

Brief

Oslo Press Incidents

Continuity of a Colonial Gaze, Norwegianization and Illusion of Human Rights and Social Justice

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A Report on the Oslo Press Incident of 18 May 2026, the Aftenposten Caricature, the World Press Freedom Index, the American-Norwegian-European Funding Ecosystem that Sustains and Shapes Europe's India Narrative, and Norway's own Documented Record of Assimilation and Abuse against Native and Minority Populations

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Abstract

On 18 May 2026, Norwegian commentator Helle Lyng of Dagsavisen heckled Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a joint press appearance with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre in Oslo. That same morning, Aftenposten, Norway's newspaper of record, had published a curtain-raiser caricature depicting Modi as a snake charmer. This report situates both incidents within four interlocking structures. First, a colonial visual grammar with documented antecedents in The New York Times (2014) and La Vanguardia (2022). Second, the methodology of the World Press Freedom Index, on which India's 2026 ranking of 157 of 180 rests: a sentiment survey of selected respondents per country, applied to a press environment of 146,045 newspapers, 903 broadcasters, and 22 official languages. Third, the transatlantic funding ecosystem that sustains and shapes Europe's India narrative, traced from George Soros's Open Society Institute and Norway's Fritt Ord in 2008, through the Rausing-Baldwin estate's Arcadia commitment in 2021, to the European Commission's emergence as the largest single donor by 2025. Fourth, Norway's own documented record of Norwegianization, assimilation, and abuse against Native and minority populations, audited by the Storting in November 2024, ongoing in the Fosen case, and recorded in approximately sixty-five Barnevetnet judgments at Strasbourg. The report concludes that the index, the journalist, and the publication that converged on Modi in Oslo are not three independent witnesses but three institutional outputs of one ideologically coherent ecosystem, and that India's response that evening exposed that ecosystem for what it is.

Highlights

1. The Oslo press incidents were institutional, not individual.

What occurred between 18 and 20 May 2026 in Oslo was not one journalist's intervention but a coordinated editorial register: a heckle at the joint press appearance by Dagsavisen commentator Helle Lyng; her pressing of the "why should we trust you?" question at the Indian Embassy's evening briefing, answered on record by MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George; and, framing both, a caricature of Prime Minister Modi as a snake charmer published in *Aftenposten*, Norway's newspaper of record, alongside a commentary headlined "a sneaky and slightly annoying man". The cartoon was published in the hours before Modi landed in Oslo, not after, which establishes the editorial frame as planned and not reactive.

2. The *Aftenposten* cartoon is the institutional voice, and the institution is named.

Aftenposten is wholly owned by Schibsted ASA (99.99 percent) and edited by Trine Eilertsen, editor-in-chief since January 2020. Schibsted also owns VG, *Bergens Tidende* and *Stavanger Aftenblad*; at least 30 percent of Schibsted's equity is held by foreign investment vehicles including Goldman Sachs. The cartoon and the commentary it accompanied were therefore not the work of a marginal commentator. They were the editorial line of Norway's most authoritative daily, signed off by its named editor and printed under the masthead of its named corporate owner.

3. The MEA response was the substantive event of the day.

Secretary George delivered India's position on the record: "We are one-sixth of the total population of the world, but not one-sixth of the problems of the world"; "If anyone's rights are violated, they have the right to go to court. We are proud to be a democracy"; and the direct critique that foreign questions on India often rely on "one or two news reports published by some godforsaken, ignorant NGOs."

4. The "157th rank" is a perception score, not a measurement.

The World Press Freedom Index is built on a survey of approximately 150 unnamed correspondents and 18 partner NGOs answering 87 questions per country. NITI Aayog's 2020 analysis observed that this produces, on average, one respondent assessing one country. Respondents, weighting and per-question scores are undisclosed. Reporters Without Borders itself states the WPF Index "does not measure the quality of journalism."

5. The methodological pathology is industry-wide.

The Centre for Integrated and Holistic Studies 2023 paper *Unsettling Truth Behind Global Indices* documents that the WPF Index, the Global Hunger Index, the Freedom in the World Index, the V-Dem indices and the USCIRF designations share a common structural defect: opaque expert panels, undisclosed funding sources, and outputs that reliably penalise countries pursuing independent foreign policy positions.

7. The donor record runs from Soros in 2008 to the European Commission in 2025.

Journalismfund Europe, the principal Brussels-based grant-maker for European cross-border investigative journalism, was seeded in October 2008 by Norway's Fritt Ord (€50,000) and in October

2009 by George Soros's Open Society Institute (€114,000). Three further OSF tranches followed, taking the total OSF contribution to roughly US\$500,000 plus €628,000 by the end of 2020. From August 2021 the Rausing-Baldwin philanthropic estate (Arcadia Fund) committed €11.5 million across six years. From 2023 the European Commission became the single largest donor, at €2.87 million in 2025. Fritt Ord in parallel runs a domestic Norwegian Journalism programme of up to NOK 25 million annually that underwrites publications across the Norwegian press, including Dagsavisen. The ecosystem is entitled to its views. It is not entitled to present them as the neutral verdict of the world.

8. Norway colonised the Sami homeland and suppressed not one but six populations under Norwegianization.

The Sami are the native (indigenous) people of the region known as Sápmi. Norwegian settler colonisation of Sami territory accelerated from the 14th century onward and intensified through the 18th and 19th centuries. The 1851 Norwegianization policy formalised assimilation against the Sami and five recognised national minorities: the Kvens, Forest Finns, Romani/Tater, Roma, and Jews. The record is a systematic, multi-decade, multi-population pattern.

9. The Norwegian record is recent, not historical.

The Svanviken labour colony for Romani/Tater families closed in 1989. The Sterilisation Act was applied to Romani/Tater women until 1977. Approximately 40 percent of women resident at Svanviken between 1949 and 1970 were forcibly sterilised. Roughly 1,500 Romani/Tater children, about one-third of the community's youth across two generations, were removed from their families. The Storting issued its formal apology to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns only in November 2024.

10. Norway's native rights violations are ongoing.

In October 2021, the Supreme Court of Norway unanimously ruled that the 277-turbine Fosen Vind installation, the largest onshore wind farm in Europe, was built illegally on South Sami reindeer grazing lands in violation of ICCPR Article 27. The Norwegian government took approximately 500 days to apologise. The turbines continue to operate.

11. The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly condemned Norway on family rights, and Indian children have been among the victims.

Of approximately 65 ECtHR judgments against Norway through 2023, 43 were convictions. Of child welfare cases ruled on by 2020, Norway was found in violation of Article 8, the right to family life, in seven of nine. Three documented India-specific cases of Norwegian removal of Indian children have occurred since 2011: the Bhattacharya case (May 2011), the Hyderabad couple case (December 2012), and the Gurvinderjit Kaur case (December 2016).

12. The standard going forward is reciprocity, and the trust enquiry runs in both directions.

Norway's moral capital is materially financed by hydrocarbon export. Trust between states is established through documented institutional conduct, observable over time, in both directions. India has supplied that documentation. Norway has, in April 2015 to the Romani, in March 2023 to the Sami at Fosen, and in November 2024 to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns, issued three formal apologies whose operational follow-through remains incomplete. Norway must finish looking in its own mirror before it can credibly hold one up to anyone else.

II. The Oslo Press Incidents in Plain View

The events of 18 to 20 May 2026 in Oslo are best understood not as a single incident centred on a single journalist but as a sequence of three connected episodes, each produced by a different actor within the Norwegian press establishment and each illuminating the editorial register of that establishment as a whole.

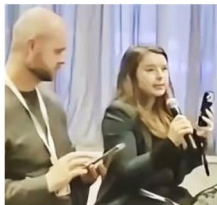
The first episode occurred at the joint press appearance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on 18 May 2026. Dagsavisen commentator Helle Lyng called out from the floor: "*Prime Minister Modi, why don't you take some questions from the freest press in the world?*" The question went unanswered. Lyng subsequently posted on X that India sits at 157 on the World Press Freedom Index "*competing with Palestine, Emirates and Cuba,*" while Norway holds first place. The Indian Embassy in Oslo publicly invited Lyng to that evening's press briefing at the Radisson Blu Plaza.

