduction, or investigating potential defenses," said Danielle Carman, assistant director of the North Carolina Office of Indigent Defense Services, in an email interview.

Across Mississippi, similar incidents have occurred. The state government does not provide funds for public defenders, putting already cash-strapped counties in a tight spot when it comes to providing lawyers.

The problem also extends beyond Mississippi. The New York Civil Liberties' Union filed suit against the State of New York for not providing a statewide public defender system. The suit, recently endorsed by the Justice Department, alleges that the lack of a system strains budgets and leads to shortages of public defenders.

"The right to counsel is one of the core guarantees of the Bill of Rights, and yet, as countless cases and studies show, indigent defense systems across the country are facing significant challenges in meeting their Sixth Amendment obligations," said Acting U.S. Assistant Attorney General Molly Moran in a statement released Sept. 25.

Back in Mississippi, the ACLU's fight continues. The group says that the county continues to hold dozens of inmates without indictments. The suit asks the court to place a permanent injunction on the county requiring it to release unindicted inmates after 21 days and individuals who remain without counsel a week after their arrest.

Additionally, the suit's class-action status will allow other detainees who believe that the county violated their rights to join the suit.

But, Burks and Bassett will not have to wait for a ruling to get out of the jail. As of Oct. 19, Burks' record listed him as transferred out of the jail. Scott County released Bassett only two days after the ACLU filed the lawsuit.

Open Hillel conference inspires national change

BY NICOLE ZELNIKER & SARA MINSKY
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Hundreds of students flocked to Harvard University for over 50 speakers, dozens of conversations and one life-changing weekend. Together, students from schools all over the country organized the first Open Hillel conference.

"There are only three Open Hillels in the country," said Brandeis graduate Lex Rofes '13. "It started toward the end of 2012."

The Open Hillel movement began at Harvard and spread to Swarthmore, Vassar and Wesleyan. After Harvard, Hillel was unable to collaborate with other campus organizations due to national Hillel policy, which bans cooperation with organizations that support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or deny the right of Israel to exist.

"Because of Hillel International's guidelines for cooperation, we could never do anything with Guilford's Hillel," said junior Students for Justice in Palestine President Walid Mosarsaa.

Because of Hillel International's pro-Israel stance, some students feel like their views aren't welcome.

"Hillel is supposed to be an organization centered on Jewish life," said Mosarsaa. "Not everyone believes in a two-state solution. Not everyone believes in a one-state solution."

Campuses that have opened their Hillels have engaged students of all different political beliefs regarding Israel and Palestine.

"Let's think about where our students are and how we can support them in thinking and growing and going deeper and offering them challenges to help them get a better grasp of where they are," said Swarthmore junior Joshua Wolfsun at the conference.

Students from campuses far and wide came to Harvard on October 11th to learn about the growing movement, including students from Guilford's Students for Justice in Palestine and Hillel.

"This was a very comfortable space for everyone," said sophomore and Hillel President Leah Whetten-Goldstein. "It's all inclusive."

Even though conference attendees learned many different views about Israel and Palestine, the opportunity to listen to other voices is something that students would not have been able to do through Hillel.

"The panels wouldn't have been able to exist at my Hillel," said Rofes. "They included voices that would have been barred. I'm not a Jewish Voice for Peace supporter. I don't support all aspects of BDS, but I gained a lot from listening to that perspective."

Rabbis, authors, Jewish organizations, professor, and more spoke out about the conflict in the Middle East. Speakers from all sides were invited, although right-wing groups declined the invitation.

"You're the ones being left out of the conversation now," said Mosarsaa. "They're fearful of their beliefs being shattered, which is not what this conference is about. It's about everyone's beliefs being respected."

Regardless, panels covered a wide range of opinions.

"Just because someone is more on the left side doesn't mean you agree," said Whetten-Goldstein. "There was a whole range of opinions."

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