

SMILE REPORT



miles 2 smile

Gateway to Happiness

RELIEF & REHABILITATION WORK

Siwan | Bihar



miles2smile foundation

SEPTEMBER
2022

INCIDENCE OVERVIEW



In Barharia village of Bihar's Siwan district, hundreds of saffron-clad men armed with sticks, and swords carried out an annual Mahaviri Akhara Rally in the afternoon of September 8, 2022. The rally turned violent as it reached Madni masjid near Purani Bazaar. Based on our team's on spot assessment, Muslims were offering early-evening prayers inside the mosque, while participants from the rally started dancing to provocative music in front of the mosque. They did not just stop there. Some of the men who were part of the Mahaviri Akhara even attempted to enter the mosque. According to our relief team, participants in the Mahaviri Akhada procession clashed with Namazis, as the former swooped upon those holding the namaz inside the mosque and started beating them with lathis they were carrying, besides indulging in wreaking widespread havoc to their properties after the flare-up.

The number of people rallying in Akhara were not small by any standards, largely because they had organized it after three years of postponement due to the pandemic. According to local residents, the failure of administration to sense the danger and deploy adequate numbers of police resulted in exacerbation of the situation.





Had the police been more vigilant, the tension could have been averted. As per a local auto rickshaw driver, participants in the Mahaviri Akhada included people from nearby and distant villages and some participants at the rally were even regular users of marijuana and other drugs.



Click to watch video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shqMel1yRY>

It was a solidarity visit after we heard the reports of widespread devastation against Muslims of Siwan in Bihar. We reached there the very next day of violence. Many were found to be gravely injured and were receiving treatment. While some were staring forlornly with a bleak future as their only sources of earning a livelihood were gutted in the fire of communalism. During our visit, we came across four such families who were in dire need of help. Miles2smile urgently started the relief work; initially for one of the families that had its male earning member admitted in the hospital in Gopalganj, Bihar.

Out of severe bruising, his left side of the brain had suffered immense damage, as he was thrashed brutally by the rally participants while they looted and vandalized his shop. Later, three more families, whose sources of livelihood were colossally harmed in the aftermath of violence, received financial assistance from the organization. In this report, you will read how miles2smile is restoring their smiles.





SMILE STORIES

8-year old Rizwan Qureshi gets helped by Miles2Smile:

When the police came in to control the situation, instead of arresting the perpetrators, they arrested people from inside the mosque who had just offered evening prayer. This included 8-year-old Rizwan Qureshi and his 70-year-old grandfather Mohammad Yasin. However, they were released on bail on 14 September, after 7 days of their arrest. We spoke to the family about their ordeal. It's a nightmare for any mother to have her child snatched away from her. These 7 days without Rizwan were hell for her mother. They kept Rizwan all alone in a dark cell for two days at the Barharia police station and then sent to the court with his grandfather. They both were tied down in a rope, and even had ropes tied to their stomach. After the 8-year-old Rizwan's arrest that night, her mother went the very next morning to meet him at the station and took some breakfast along with her, but they didn't let her meet her son and neither gave him the tiffin she had prepared. Afterwards, he was sent to the Juvenile home. Where he met her mother for barely 5-10 minutes.

Rizwan was wailing like an infant when he was brought back home after seven days. He is in 4th grade and goes to Iqra Public School. Rizwan's mother said that when they arrested Rizwan from the mosque, they beat him continuously and kept asking him his age. When he told them that he was eight, they refused to believe him and claimed that he was 13-year-old. Rizwan's family tried their best to prove that he is eight, they had official documents, but the police were hell-bent that Rizwan is 13. Yasin and Rizwan were among the 35 persons booked under serious criminal charges and among them, 25 were Muslims.

Rizwan's grandfather was the sarpanch of Barharia 5 years ago. He's also a member of the peace committee of the Barharia Thana. He said, "It was after asr namaz that the mob started pelting, we ran inside the mosque and the police took shelter inside the building with us. There were barely 5-6 constables, and of course, they couldn't control the mob. It was a stampede-like situation whereas we didn't get the chance to get away so we stayed inside. Till that time the maghrib prayer time had started, so we all thought to offer the namaz and then go to our homes. But right after we had finished offering namaz, the force came in and arrested us. They started beating us, including my grandchild, very badly. It was after a lot of pressure and outrage from civil society and organizations like Miles2Smile against our arrests. I am thankful to them and everyone who stood beside us in the troubling times, because in such cases it takes ages to get bail. Miles2Smile helped us both financially and psychologically through all this. We are indeed grateful for their help"



Nasiruddin Ahmad

In the afternoon of September 8, 2022, 53-year-old Nasiruddin was at his ration shop like any usual day, when an armed marauding mob, a section from the Mahaviri Akhara Rally came and set fire to his shop between 4:15 and 4:30 pm. They dragged him out of the shop. Had he not cooperated, the agitated mob would have thrown him in the same fire. They were cheering on the act while incessantly chanting Jai Shri Ram. Nasiruddin was numb and shocked to watch smoke spewing from his shop. Only his shop being attacked in the vicinity made him mentally scared too. Agitated mob targeted the Muslim properties by torching them and remained dominant till late hours, while Policemen stood near the spot, offering no reaction. Two people in the mob that burnt down his shop lived in his neighborhood.