The second episode was the press briefing itself. Lyng attended. There she pressed the case directly to MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George: "*I am wondering as we strengthen our partnership, why should we trust you? Can you promise that you will try to stop the human rights violations that go on in your country?*" Secretary George took the questions and answered them on record.

The third episode, treated in detail in Section III below, was the publication by *Aftenposten*, Norway's newspaper of record, of a cartoon depicting Prime Minister Modi as a snake charmer, accompanied by a commentary headlined in Norwegian to the effect of "*a sneaky and slightly annoying man.*" The piece appeared in the hours preceding Modi's arrival in Oslo and was therefore not a reactive editorial response to the press exchange. It was the curtain-raiser the country's largest daily had chosen to publish in advance of the visit.

That is the full factual core of the incidents. Everything else, the celebratory retweets, the hand-wringing op-eds, the new-found global following of one commentator, is theatre. And the theatre is worth examining, because it rests on three premises that deserve scrutiny: that a numerical index proves moral superiority, that the questioner's own country has standing to preach, and that the country being questioned has nothing to say back. All three premises fail on inspection.

There is a fourth premise embedded in the "*why should we trust you?*" formulation that warrants particular attention. The question presupposes that Norway is the natural arbiter of trust and India the natural object of audit. The grammar of the question is the argument of the question. It is also, on the documented record set out in the sections that follow, the premise least defensible of all. A country whose Truth and Reconciliation Commission completed its work eighteen months ago, whose Supreme Court ruled wind farms on native land illegal in 2021 with the turbines still operating in 2026, and whose child welfare service has been repeatedly condemned by the European Court of Human Rights, is not the natural seat of the trust enquiry. The trust enquiry, if it is to be conducted at all, must be conducted in both directions.



Helle Lyng of Oslo-based newspaper Dagsavisen during the MEA Briefing Interaction on May 18, 2026.



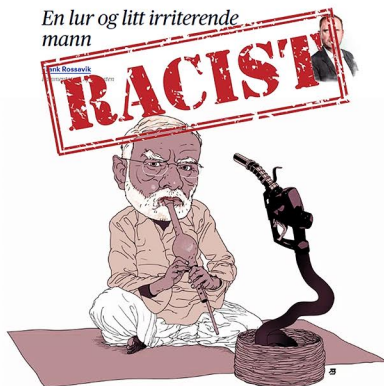
India has its own debates, conducted vigorously inside India by Indians. The point here is narrower and more uncomfortable for the Oslo press gallery: if you intend to lecture, you must first earn the pulpit. Norway has not earned it. The case is laid out below.

The factual sequence is summarised below.

Date	Episode	Actor
18 May 2026 (morning of Modi's arrival)	<i>Aftenposten</i> publishes snake charmer cartoon and accompanying commentary headlined to the effect of "a sneaky and slightly annoying man"	<i>Aftenposten</i> editorial board, Editor-in-Chief Trine Eilertsen, publisher Schibsted ASA
18 May 2026 (joint press statement)	Lyng calls out " <i>why don't you take some questions from the freest press in the world?</i> " No response at the venue	Helle Lyng, <i>Dagsavisen</i>
18 May 2026 (post-statement, X)	Lyng posts WPMI rankings, groups India with Palestine, UAE, Cuba	Helle Lyng, <i>Dagsavisen</i>
18 May 2026 (same day)	Indian Embassy publicly invites Lyng to the 21:30 press briefing at Radisson Blu Plaza	Embassy of India, Oslo
18 May 2026 (evening)	Lyng attends briefing. Pressed by her " <i>why should we trust you?</i> " question, MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George responds on record	MEA (Government of India)

The substantive engagement therefore occurred at the press briefing, in the architectural frame established hours earlier by *Aftenposten*. To examine only the heckle, and not the framing institution that preceded it, is to miss the structure for the gesture.

Kommentar | India

*En lur og litt irriterende
mann*

Tegning: Marvix Holmström / Aftenposten

Narendra Modi holder seg inne med så mange som mulig. Slik utøver India makt.

III. The Cartoon and the Continuity of a Colonial Gaze

The temptation in a report of this kind is to treat the Lyng episode and the Aftenposten cartoon as separate events: the first a matter of press accountability, the second a matter of editorial taste. The temptation is to be resisted. The two events are continuous in register, are produced by the same press culture, and rest on the same underlying assumption: that the Indian Prime Minister is a subject to be measured, scolded, and depicted, and that the Norwegian press is the natural locus of that measurement, scolding and depiction. This is not press freedom. It is the editorial reflex of a press culture that has not yet completed the work its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission asked it to begin.

III.1 The Cartoon and Its Institutional Address

Aftenposten is not a marginal publication. It is Norway's newspaper of record by circulation, with approximately 1.2 million readers and a daily print run that has historically led the country. Founded in 1860, it sets the editorial tone for the Norwegian establishment. The relevant institutional addresses for the 18 May 2026 cartoon and accompanying commentary are as follows.

Role	Name / Entity
Publication	<i>Aftenposten</i> , founded 1860, Norway's newspaper of record
Owner (99.99 percent)	Schibsted ASA, the largest media group in the Nordic region
Minority owner (0.01 percent)	Stiftelsen Tinius
Editor-in-Chief	Trine Eilertsen, appointed January 2020
Managing News Editor	Tone Tveøy Strøm-Gundersen
Foreign equity in Schibsted ASA	At least 30 percent, including Goldman Sachs and other foreign investment vehicles
Other Norwegian newspapers owned by the same group	<i>VG</i> , <i>Bergens Tidende</i> , <i>Stavanger Aftenblad</i>
Publication timing of cartoon and commentary	Hours before Prime Minister Modi's arrival in Oslo, 18 May 2026
Headline of accompanying commentary	Roughly translated as "a sneaky and slightly annoying man" (variants in English coverage include "a clever and slightly annoying man")
Visual content of cartoon	Modi depicted as a snake charmer with a flute, with a fuel-station filling pipe substituted for the snake

Each element of this table matters for the analytical question this report addresses.

The publication is not fringe. Aftenposten is the establishment voice of the Norwegian capital. Its decision to depict the visiting head of government of the world's most populous democracy through a snake charmer caricature is therefore not an outlier commentary; it is the curated editorial line of the establishment, in the hours before that head of government landed on Norwegian soil.

The ownership is concentrated. Schibsted ASA owns Aftenposten and three other major Norwegian dailies, which means the same corporate editorial culture inflects a substantial share of the country's mainstream daily news. The presence of significant foreign equity, including Goldman Sachs, reinforces the point that the institutional voice of the Norwegian press is not a folk artefact arising spontaneously from Norwegian civic culture; it is a corporate product with disclosed shareholders and disclosed editors.

The editor is named. Trine Eilertsen, born 1969, has been editor-in-chief of Aftenposten since January 2020. She is a member of the Trilateral Commission's European Group. Any cartoon and any commentary published in the paper bears, by editorial convention, her authority. The decision to publish the snake charmer caricature on 18 May 2026 was, in the conventional understanding of editorial responsibility, hers and her senior editorial team's, not the cartoonist's alone.

The timing is decisive. The piece was published before Modi landed in Oslo, not after. This rules out the most charitable interpretation, that the cartoon was a satirical reaction to something the Prime Minister said or did during the visit. It was the editorial frame the country's most authoritative daily chose to introduce the visit. Indian readers and global readers were intended to encounter the visit through the figure of the snake charmer.

The headline matters. The Norwegian text accompanying the cartoon described the visiting head of government in terms that translate roughly as "a sneaky and slightly annoying man." The choice of adjectives, the choice of visual stereotype, and the timing of publication form a single curated editorial gesture.

III. II The Genre: *This Is Not the First Time*

The snake charmer caricature does not appear in *Aftenposten* in isolation. It belongs to a documented and recurring genre across the Western press, in which the assertion of Indian rise, success or independent agency is met by retrieval of a colonial-era visual stereotype. The pattern is testable against named publications and named events.

