

AMIT SHAH

IMPACT: Amit Anil Chandra Shah is the current Home Minister of India. He was formerly the Minister of State for Home Affairs in Gujarat, a period during which the state police faced accusations of extra-judicial killings. Shah is a close friend, confidant and is often referred to as the right-hand man of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shah has used his political position to promote Hindu nationalist ideology. During his tenure as India's Home Minister, he has introduced laws and undertaken measures that target Muslims, Christians, political opposition, civil society, journalists, and critics.

- Amit Anil Chandra Shah, the current Home Minister of India, was born to a wealthy Gujarati family in 1964. At the **age of 18, he joined the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**, a Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organization and the ideological parent of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He served as ABVP's joint secretary of the Gujarat unit.
- In 1989, Shah was inducted directly into the BJP as a secretary of the party's unit in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. **Until 2009, he led the election campaign management for the senior BJP leader and prominent anti-Muslim figure LK Advani, who spearheaded the movement to demolish the Babri Masjid in 1992**, a 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. The demolition led to riots that resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, mostly Muslims.
- **Shah and Narendra Modi met when the latter was an RSS full-time worker in Gujarat, and they have been climbing the political ladder together since then.** Shah fought his first election in 1997, winning a seat in Gujarat's legislative assembly by almost 25,000 votes as a BJP candidate. **Shah has also faced accusations of involvement in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, in which over 2,000 Muslims, including women and children, were killed.** During the violence, Rajiv Shah, a Times of India reporter from Gujarat, approached Shah, who was then a legislator from Sarkhej in Ahmedabad, seeking his intervention to stop the violence in his constituency. "Don't bother. Nothing will happen to you. Your side has nothing to worry. Whatever incidents happen, they will take place on the other side of the border," Times of India quoted Shah as saying in reference to the Muslim areas.
- A UK government inquiry into the pogroms found that the violence was pre-planned and that "the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) and its allies acted with the support of the state Government. They could not have inflicted so much damage without the climate of impunity created by the state Government. Chief Minister Narendra Modi is directly responsible...As an architect of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda which it has pursued since it came to power in 1995, he is a believer in the VHP's ideological motivation."
- After the pogrom, Shah was entrusted with organizing the 'Gaurav Yatra' (Pride Rally) to mobilize support for Modi's election as Chief Minister, resulting in a decisive victory. **After winning the elections, Modi rewarded Shah by appointing him as a minister and assigning him important portfolios, including control over state police and law and order.**
- In April 2011, former senior Gujarat police officer and whistleblower Sanjiv Bhatt filed a petition with the Supreme Court against Modi. According to Bhatt, he was present at a meeting on February 27, 2002, at Modi's residence, where he instructed officials to let Hindus express their outrage. **He had also testified before a state-appointed commission to investigate the pogrom, alleging that Shah pressured him not to share details about the Modi government's involvement in the violence with the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT).**
- Bhatt was suspended after making these claims and was eventually sacked in 2015. The same year, Bhatt moved to the Supreme Court seeking an investigation into the nexus between Gujarat officials, defense lawyers, and Shah to subvert justice in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom cases, which was dismissed. He was arrested in 2018 and faced multiple

cases. In 2019, a court in Gujarat [sentenced him to life](#) in prison for an alleged murder. In 2024, the court sentenced him to [20 years in prison](#) in an alleged drug-planting case.

- **Shah's nearly four-decade-long political career has been marred by allegations of promoting Hindu nationalist ideology, orchestrating extrajudicial killings, implementing discriminatory policies targeting Muslims, weaponizing government agencies to target opposition leaders and critics, and delivering hate and dangerous speeches targeting Muslims, refugees, and undocumented migrants.**
- In November 2005, a Muslim man named Sohrabuddin Shaikh, his wife Kausar Bi, and associate [Tulsiram Prajapati](#) were kidnapped and [extrajudicially killed](#) by Gujarat police. Human rights lawyer Mukul Sinha [alleged Kausar Bi was raped](#) and murdered by police, who later burned her body. **In 2010, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the federal investigative agency, charged and arrested Shah for murder. The CBI chargesheet alleged that the killings were planned by officers of the Gujarat police on Shah's orders. Witnesses also accused Shah of "running an extortion racket through the state police."** After spending three months in prison, Shah was [released on bail](#) by the Gujarat High Court in October 2010. Fearing undue influence on witnesses, the court ordered [Shah to leave](#) Gujarat. In 2012, the Supreme Court allowed his return to Gujarat but transferred the case from Gujarat to Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **In 2013, Shah was appointed the National General Secretary of the BJP. In 2014, he led PM Modi's election campaign and played a critical role in securing his victory. Subsequently, he was elevated to the position of President of the BJP.** Six months after forming the government, Judge H.B. Loya, who was presiding over Shah's fake police encounter case, [died of a heart attack](#). In a November 2017 [interview](#), members of Judge Loya's family "listed what they said were inconsistencies in the facts surrounding his death," and alleged that the "judge had been [offered Rs 100 crore](#) to give an order favourable to the prime accused [Amit Shah]." Less than a month later, on December 30, the newly appointed judge [acquitted Shah](#) for his role in extrajudicial killings. Importantly, the CBI [didn't challenge the acquittal](#), and multiple courts rejected any review of the lower court order. In December 2018, all the other accused police officers were similarly [acquitted](#).
- **In 2019, after securing a second term, Modi appointed Shah as Home Minister. In this role, Shah has implemented several policies aligned with the Hindu nationalist agenda.** In August 2019, Shah's ministry spearheaded a controversial move to [revoke the autonomous status](#) of Indian-administered Kashmir granted under Article 370 of the Indian constitution. This status granted Kashmir a degree of autonomy to manage its government affairs and provided rights such as land ownership, local government jobs, and education scholarships exclusively to native Kashmiris. Additionally, the region was bifurcated into two territories directly governed by administrators appointed by the Modi-led federal government.
- The move was followed by the arrest of [thousands of political leaders, religious figures, and critics](#) in an unprecedented crackdown and imposition of a complete lockdown, including a communication blockade across the region. As cited by [The Atlantic](#), legal experts denounced the move as "illegal and unconstitutional."
- **In December 2019, the Indian parliament enacted the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was introduced by Shah.** Under the law, religious minorities (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, etc.) from neighboring countries who entered India before December 2014 can fast-track to Indian nationality. Muslims, however, are not afforded the same right. The CAA marked the first time religion has been used as a criterion for citizenship in India. **When the government implemented the CAA in 2024, Shah said, "These rules will now enable minorities persecuted on religious grounds in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to acquire citizenship in our nation."**
- The law has been criticized by the [United Nations Human Rights Office](#) as "fundamentally discriminatory in nature" and predicted to "have a discriminatory effect on people's access to nationality." The bipartisan, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), [has warned](#) that the CAA, along with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a government-led exercise to identify "illegal migrants," could result in the "widespread