He had many people in his family dependent on him and his **ration shop** was the only source of income he had. Dejected, he was wailing at the loss, when miles2smile learned about his dire financial situation. He suffered a loss of around one lakh. **Miles2smile** immediately raised a generous sum from the kind donors to jumpstart his shop's recovery. And now, a month later, his family has regained control of their lives, as he is once again providing adequately for his family.



Sarwari Begam

As she sat slumped against the wall in dismay, she spoke of the brutal attack by Mahaviri Akhara rallyists on her husband, who had been taken to a hospital in Gopalganj, Bihar, where he was fighting for his life, when Miles2Smile visited his home. Her husband Sarwar was thrashed to near death while his **egg shop** was looted and vandalized by a group of armed men. Our team went to visit him at the hospital. His left side of the brain suffered immense damage.

Sarwari was troubled over her husband's health because he was the sole breadwinner in the family, but she exuded confidence when we provided financial relief for her husband's further treatment and the family's well being. We're delighted to report that Sarwar has recovered fully and is back at work at the egg shop.



“

It is women like Sarwari who bear the most of the consequences of violence. When men are injured, women are left with the responsibility of sustaining their families while also handling care work

”





Amir Alam Khan

43-year-old Amir Alam Khan owned a medical store at Purani Bazaar in Barharia Siwan. On the day of violence, upon getting wind of the impending danger, he decided to shut his shop which was located in lane, predominantly occupied by Hindu businesses. As he was making his way home, he glanced up and saw a mob climbing up to his store and breaking the shutter locks. He went back to confront them but they threatened to kill him if he didn't leave the area immediately.

After the helpless Khan left, they took his refrigerator, computer, and the wooden counter out and set it all on fire. They also stole all the cash kept in the shop's locker. – he estimated losses of Rs 1.5-2 lakh.

Amir recounts how he had started from scratch and put in decades of effort to take a shop on rent to run his own medical store two years ago, but now everything has ended for Khan. He is the sole breadwinner in his family, he has three young daughters who are studying. It was through this medical store, he was earning a square meal.

Khan said with despair in his voice, *"some people in the mob lived in his own neighborhood"*. He believes it was a part of a conspiracy, as only his shuttered shop was burned and looted. "The shop next to him belonged to a non-Muslim, and they didn't damage his store." Burdened with a mental trauma, Khan was distraught over his loss, when miles2smile visited his shop. He was concerned about how he would restart his business, as all of his savings laid in soot. Miles2smile provided him with financial assistance of Rs 50,000 that we could accumulate from the fundraiser. With the money, Amir is trying to rebuild his life and we hope that soon he can reach the pre-violence prosperity.





Sabir Qureshi

For more than 3 years, Sabir has been selling chicken & mutton from a roadside wooden kiosk on which he used to hang an LED light at night.

On September 8, for him, it was a regular business day, when a Hindu mob from the Mahaviri Akhara Rally gathered around his small wooden cabinet and flipped the entire cabinet, by the time he could realize it. They abused him repeatedly. They didn't even give a reason, but overturned his kiosk and looted everything that he had in his money box, while the police mutely watched the rampage. The mob was shouting slogans inciting violence against all Muslims who do not adhere to their mentality. Sabir anyhow managed to escape, but could not save his livestock. They destroyed his wooden cabinet, leaving him jobless for several days.

In the aftermath of devastation & loot, his business has been under strain. His family was suffering for food, in the absence of work, as he had no other means of earning a living. **Miles2smile** assisted Sabir with **Rs 20,000** for rebuilding his **kiosk** and to get his business running again.

SMILE COUNTER

2334 MILES COVERED

1 SMILE PROJECT

24 SMILE HOURS

25 SMILES RESTORED




About the organization:

Miles2Smiles was established two years back as a not-for-profit organization, based in Delhi. The organization works primarily in relief activities and brings smiles to the faces of victims looming over penury and distress. Livelihood creation, healthcare and educational empowerment are also some core areas of work by the organization. In the past two years, the organization has made commendable service in delivering solace to the people languishing in the heap of despair. The organization is on an assiduous mission to revive happiness to the people ripped after communal tensions.



 011-41557836; +91 8448-817331

 Contact@miles2smile.org

 www.miles2smile.org

MILES2SMILE FOUNDATION

B-99/A, Third Floor, Behind Zayed College
for Girls, Thokar No-7, Shaheen Bagh, New
Delhi, 110025