Year	Publication	Subject Depicted	Visual Stereotype Deployed
2014	<i>The New York Times</i>	India's ISRO Mars Orbiter Mission, successful at a fraction of NASA's budget	Indian peasant with cow knocking at door of "Elite Space Club"
2022	<i>La Vanguardia</i> (Spain)	"The hour of the Indian economy"	Snake charmer representing the rising Indian economy
2026	<i>Aftenposten</i> (Norway)	Prime Ministerial visit to deepen Indo-Nordic strategic partnership	Snake charmer with fuel pipe as snake; headline calling Modi "a sneaky and slightly annoying man"

The structural feature of this genre is the substitution of a contemporary subject by a colonial-era stereotype. In 2014, India's successful Mars mission was depicted through the figure of a turbaned villager with a cow. In 2022, India's rise to be the world's fifth-largest economy was represented by a snake charmer. In 2026, the Prime Minister of the world's most populous democracy on a state-level diplomatic visit was depicted as a snake charmer with a fuel pipe. The conscious choice in each case is to retrieve the 19th century European visual vocabulary in preference to any contemporary representation of the actual subject. The genre is not commentary. It is editorial habit, sustained across decades, across countries, and across changes in the actual subject matter.

The pattern carries a specific institutional meaning when produced by Norway. Norway's own Storting issued a formal apology in November 2024 for "the historical injustice of forced assimilation" against the Sami, the Kvens and the Forest Finns. Eighteen months later, Norway's newspaper of record produced a cartoon recycling the visual vocabulary of European colonial racism to depict a foreign head of government. The temporal proximity between the Storting's apology for the historical colonial gaze inward and *Aftenposten*'s deployment of the colonial gaze outward is not an accident of editorial calendar. It is evidence that the apology, however welcome, has not yet altered the editorial register of the institution that requires it most.

III. III The Place of the Lyng Episode within the Frame

In this institutional frame, Lyng's intervention can be located accurately and proportionately. She is a commentator at Dagsavisen, a smaller centre-left Oslo paper unrelated to Aftenposten. She is entitled to her career, entitled to ask any question of any leader, and entitled to the editorial protection of her own publication. The substantive point about her intervention is not biographical (the count of her published articles, the warmth or coolness of her past coverage of various world leaders, the recency of her social media verification) but institutional: she operates inside an editorial culture which, in the same week, had its newspaper of record reach for the snake charmer.

Lyng later approached Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on X seeking an interview on his views of the Modi visit, which locates her work at the level of Indian domestic political alignment rather than at the level of state-to-state press accountability. This is a relevant observation about her positioning but it is not the central evidence in this report. The central evidence is Aftenposten. The central editor is Trine Eilertsen. The central publisher is Schibsted ASA. These are the actors who set the frame. Lyng worked inside it.

This is the context within which the trust enquiry must be conducted. The questioner is not a neutral measurer. The publication that framed the visit is not a neutral mirror. The cartoon, by its own editorial logic, is what the Norwegian press of record reaches for when its imagined civilisational rival walks into the room. The remainder of this report tests that press culture's standing to issue instructions.



18 May 2026 Oslo press briefing, Sibi George strongly defended India's democracy, constitutional values, and press freedom during an exchange with Norwegian journalists amid Prime Minister Modi's Norway visit.

IV. The MEA Response: India's Position on Record

The most significant element of the incidents for any analytical purpose is the official Indian response, delivered by Secretary (West) Sibi George of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. His statements addressed both the rhetorical framing of the questions and their substantive content. The principal statements, with their substantive significance, are tabulated below.

Statement by Secretary Sibi George

"We are one-sixth of the total population of the world, but not one-sixth of the problems of the world."

"We have a constitution which guarantees the fundamental rights of the people. We have equal rights for the women of our country, which is very important. We believe in equality; we believe in human rights."

"If anyone's rights are violated, they have the right to go to court. We are proud to be a democracy."

"You ask a question, don't ask me to answer in a particular way."

"At least 200 TV channels in Delhi alone, in the English language, in Hindi language and multiple languages. People have no understanding of the scale of India."

"They read one or two news reports published by some godforsaken, ignorant NGOs and then come and ask questions."

Reference to India's COVID-19 outreach, constitutional traditions, and civilisational continuity

Secretary George's statement was a structured refusal to accept the premises embedded in the question, paired with positive reference to the constitutional and institutional architecture that actually governs India.

Substantive Content

Asserts the proportionality argument: comparative country assessments that fail to weight by scale, diversity, and developmental stage produce statistically and analytically unsound conclusions

Locates India's commitments in its own constitutional text, not in external certification

Identifies the operational test of a rule-of-law system: the availability and functioning of judicial remedy, which exists and is in continuous use in India

Rejects the rhetorical structure of leading questions that pre-supply the conclusion

Introduces verifiable scale data into a discussion that the foreign questioner had attempted to settle with a single composite ranking

Identifies the source-chain problem: foreign reporting on India often relies on a small number of advocacy organisations whose methodology and funding are not disclosed

Establishes the longer time horizon against which a 120-year-old nation-state attempts to grade a continuous civilisation

V. The Index Cited: An Examination of the World Press Freedom Index

The single instrument Lyng deployed to compress India into a moral hierarchy alongside Palestine, the UAE and Cuba was the World Press Freedom Index. The entire rhetorical structure of her intervention rested on this one number. The instrument therefore warrants forensic, not summary, examination.

The World Press Freedom Index is published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), a Paris-based non-governmental organisation founded in 1985. The Index has been issued each year since 2002 and ranks 180 countries on a 0 to 100 scale, with a higher score and lower numerical rank indicating better placement. The score is built from two components weighted unequally. The first is a quantitative tally of documented abuses against journalists, including killings, imprisonments, kidnappings and assaults, which is anchored to verifiable events. The second, which carries the dominant weight in the final composite score, is a perception survey. This is the part of the instrument that determines most country rankings, and it is the part that determines India's rank.

The perception survey has the characteristics summarised below, drawn from RSF's own published methodology and from NITI Aayog's 2020 analysis.

Survey Parameter	Documented Position
Number of questions per country	87
Total respondents	Approximately 150 "correspondents" plus 18 partner NGOs
Categories of respondent	Journalists, jurists, academics, human rights activists, partner NGO staff
Average respondents per country	Approximately one
Identity of respondents	Not published
Selection criteria for respondents	Not published
Per-question country scores	Not published
Weighting between assessment categories	Not published
Standard adopted by RSF	The Index <i>"does not measure the quality of journalism"</i>

The structural consequence of this design is that a single respondent's perception, filtered through 87 questions whose individual weights are undisclosed, becomes the source of a rank that is then cited globally as an objective fact. NITI Aayog's analysis of the 2020 WPMI concluded that with a sample this small and a methodology this opaque, the chances of bias and disconnection from realities on the ground are high.

For most of the period during which India's rank has declined, the Index used seven assessment categories: pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, infrastructure, and abuses. The first six are entirely or substantially subjective. They are assessed not by counting events but by asking respondents to evaluate a climate, a framework, an independence and a pluralism. The respondent's own ideological position, the priors of the partner NGOs, and the political environment of the country in question all enter the score without any disclosed mechanism for correction.

RSF's published financial disclosures indicate that the organisation's income derives substantially from Western governmental and foundation sources, including European governments and government-affiliated agencies, European Union institutional funding, and private foundations notably including the Open Society Foundations and the Ford Foundation, with the balance from commercial revenue and public donations. This funding structure does not, by itself, establish bias in any particular ranking decision. It does establish that an instrument produced by a Paris-based NGO, funded by Western public and ideologically aligned private sources, scored by an unnamed and unaudited expert panel, and applied to 180 countries through a survey of 87 questions answered on average by one respondent per country, cannot be treated as a neutral instrument of measurement. It is a perception score wearing the institutional livery of objectivity. When invoked as a moral hierarchy of countries, it functions as citation laundering: an opinion converted into a rank, the rank cited as evidence, the evidence then cited back as objective fact in the next year's survey. A former Singaporean Prime Minister, cited in the Centre for Integrated and Holistic Studies 2023 study, described the WPMI accurately as *"a subjective measure computed through the prism of Western liberals."*

The Western funding ecosystem around press-freedom advocacy and investigative journalism is a closed circle, and its participants are named on the public record. Reporters Without Borders, Journalismfund Europe and the European Civitates fund are substantially financed by Open Society Foundations, the Ford Foundation, and a small cluster of European foundations, principal among them Norway's Fritt Ord. Open Society Foundations has funded Journalismfund Europe across four documented grant cycles since 2009, beginning with a €114,000 seed grant from the Open Society Institute that year and continuing through grants of €324,000 in 2011, €190,000 over 2015 to 2016, and US\$500,000 over 2018 to 2020. Fritt Ord itself seeded Journalismfund Europe with €50,000 in October 2008, the foundation's first contribution to what would become the principal Brussels-based grant-maker for European cross-border investigative journalism. Fritt Ord also runs a domestic Norwegian Journalism programme of up to NOK 25 million annually, which underwrites projects across the Norwegian press, including Dagsavisen, the paper for which Helle Lyng writes.