disenfranchisement of Indian Muslims.” The commission has even recommended that the US government consider “sanctions against the Home Minister and other principal leadership” over the citizenship law. Shah has repeatedly emphasized the idea that his government will implement a nationwide NRC.

- In February 2020, anti-CAA protesters were attacked by Hindu nationalist supporters in New Delhi, resulting in 53 deaths, mostly Muslims. Throughout the violence, the Delhi police either mostly stood by or took part in the attacks. The violence was incited by BJP leader Kapil Mishra, who had given the police a three-day deadline to remove the protesters.
- The **Delhi police, under the control of Shah’s Home Ministry, faced criticism from organizations like Amnesty International, which reported that the police “used excessive force, tortured detainees in custody, and stood by as rioters wreaked havoc.”** A fact-finding team led by former Supreme Court judge Madan B. Lokur accused the police of “complicity in the violence” and accused Shah’s ministry of delaying the deployment of additional troops to stop anti-Muslim violence. Human Rights Watch also reported that the Delhi police used the riots as an opportunity to crack down on students, activists, and critics protesting against the citizenship law, charging them with draconian anti-terrorism laws and sedition.
- **Shah is known for delivering hateful, dehumanizing, and dangerous speeches, often promoting bogus conspiracy theories to sow fear and animosity against Muslims.** In April 2014, Shah was charged for delivering a hate speech in Uttar Pradesh state. According to Reuters, in April 2019, Shah referred to undocumented Muslim immigrants as “termites” and vowed to “pick up infiltrators one by one and throw them into the Bay of Bengal.”
- **He has frequently promoted anti-Muslim conspiracy theories such as “love jihad” and “land jihad” in his speeches.** Love jihad alleges that Muslim men are enticing Hindu women into marriages to forcibly convert them to Islam, while “land jihad” claims intentional occupation of public or government land by building religious structures or holding mass prayers on them.
- In March 2021, according to Hindustan Times, Shah announced plans to introduce laws against 'land jihad' and 'love jihad' during an event in Assam's Kamrup district. This came despite his ministry stating on record in February 2020 that “no such case of ‘Love Jihad’ has been reported by any of the central agencies.”
- In November 2022, while addressing a campaign rally in Gujarat’s Kheda district, **Shah made inflammatory remarks regarding the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, stating, “They were taught a lesson in 2002, these elements left that path. They refrained from indulging in violence from 2002 till 2022,”** as reported by The Wire.
- In November 2023, during an election rally in Chhattisgarh state’s Bemetara district, Shah claimed that the region had become a center of “love jihad.”
- **Shah has also repeatedly targeted Rohingya refugees and migrants from Bangladesh, labeling them as “infiltrators.”** During elections, the BJP leadership often conflates the term “infiltrators” or “outsiders” with India’s Muslim voters. During a May 2024 election rally in New Delhi, Shah invoked refugees to target the opposition party, stating, “Do you know who their vote bank is? It’s not you, it’s the Rohingya infiltrator. But we aren’t scared of these infiltrators.”
- Shah’s Ministry has used the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) to target charity groups, human rights organizations, and think tanks. The FCRA regulates the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions or donations by individuals or organizations.
- According to a report by Firstpost, Shah’s ministry canceled FCRA licenses of over 20,000 non-profit organizations (NGOs) between 2014 and 2018. In March 2023, his ministry informed the upper house of the Indian parliament that

the licenses of another 1,827 non-profits were canceled between 2018 and 2022. According to [The Hindu](#) FCRA is being used as a “weapon to silence entities whose work is not to its liking — typically those working on environmental issues, civil liberties, and human rights.” In 2020, the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) criticized the law and said it was “open to abuse, and that it is indeed actually being used to deter or punish NGOs for human rights reporting and advocacy that the authorities perceive as critical in nature.”

- In 2020, Amnesty International was [forced to shut down](#) its work in India after authorities froze its bank accounts over alleged violations of FCRA rules. Human Rights Watch [called](#) it an “act of reprisal for the organization’s human rights work.” In January 2024, the ministry [revoked the FCRA license](#) of a prominent think tank, Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Bridge Initiative Factsheet

This factsheet was produced in collaboration with Raqib Hameed Naik, a US-based Kashmiri journalist who covers human rights, religious minorities, and Hindu nationalism.