



# The Contours of Crimmigration Control in India

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The criminalisation of irregular migration through escalated enforcement of toughened immigration laws is often referred to as *crimmigration* or *immcarceration*. Detention and deportation are important aspects of such enforcement across the globe. While these processes have received much scrutiny in the Global North, far less attention has been given to them in the context of South-South migration.

This Global Detention Project Working Paper, by **Sujata Ramachandran**, helps address this gap by identifying distinctive aspects of crimmigration control in India and its connections with the governance of migration in wealthier countries. The paper argues that the Indian subcontinent's British colonial history has helped shape the country's contemporary crimmigration system, targeting the objects of control and bestowing a set of severe policies. The large-scale refugee flows that occurred during post-colonial nation formation entrenched deep-seated anxieties about informal migration, which today are manifested in a purported national "infiltration" crisis and unchallenged anti-Muslim xenophobia, with a particular focus on "irregular Bangladeshis." Increasingly influenced by these anti-immigrant impulses and the perceived failure to effectively deter cross-border migrations in the past, punitive forms of control have become default options in the country's response to migration challenges.

The paper provides an assessment of India's principal immigration law, the Foreigners Act, to draw attention to its role in propping up the country's crimmigration system. It reviews the workings of crimmigration through the existing legal and bureaucratic systems, highlighting the variety of hurdles detainees face, many of whom are extraordinarily vulnerable residents who have survived on the fringes of Indian society. Important, too, is the paper's analysis of the impact of framing immigration enforcement as a matter of public and national security, which results in a veil of secrecy being drawn around many procedures. The paper underscores the important influence exerted by Hindu right-wing political forces on immigration processes, in part through the strategic manipulation of migrants' identities.

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