So the picture is this. The same donor circle that scored India at 157 on the Press Freedom Index also funds the European journalism programmes from which India's foreign critics emerge, and supports the Norwegian press in which the heckler at Modi's press conference works. The index, the journalist, and the publication are not three independent witnesses to India's democratic condition. They are three outputs of the same funding ecosystem.

The ecosystem is entitled to its views. It is not entitled to present them as the neutral verdict of the world.

The output of this methodology, when applied to India, generates rankings that on their face fail tests of basic plausibility.

Year	India's Rank	Comparator Rankings	Plausibility Observation
2023	161 of 180	Afghanistan 152, Pakistan 150, Somalia 141	India ranked below Taliban-administered Afghanistan, below Pakistan during a period of documented journalist killings, and below Somalia
2024	159 of 180	Pakistan 152	India still below Pakistan in a period of documented attacks on Pakistani journalists
2026 (Lyng's citation)	157 of 180	Grouped by Lyng with Palestine, the UAE, and Cuba	India's media ecosystem of 146,045 daily newspapers and 903 news broadcasters across 22 languages equated with single-party Cuba and a federation of seven emirates

These are not interpretive quibbles. They are face-validity failures. An instrument that places a 1.4 billion person constitutional democracy with the world's largest news ecosystem below a regime that has explicitly closed girls' education and banned independent television is an instrument that is not measuring what its name claims. India's then External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar offered the appropriate response in 2023: *"I was amazed at our number. I thought we had the most uncontrollable press, and somebody is getting something fundamentally wrong. Afghanistan was freer than us. Can you imagine?"*

For context, although Lyng cited only the WPMI, the same methodological pathology recurs across a wider class of opinion-based country rankings. The Global Hunger Index, the Freedom in the World Index, the V-Dem indices, and the USCIRF designations have each been the subject of formal Indian governmental rebuttal on documented grounds of methodological opacity, unnamed expert panels, ideologically aligned funding, and unverifiable inputs. The Centre for Integrated and Holistic Studies has accordingly recommended the development of transparent counter-indices by autonomous think-tanks based in the Global South, with disclosed funding, named respondent panels, published weightings and per-question scores subject to external audit. That recommendation is endorsed by the present report. The point for present purposes, however, is narrower: the specific instrument Lyng deployed in Oslo cannot bear the moral weight she placed on it.

The WPMI is not a free-floating rhetorical artefact. It is an input to the World Governance Indicators, which feed sovereign credit ratings issued by Moody's, S&P and Fitch; to Environmental, Social and Governance screens used by institutional investors making allocation decisions; to foreign correspondent reporting on India, which in turn supplies the perception panels that score next year's Index; and to country assessments by the European Parliament and the European External Action Service. A perception score generated by approximately one respondent per country, with undisclosed weighting, therefore propagates through the international system into capital flows, credit costs and diplomatic posture. India is correct to challenge it. The Norwegian journalist is incorrect to deploy it without disclosing what it actually is.

This concludes the examination of the index Lyng cited. The remainder of the report addresses the second proposition embedded in her intervention: whether Norway holds the institutional standing to deploy any such instrument against any other country.

VI. American-Norwegian axis: Transatlantic Media-Funding Network Shaping Europe's India Narrative

The roots of this ecosystem are American and Scandinavian before they are European, though they are ultimately rooted in a broadly similar ideological framework. In October 2008, the Norwegian Fritt Ord Foundation seeded Journalismfund Europe with €50,000. One year later, Open Society Foundations entered through its New York Media Programme with €114,000. Over the next decade OSF returned repeatedly: €324,000 in 2011, €190,000 across 2015-2016, and a final US\$500,000 covering 2018-2020.

Running parallel through the wider ecosystem was the Ford Foundation, which funded adjacent press-freedom and governance infrastructure, including organisations such as Reporters Without Borders and other liberal civil-society networks shaping international discourse around democracy, rights, governance, and media freedom.

Across twelve formative years, the Soros network was not a peripheral donor but one of the principal institutional architects of the European investigative-journalism infrastructure that today shapes international narratives on democracy, corruption, media freedom, and governance.

Alongside OSF stood a cluster of European philanthropic actors with similar institutional assumptions: Adessium Foundation, backed by the Van Vliet family; Porticus, tied to the C&A retail fortune; the Stavros Niarchos Foundation; the King Baudouin Foundation; and a wider constellation of media-pluralism vehicles spread across Brussels, Amsterdam, Geneva, Oslo, and Paris. These are establishment left-wing institutions, not politically neutral arbiters floating above ideology. They share a recognisable worldview and remain deeply invested in the left international order built after the Cold War.

The structure changed scale in 2021 when Arcadia Fund committed €11.5 million over six years to Journalismfund Europe's Earth Investigations Programme. The Rausing-Baldwin grant transformed the organisation. Donations doubled and then doubled again. At the same time, OSF itself receded from the donor tables after 2020. Yet the ecosystem did not disappear; it Europeanised. The vacuum was filled directly by the European Commission through Creative Europe programmes such as PluPro, SOJO, PM4D, and Media Deserts. By 2025, the European Commission had become the single largest financial underwriter of Journalismfund Europe.

This evolution matters because it reveals continuity beneath apparent institutional diversity. The names change. The worldview remains remarkably consistent.

The issue is not merely that these organisations criticise India. Mature democracies withstand criticism. The issue is that these institutions exercise ideological power while presenting themselves as neutral custodians of universal democratic values. Their language is the language of “media freedom,” “pluralism,” “civil society,” and “democratic norms.” Yet the operational definition of those values consistently tracks the assumptions of the Western left-wing establishment.

Within this ecosystem civilisational and cultural oriented governments are approached far more aggressively and with suspicion. Assertions of sovereignty are often treated as hostility to pluralism or their notion of liberalism. Governments led by Narendra Modi, Giorgia Meloni or other movements are therefore examined not simply as governments, but as ideological challenges to the global left order these institutions were built to defend.

The conflict with Modi's India is therefore not accidental. It is ideological. The Modi government derives legitimacy from electoral mandate, national sovereignty, civilisational continuity, and cultural self-assertion. The transatlantic NGO-media ecosystem derives legitimacy from post-national leftist norms, minority-rights frameworks, supranational governance, and institutional cosmopolitanism. The clash between them is structural, not episodic. This does not mean every investigation is fabricated or every criticism dishonest. It means the ecosystem has a clear ideological gravity that is rarely acknowledged openly.

More importantly, the ecosystem functions through recursive amplification. The grant-maker funds the investigative consortium. The consortium collaborates with advocacy NGOs. Press-freedom indices cite the resulting investigations. International newspapers cite the indices. Parliamentary debates and diplomatic statements then cite the international coverage as evidence of a global democratic consensus.

What appears publicly as multiple independent validations of democratic decline often emerges from a tightly interconnected institutional network sharing donors, personnel pipelines, fellowship systems, advisory boards, conference circuits, and broadly aligned ideological assumptions.

On the Norwegian end, Fritt Ord Foundation not only helped seed the wider European investigative-journalism structure in 2008, but today runs its own NOK 25 million annual journalism programme underwriting projects across the Norwegian press, including Dagsavisen.

Dagsavisen is the publication that employs Helle Lyng as a commentator, the same Helle Lyng who heckled Prime Minister Modi during the joint press appearance with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store in Oslo on 18 May 2026.

Aftenposten, the publication that ran the snake-charmer caricature of Prime Minister Modi on the morning of 18 May 2026, sits inside a different institutional base from Dagsavisen but inside the same Norwegian press establishment. It is Norway's newspaper of record, founded in 1860, and is owned 99.99% by Schibsted ASA, the largest media corporation in the Nordic region.

