

**India: Driving while Muslim? Cops plant evidence, skew facts**  
**By Jason Overdorf, GlobalPost – International News**  
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India's Muslim minority faces economic and social discrimination--resulting in skewed poverty figures for the community. But their treatment at the hands of government authorities can be even worse, new reports suggest.

A new study by the Jamia Teachers' Solidarity Association (JTSA) documents 16 cases in which the so-called "special cell" of the Delhi police allegedly planted evidence in an effort to nab Muslim youths as operatives of terrorist groups like Al Badr, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Outlook magazine reports. All 16 were later acquitted by the courts.

But not everybody is so lucky, presumably. Even those who avoid conviction, thanks to support from human rights activists and the like, may never escape the cloud of suspicion that surrounds them after the initial arrest. And there has so far been no attempt to compensate the victims of this type of abuse by the police, or to lay criminal charges against the police officers involved, the JTSA points out.

"Courts have clearly indicted the special cell for setting up innocents, violating due process, concocting evidence... (they have) ordered a CBI probe against the cell and directed the filing of FIRs and initiation of departmental inquiries," Outlook quotes JTSA president Manisha Sethi as saying. Yet, not a single officer in the operations described here has suffered any consequence. Instead, they get promotions and gallantry awards."

Across India, the situation is equally bad, journalist Muzamil Jaleel points out in a compelling series of articles for the Indian Express on the prosecutions of alleged operatives of the banned Students' Islamic Movement of Indian (SIMI).

In one article, Jaleel unveils how six terrorism cases, lodged over a two-year period in five different Indian cities, all relied on the same dubious evidence: Possession of an April 2004 issue of a Hindi magazine, Tehrik-e-Millat. And not just the same issue. The very same, tattered copy of the magazine, which had the names of sisters named Aashiya and Rafia handwritten on the covers.

"In the space of two years, these same copies of the April 2004 issue of Tehrik-e-Millat — with the names of the Khandwa sisters written by hand on the cover — travelled to at least two other states," Jaleel writes. "Several cases later, the police even started referring to the magazine as 'Tehrik Millat Aasiya' and 'Tehrik Rafia' in their official records. However, other than their names on the magazines, the two sisters were never mentioned in police records." Nor was the magazine in question ever banned, though a case was once lodged against its editor.

In another piece, Jaleel reveals that in one month five people were arrested as SIMI activists in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, simply for shouting slogans.

"The script was the same: a mukhbir or informer tipped off police about men 'shouting anti-government slogans' outside mosques or in front of their homes, and the men were arrested and then left to battle it out in court," Jaleel writes.

In another case, a man who left SIMI before it was banned -- back in 2000 -- has been battling the courts, and even spent 21 months in jail, because of a poster he possessed before it had even been outlawed.