Approximately 30% of Schibsted equity is held by foreign institutional investors, including Goldman Sachs. Aftenposten does not receive Norwegian state press subsidy because the produksjonstilskudd scheme administered by Medietilsynet is structurally designed to support "Number 2" newspapers, that is, papers that do not have the largest circulation in their market, and Aftenposten is the largest-circulation paper in Oslo.

Its editor-in-chief since January 2020 has been Trine Eilertsen, who also sits on the European Group of the Trilateral Commission. The cartoon was therefore not the work of a fringe publication or a maverick voice. It was the curtain-raiser of Norway's commercial-establishment newspaper of record, published on the morning of the Indian Prime Minister's arrival, by an institution embedded in the transatlantic commercial-corporate media order.

Dagsavisen and Aftenposten together represent the two institutional bases of the Norwegian press establishment: the state-subsidised opposition press funded through Fritt Ord, and the commercial corporate press owned through Schibsted. On 18 May 2026, both converged on the same caricature of India, on the same day, in the same city.

The investigative-journalism programmes from which European critiques of Indian democracy emerge, the Paris-based publisher of the press-freedom index that ranked India at 157, and the Oslo publication employing Lyng all sit within the same broad institutional circuit. The donors, openly listed on their own public pages, include George Soros's network, the Rausing-Baldwin estate through Arcadia Fund, the Ford Foundation, the European Commission, the Flemish Government, Porticus of the C&A family, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Adessium Foundation, Fritt Ord Foundation, and a wider network of European media vehicles.

The point is not that these institutions are secretly coordinated. The point is that they occupy the same ideological and financial ecosystem, circulate through the same conferences and fellowship systems, fund the same investigative infrastructures, cite one another's outputs, and reinforce one another's legitimacy.

The publication employing a journalist hostile to an Indian Prime Ministers visit based on learnings from this very ecosystem, the investigative-journalism programme funding projects on democratic decline, and the Paris-based organisation ranking India near authoritarian states are frequently presented as separate witnesses corroborating one another. In reality, they often sit within overlapping donor ecosystems funded by the same small cluster of foundations, European public institutions, and transatlantic media initiatives.

The appearance is one of independent convergence. The underlying reality is frequently one of ecosystem reinforcement. What presents itself as independent journalism increasingly operates as a closed-loop system of funding, validation, amplification, indexing, and reputational pressure originating within a relatively narrow ideological class spanning New York, Brussels, Oslo, London, Amsterdam, Geneva, and Paris.

The central question, therefore, is not whether India should be criticised. It is whether audiences are being adequately informed about how ideologically inclined the institutional production of that criticism actually is.

The American foundations that seeded and financed the ecosystem, the Norwegian institutions that embedded and amplified it within Europe's media landscape, the Brussels structures that now sustain it, and the investigative and advocacy networks that circulate within it together form a coherent transatlantic media-funding axis shaping Europe's narrative about India.

The index, the activist-journalist, the investigative consortium, and the advocacy report are often not four independent signals. They are different outputs of the same transatlantic ideological and financial ecosystem.

The ecosystem is entitled to its views. What it is not entitled to claim is that those views emerge from a politically neutral or institutionally independent global consensus.

Transatlantic Media-Funding Network Shaping Europe's India Narrative

A closed circle. Its participants are named on the public record.

Sources: journalismfund.eu, frittord.no, OSF published grants database.

EPOCH I · 2008 - 2020

Seed and consolidation: the American-Norwegian axis

George Soros's Open Society Society network and Norway's Fritt Ord seed and underwrite the Brussels grant-maker for twelve years.



Open Society Foundations
George Soros - New York

€14,000 - October 2009 (seed)
€324,000 - December 2011
€100,000 - 2015 to 2016
US\$500,000 - 2018 to 2020



Fritt Ord Foundation
Oslo - freedom of expression endowment

€50,000 - 1 October 2008
First seed contribution to the project
that would become Journalismfund Europe



Adessium · Oxfam Novib
Van Vliet family (NL), Dutch philanthropy

Adessium: €1.5m+ across 2011-2020
(premier donor 2017-2020)
Oxfam Novib: €853,000 (2014-2021)

EPOCH II · 2021 - 2023

Transition: OSF withdraws, Arcadia and the European Commission move in

The Soros tranche closes 31 December 2020. In August 2021 the Rausing-Baldwin philanthropic estate commits €11.5m across six years.



ARCADIA
Lisbet Rausing - Peter Baldwin

€11.5m commitment - August 2021
€2.7m disbursed in 2023 alone
Soros Pub. Justice / American Justice

European Commission
Creative Europe media-philanthropy programmes

PubPro - S000 - P040 - Media Deserts
€1.2m (2023)
EU taxpayer funds, DG CNECT

Porticus · Niarchos - King Baudouin
Brommelaer family of C&A - Niarchos estate

Porticus: €193,865 (2023)
Soros Niarchos: €125,970 (2023)
+ Lightlight, Melior, Voozoo, Flemish Goet

EPOCH III · 2024 - 2025

Current state: the European Union itself overtakes every private donor

By 2025 the EU is the single largest underwriter of European cross-border investigative journalism, at €2.87m for the year.

Journalismfund Europe vzw · Brussels · founded 1998

Total annual donations: €1.62m (2021) → €3.58m (2022) → €5.63m (2023) → €4.89m (2024) → €5.84m (2025)

2025 donor table: European Commission €2.87m • Arcadia €1.95m • Flemish Govt €642k
King Baudouin €149k • Meliore €117k • LimeLight €100k • Veronica €8.5k

ADJACENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The wider press-freedom ecosystem



Reporters Without Borders
Paris - founded 1985

Publisher of the World Press Freedom Index
Index scored 157 of 180 in 2020



OSF redeployed funding
to adjacent press-freedom infrastructure

OCCRP: US\$4.4m (2023)
GHN: US\$625,000 (2023)
Global OSF grant 2016-22: US\$6.1m



Norwegian Journalism Programme
Administered by Fritt Ord, Oslo

Up to NOK 25 million annually
Eligible recipients across the
Norwegian press, including Dagbladet

The Norwegian press establishment

Two institutional bases: state-subsidised opposition press (Fritt Ord) and commercial corporate press (Schibsted ASA)



THE HECKLE
Dagsavisen

employs Heide Lyng as a commentator

State-subsidised opposition press
Norwegian Journalism Programme recipient (Fritt Ord, NOK 25m/year)
Lyng headed PM Med in Radisson Blu Plaza, 18 May 2020



THE CARICATURE
Aftenposten

Norway's newspaper of record, owned 99.99% by Schibsted ASA

Commercial Oslo establishment press
~30% of Schibsted equity held by foreign institutional investors, including Goldman Sachs
Published state-charter criticism of PM Med, 18 May 2020, in status-moré



The index, the journalist, and the caricature that converged on the Indian Prime Minister in Oslo are not three independent verdicts.

They are three institutional outputs of one ideologically coherent ecosystem.

The ecosystem is entitled to its views. It is not entitled to present them as the neutral verdict of the world.

Oslo Press Incidents

Continuity of a Colonial Gaze, Norwegianization, and Illusion of Human Rights and Social Justice



Sámi people, indigenous inhabitants of northern Scandinavia whose lives, traditions and identities were often documented through the lens of colonial-era ethnography, a systematic, multi-generational erasure of identity and culture

VII. Norway's Settlement of Sami Lands: A Short Historical Account

Before any account of forced assimilation can be set out, an account of the prior fact, the settlement of Sami territory by Norwegian and other Nordic populations, is necessary. The Sami did not become a minority in their own homeland by accident. They became a minority through a multi-century process of state-incentivised colonisation of their territory.

The Sami are the native (indigenous) people of the region historically known as Sápmi, comprising the northern reaches of present-day Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia's Kola Peninsula. Archaeological evidence places continuous Sami habitation in the region for at least 10,000 years. Sami society was organised around the *siida*, the local community linked by kinship and territory, with annual migration patterns tied to fishing, hunting and, from the late 16th century onward, reindeer husbandry.

Norwegian and Norse presence in the region long predates the modern Norwegian state but was for centuries limited and tributary in character. From the 9th century, populations from the south began to move into the Sami homeland and to claim land and resources. The first permanent Norwegian fortification in Finnmark, *Vardøhus*, was erected in 1306 by King Haakon V Magnusson. From the 14th and 15th centuries onward, Finnish settlement increased in Finnmark and *Meänmaa*, with the Sami population gradually becoming outnumbered through demographic displacement rather than treaty.

The decisive period of state-directed settler colonisation came in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Successive Norwegian, Swedish and Russian governments offered material incentives, land grants, tax exemptions and missionary backing, to ethnic Norwegians, Finns and Swedes to colonise Sami territory. This was the formal mechanism by which the demographic balance of Sápmi was inverted, and the legal mechanism by which Sami land tenure was supplanted by settler property regimes. The pattern is structurally identical to the Anglo-American and Iberian colonisation of native lands in the Americas during the same period: state-incentivised settler in-migration, conversion to Christianity, suppression of native religion, and reclassification of native land as Crown or state property.

Two features of this settler colonisation are documented in the historical literature and deserve particular notice.

The first is the religious dimension. Sami spiritual practice, organised around the noaidi (shaman) and the gievrie (sacred drum), was officially classified as devil worship by the Lutheran church and by the Crown. Sami who continued to practise their traditional religion were persecuted. Some were burned at the stake for witchcraft. The Vardø witch trials of the 17th century, in which 88 women and one man were burned, are a documented case in point. Sacred sites across Sápmi were destroyed.

The second is the fiscal dimension. From the medieval period onward, the Sami were treated as a tributary population: the finnskatt or "Finn tax" was a fur and produce levy collected by Norwegian, Swedish and Russian agents, often simultaneously by all three from the same Sami household. The 1326 Treaty of Novgorod formalised the right of Norway and Russia to tax the same Sami subjects. Sami who could not pay tribute lost their right to use land. By the 17th century, this system had transferred large amounts of Sami territory into state and settler hands.

The pattern established by this multi-century settlement, religious suppression and fiscal expropriation is the foundation on which the formal Norwegianization policy of 1851 was built. The 1851 policy did not begin Norwegian colonisation of Sápmi. It rationalised and accelerated a process already four centuries old, by adding to it the new instruments of compulsory schooling, language ban, residential boarding schools, forced renaming, eugenics and sterilisation. The Norwegian record on its native population is therefore not the record of a 175-year policy aberration. It is the record of approximately 700 years of settler colonisation, of which the formal Norwegianization period is the most documented and the most recent phase.

This is the historical foundation on which the contemporary Norwegian self-presentation as a model of minority rights and a moral arbiter of others rests. The foundation is not solid.

VIII. Norwegianization and Its Six Populations

A central premise of Lyng's intervention was that Norway holds the moral standing from which to instruct India on minority and human rights. That premise is testable against Norway's own documented record, drawn from the Norwegian Government's own White Papers, Storting Commission reports, NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger) reports, and the academic literature.

The relevant historical and policy framework is captured in a single Norwegian word: *fornorsking*, conventionally translated as "Norwegianization." The term denotes the formal state policy, instituted in 1851 and continued in various forms until the late twentieth century, of compelling the linguistic, religious, cultural, and in some cases biological assimilation of populations resident in Norway who were not ethnically Norwegian. The policy was not informal social pressure. It was funded by a dedicated state instrument, the *Finnefondet* (the Finn Fund), administered through schools, churches, and successive land and trade legislation, and reinforced through statutory provisions including the Vagrancy Act of 1900, the Sterilisation Act of 1934, and the Trade Act of 1907. Its instruments included language bans in schools and churches, the forced removal of children to boarding schools and orphanages, land expropriation, forced renaming, forced settlement in state-administered labour colonies, forced sterilisation, and statutory exclusion from professions and trades. Aspects of the policy were characterised by social Darwinian and racial-biological ideology, particularly between the 1880s and the 1940s, in which non-Norwegian populations were officially classified as racially inferior. The Sami, for example, were categorised in the Norwegian census alongside the "blind, deaf and insane" until 1920.

Norwegianization formally ended in policy in the 1960s. State funding of its principal implementing instrument, the Norwegian Mission for the Homeless, continued until 1986. Its principal physical institution, the Svanviken labour colony, continued operating until 1989. Its statutory sterilisation regime was applied to Romani/Tater women until 1977. The most recent formal apology by the Norwegian Storting, addressed to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns, was issued in November 2024.

Norway officially recognises one native (indigenous) people and five national minorities. Each of these six populations was subjected to Norwegianization in some form, summarised below.

Svanviken Labour Colony, a Norwegian assimilation colony where Romani/Tater families were subjected to forced settlement and cultural suppression in the 20th century.





Sámi youth activists gathered at the Storting during the 2023 Fosen protests, demanding justice after Norway's Supreme Court ruled that wind farms built on Sámi reindeer grazing land violated Indigenous rights."

Population

Sami

Status under Norwegian Law

Native (indigenous) people of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia's Kola Peninsula

Documented State Policies Applied

Norwegianization 1851 to 1980s: language ban in schools and churches, residential boarding schools, forced renaming, land expropriation in Finnmark, census classification alongside "blind, deaf and insane" until 1920, physical and sexual abuse in school institutions documented by the 2023 Truth and Reconciliation Commission



Norwegianization policy tried to erase the Sámi identity, silencing their language, culture, and heritage through schools and boarding institutions, where Norwegian was taught, designed for assimilation

Kvens / Norwegian Finns

Finnish-speaking population settled in northern Norway over centuries

Norwegianization applied identically to the Sámi: language suppression in schools and public life, social marginalisation, exclusion from civic positions; the Kven language was not officially recognised as a minority language until 2005

Oslo Press Incidents

Continuity of a Colonial Gaze, Norwegianization, and Illusion of Human Rights and Social Justice



Forest Finns lived in deep harmony with nature, mastering slash-and-burn farming and preserving a unique forest culture; but assimilation and social pressure slowly erased their language, culture and way of life, a quiet loss of human heritage.

Forest Finns
(Skogfinner)

Finnish settlers in south-eastern Norwegian forests from the 17th and 18th centuries

Practical assimilation through schooling and administrative pressure; near-complete loss of the Forest Finnish language and traditional livelihoods over the 20th century



Thousands of Romani children were taken from their families and placed in boarding schools, children's home and "special schools" under the guise of state intervention; a system that stripped communities of identity, dignity and belonging.

Romani / Tater

Descendants of Romani migration to Scandinavia in the 16th century

Vagrancy Act 1900 enabled forced settlement; Svanviken labour colony (1908 to 1989) housed 990 individuals across its operating life; approximately 1,500 Romani/Tater children removed from families, roughly one-third of the community's youth across two generations; approximately 40 percent of women resident at Svanviken between 1949 and 1970 forcibly sterilised under the 1934 Sterilisation Act; the youngest documented forced sterilisation was of a 14-year-old girl



Protest against Roma lives lost behind bars, too often ignored, unheard and denied justice

Roma

Arrived in Norway in the 1880s

Exclusionary policy in the early 20th century; denial of re-entry permits in the 1930s, with the documented consequence that stranded individuals died in Nazi concentration camps; continued post-war marginalisation; formal apology by Prime Minister Erna Solberg, April 2015



Article 2 of Norway's 1814 Constitution originally declared Evangelical Lutheranism as the state religion and barred Jews and Jesuits from entering the kingdom, reflecting the era's religious nationalism and exclusionary policies.

ARTICLE 2.—The Evangelical Lutheran Religion shall remain the official religion of the State. Inhabitants who profess the same shall be required to educate their children therein. Jesuits and Monastic orders shall have no place in the country.

Jews

Recognised national minority

Article 2 of the 1814 Norwegian Constitution explicitly barred Jews from entering the country, the most restrictive such provision in Western Europe at the time; bar removed in 1851; deportation of 772 Norwegian Jews under the Nazi occupation 1942 to 1945 with documented Norwegian police participation, of whom 230 survived; delayed post-war restitution

The relevant timeline runs across approximately 175 years of formal policy and approximately 700 years of settler colonisation.

Year / Period	Event
1306	Vardohus, the first permanent Norwegian fortification in Finnmark, erected.
	Beginning of formal Norwegian state presence in Sami territory
1326	Treaty of Novgorod formalises Norway, Sweden and Russia's shared right to tax Sami subjects
17th century	Vardo witch trials: 88 women and one man burned, mostly Sami; sacred Sami sites destroyed
1700s-1800s	Sustained state-incentivised settler colonisation of Sami territory; demographic inversion of Sápmi
1814	Article 2 of the Norwegian Constitution explicitly bars Jews from entering the country
1851	Norwegianization formalised as state policy; the Finnefondet established to finance assimilation. Same year: constitutional bar on Jews removed
1850s onward	Sami and Kven languages banned in schools and churches
1870s to 1900	Peak Norwegianization period: forced renaming, land expropriation, settler colonisation of Finnmark by ethnic Norwegians
1897	Norwegian Mission for the Homeless founded; will become the principal instrument of Romani/Tater assimilation, operating with state funding until 1986
1900	Vagrancy Act enacted, enabling forced settlement of Romani/Tater families
1907	Trade Act forbids "Vagrants" from trading goods carried from place to place
1908	Svanviken labour colony established
Until 1920	Sami ethnic origin categorised in the Norwegian census alongside " <i>blind, deaf and insane</i> "
1934	Sterilisation Act enables forced sterilisation of those deemed unable to provide for children or to carry " <i>defect genes</i> "
1934 to 1977	Forced sterilisation programme operational
1942 to 1945	Deportation of 772 Norwegian Jews under Nazi occupation; 230 survive. Roma denied re-entry permits in earlier years contributing to camp deaths
1949 to 1970	At Svanviken, approximately 40 percent of resident women forcibly sterilised
1950 to 1970	Approximately 1,500 Romani/Tater children removed from families and placed in orphanages or ethnic Norwegian foster homes
1960s	Norwegianization formally ends as policy. In practice, social segregation continues
1970s to 1980s	Dr Per Fugelli, Finnmark regional doctor, publicly reports Sami denied entry to public transport and required to queue behind ethnic Norwegians in shops
1986	State funding of the Mission's work with Romani/Tater ends
1989	Svanviken closes after 81 years of operation
1999	Norway ratifies the Council of Europe Framework Convention; formally recognises five national minorities
2011	Norwegian Constitution revised; mention of national minorities is deliberately omitted
2015	NOU 2015:7 report on Tater/Romani submitted; Prime Minister Solberg issues formal apology to the Romani/Tater people
2018 to 2023	Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigates Norwegianization of Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns
1 June 2023	TRC final report submitted to the Storting
November 2024	Storting formally apologises to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns for " <i>the historical injustice of forced assimilation</i> "



Four features of this record warrant emphasis for cross-country comparison. The policies are not historically remote: the Svanviken labour colony closed in 1989, within the working lifetime of many serving Norwegian civil servants; state-funded assimilation continued until 1986; the Sterilisation Act was applied to Romani/Tater women until 1977; and the most recent Storting apology was issued in November 2024, eighteen months before the press exchange in Oslo that occasioned this report. The policies were not merely cultural: they included forced sterilisation, forced removal of children from families, forced settlement in labour colonies, denial of re-entry to a country of residence, and statutory exclusion from professions. The 1934 Sterilisation Act and its operation were instruments of biological coercion, not of cultural persuasion. The Jewish dimension is rarely acknowledged in contemporary self-presentations: the 1814 constitutional bar was the most restrictive such provision in Western Europe at the time, and Norwegian police participated in the deportation of Norwegian Jews under Nazi occupation, of whom only 230 of 772 survived. The Romani dimension is more uncomfortable still: the denial of re-entry permits to Norwegian Roma in the 1930s contributed directly to deaths in Nazi extermination camps, recorded in the 2015 Solberg apology. A state's denial of re-entry to its own minority population, with the consequence that the population is exterminated abroad, is one of the gravest acts a state can commit short of perpetration itself.

The Norwegian record on native and minority rights is not closed history. The next section addresses an ongoing case in which the documented colonial logic of Norwegianization continues to operate within the present-day Norwegian state.

IX. The Fosen Case: Norwegianization in Contemporary Form

In October 2021, the Supreme Court of Norway unanimously ruled that the licences granted for the Storheia and Roan wind farms on the Fosen peninsula were invalid. The 277-turbine Fosen Vind project, the largest onshore wind installation in Europe, had been constructed on traditional South Sami winter reindeer grazing lands. The Court held that the construction violated Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protects minority cultural rights, and that this protection could not be outweighed even by national climate policy objectives.

The chronology is instructive.

Year	Event
2010	Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate grants concession to state-owned Statkraft
2013	Sami reindeer herders bring legal challenge; Ministry of Petroleum and Energy rejects the Article 27 claim
2018	UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination requests Norway to halt construction; Norway proceeds
2019	Construction completed
2020	Local court of appeal finds Sami had lost grazing land; orders compensation
11 October 2021	Norwegian Supreme Court rules concessions invalid as a violation of ICCPR Article 27
October 2021 to February 2023	Government takes no remedial action; turbines continue operating
February 2023	Sami youth occupy ten Norwegian ministries; Greta Thunberg joins protests
2 March 2023	After approximately 500 days, Norwegian government issues apology and acknowledges ongoing human rights violation
21 December 2023	Partial settlement reached covering southern siida
March 2024	Broader settlement reached; turbines remain operational

The Fosen case is significant for the present analysis for three reasons. The Norwegian state was prepared to disregard a UN treaty body request in 2018. Even when its own Supreme Court ruled the underlying decision a human rights violation, the Norwegian government required approximately 500 days, a multi-ministry occupation, and the involvement of international climate activists before issuing formal acknowledgement. And, as of the date of this report, native rights violations recognised by Norway's own highest court remain operationally unresolved: the turbines continue to operate.

The Saami Council has characterised the situation as evidence that "Norway is a nation state that is willing to sacrifice the livelihood of the Sámi people and human rights for the sake of industry and profit." A country whose government required 500 days, a Supreme Court judgment, a UN body's intervention, and a multi-ministry occupation before acknowledging an ongoing human rights violation on its own soil is not the country best positioned to issue instructions on the timeliness of rights protection elsewhere.



Bhattacharya children returned to India in 2012 after a high-profile custody dispute in Norway sparked international debate over cultural differences, parenting norms and child welfare interventions involving immigrant families.

X. The Barnevernet Record at the European Court of Human Rights

Norway's child welfare service, Barnevernet, has been the subject of a sustained series of adverse rulings by the European Court of Human Rights. The Norwegian National Human Rights Institution itself has characterised the failure to safeguard the right to family life in child welfare cases as "a repeated and central human rights challenge in Norway."

The relevant data are summarised below.

Metric	Figure
Total ECtHR judgments against Norway in the Court's history (as of 2023)	65
Of which, convictions of Norway	43
ECtHR cases involving Norway's child welfare system accepted for hearing	39 or more
Substantive judgments delivered by 2020	9
Cases in which Norway found to have violated Article 8 (right to family life)	7 of 9
2021 alone	6 judgments finding Norway in violation of human rights in child welfare
Children in Norway under some Barnevernet measure	Approximately 3 percent of all children at any given time
Children placed outside their homes by end of 2016	15,820
Most common official basis cited for removal	"Lack of parenting skills"

The pattern is not an isolated feature of Norwegian administration. It is a systemic outcome of a child welfare framework that treats culturally diverse parenting practices, including practices universal across most of the non-Western world, as presumptively neglectful. The documented Indian and South Asian cases since 2011 establish the pattern beyond reasonable dispute.

Case	Year	Family	Reasons Cited by Norwegian Authorities	Outcome
Bhattacharya	May 2011	Anurup Bhattacharya, geo-scientist, and Sagatika Chakraborty Bhattacharya, Stavanger. Children Abhigyan (3) and Aishwarya (1)	Hand-feeding the children, classified as <i>"force-feeding"</i> ; co-sleeping; insufficient play space; argument in front of caseworker; <i>"emotional disconnect"</i> with the children	Children removed for over a year; returned to India in 2012 to paternal uncle after Indian diplomatic intervention. Case dramatised in <i>Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway</i> (2023), distributed internationally on Netflix, criticised by Norwegian Ambassador to India
Hyderabad Couple	December 2012	Indian couple, children aged 7 and 2	Allegations of ill-treatment of children	Mother sentenced to 15 months in prison; father to 18 months. Children sent to grandparents in Hyderabad
Kaur / Kumar	December 2016	Gurvinderjit Kaur (Indian national) and Anil Kumar (Norwegian citizen of Indian origin); son Aryan (5)	Allegations of abuse against asthmatic child; child removed from kindergarten on 13 December 2016 without informing parents; placed at children's welfare home 150 km from Oslo; mother taken into custody and interrogated	Diplomatic intervention by Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. The Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi requested <i>"restraint"</i> in the case

Parallel cases from Russian, Czech and Romanian families have followed similar patterns, with Russian mothers staging demonstrations outside Norwegian embassies in Moscow, St Petersburg, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk in 2012 in solidarity with the Bhattacharya family. Czech and Romanian families have pursued cases at the European Court of Human Rights, contributing to the cumulative record of Norwegian Article 8 violations set out above.

The Bhattacharya, Hyderabad, and Kaur cases are not anomalies. They are representative of a documented pattern. In all three, the official Norwegian grounds for removal were practices, hand-feeding, co-sleeping, family-centred upbringing, that are not just normal but universal across Indian and most non-Western family cultures. The Norwegian Child Welfare Act was substantially rewritten with effect from January 2023, in direct response to the ECtHR rulings. This indicates that Norwegian institutions themselves recognise the prior framework as deficient. The Norwegian National Human Rights Institution, the European Court of Human Rights, and Norwegian legal scholarship are all on record that the Norwegian child welfare system has systematically failed Article 8 of the European Convention.

A country whose child welfare agency has been condemned at this scale by Europe's principal human rights court, and whose removals of Indian children have produced three documented diplomatic incidents in five years, is not the country best positioned to direct human rights questions at the parents whose children it removed for hand-feeding and co-sleeping. The trust enquiry, on this evidence alone, does not run from Oslo to Delhi. It runs the other way.

XI. The Indian Media Landscape in Quantitative Terms

Secretary George's reference to the scale of India's media ecosystem is verifiable. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and related data establish the following.

Indian Media Reality	Figure
Registered daily newspapers	1,46,045
Registered periodicals	1,25,767
News broadcasters	903
Radio stations	815
Languages of mainstream news	22 scheduled languages plus numerous others
TV channels in Delhi alone (English, Hindi, and other languages)	More than 200
Internet users (estimate, 2025-26)	More than 800 million
Population	Approximately 1.4 billion
Universal adult suffrage extended to women	From the inception of the Republic, 26 January 1950

For comparison, Norway has a population of approximately 5.5 million. The Norwegian Press Association, Dagsavisen, Aftenposten, and the broader Norwegian press ecosystem operate at a fundamentally different scale. A composite index that assigns Norway rank 1 and India rank 157 on the basis of expert perception surveys of 150 unnamed respondents is not measuring comparable phenomena. It is producing a number whose appearance of objectivity is misleading.

XII. The Sovereign Wealth Question

Norway's institutional self-image rests in significant part on the Government Pension Fund Global, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund with assets above 1.7 trillion US dollars. The fund maintains an ethical exclusion list and is widely cited as a model of responsible capital allocation.

The fund's economic basis is hydrocarbon extraction. Approximately one-third of Norway's economic output derives from oil and gas production and export. Since the commencement of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Norway has substantially expanded gas exports to Europe at premium prices, replacing Russian supply. The cumulative profit accruing from this position is estimated in the tens of billions of US dollars.

The implications for the present analysis are twofold.

First, Norway's welfare state, its sovereign wealth fund, and the institutional infrastructure that funds its press and its international advocacy are all underwritten by hydrocarbon revenues whose climate consequences fall disproportionately on lower-income and climate-vulnerable countries, including India.

Second, a country whose moral capital is funded by activities whose externalities are exported to others has a particular obligation to circumspection when issuing instructions to those others. The argument is not that Norway should not produce oil and gas. The argument is that the production of moral instruction at premium prices, like the production of gas at premium prices, ought to be subject to honest disclosure of inputs.

XIII. Norway and India: Civilisational and Institutional Contrast

The following table summarises the principal asymmetries between Norway and India relevant to the question of who holds standing to instruct whom.

Parameter	Norway	India
Modern state founded	1905, on independence from Sweden	1947 independence; Republic from 26 January 1950
Universal adult suffrage	Men 1898, women 1913	Universal franchise for all adults, including all women, from 1950
Population	Approximately 5.5 million	Approximately 1.4 billion
Languages of mainstream news	Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk), Sami	22 scheduled languages and many more in active circulation
Native (indigenous) rights record	Approximately 700 years of settler colonisation of Sápmi; Norwegianization 1851 to 1980s; Storting apology November 2024; Fosen turbines operating after 2021 Supreme	Constitutionally protected Scheduled Tribes (Articles 244, 342); reservation in education, employment and legislatures since 1950
Family law judgments at ECtHR	Repeatedly found in violation of Article 8 right to family life; three documented Indian-family removals since 2011	Not under ECtHR jurisdiction: subject to continuous Supreme Court oversight, public interest litigation, and press scrutiny
Historical treatment of Jewish minority	Constitutional bar on entry 1814 to 1851; state participation in Holocaust-era deportation, 230 of 772 survived	Continuous shelter for Jewish refugees over centuries; Cochin and Bene Israel communities preserved across two millennia without persecution
Civilisational continuity	Approximately 1,000 years of continuous settlement; approximately 120 years as a unified independent state	Continuous textual, linguistic and religious traditions documented across more than 4,000 years
Position on decolonisation at the United Nations	NATO member from founding; aligned with colonial forces during the decolonisation period	Consistent supporter of decolonisation across Africa and Asia from 1947 onward
Editorial visual register of national press 2014-2026	<i>Aftenposten</i> snake charmer caricature (2026); recurrent colonial-era stereotypes in mainstream commentary	Documented criticism of foreign caricatures (NYT ISRO 2014, <i>Aftenposten</i> 2026) without retaliatory state action

These asymmetries do not, by themselves, settle any specific factual dispute. They do establish that the relationship between Norway and India is not one in which Oslo holds the natural seat of moral authority. The questions a Norwegian commentator may legitimately ask are precisely the questions an Indian journalist may legitimately ask in Oslo. The standard is reciprocity.

XIV. Concluding Observations

The events of 18 May 2026 are a small episode and a large one at the same time. Small, because a single commentator's heckle and a single newspaper's cartoon would not normally warrant a report of this length. Large, because the heckle and the cartoon are not the property of Helle Lyng and Aftenposten alone. They are the visible surface of a deeper institutional structure that this report has documented section by section. Seven observations close the matter.

First, the Oslo press incidents were not an accident of one journalist's temperament. The Aftenposten caricature was a curtain-raiser, not a reaction, published by Norway's newspaper of record on the morning of Modi's arrival. The heckle that evening followed the cartoon in the same ideological key. The genre has antecedents: The New York Times in 2014, La Vanguardia in 2022, Aftenposten in 2026. The continuity is not coincidence. It is a colonial visual grammar that has outlived the encounter that produced it.

Second, the World Press Freedom Index is not a neutral instrument. It is a sentiment survey of roughly 150 selected respondents per country, dressed as a ranking. To place a press environment of 146,045 newspapers, 903 broadcasters, and 22 languages at 157 of 180 is not journalism. It is an editorial position presented as evidence.

Third, the index, the journalist, and the publication are funded from the same circuit. Soros's foundations seeded it across twelve years from 2008. The Rausing-Baldwin estate stepped in through Arcadia in 2021. The European Commission became the largest single donor by 2025. Dagsavisen sits inside Fritt Ord's Norwegian Journalism programme. Reporters Without Borders sits inside the same Western philanthropic and inter-governmental world. Three institutional outputs of one ecosystem, named on its own pages.

Fourth, the country lecturing India has its own record, audited by its own parliament. Vardøhus 1306. Vardø witch trials. Norwegianization 1851. Svanviken 1908 to 1989. Forced sterilisations under a 1934 Act on the statute books until 1977. Storting apology, November 2024, in many cases more than a century late. The cartoon was published by the press of a state whose own Truth and Reconciliation Commission has just finished its work.

Fifth, Norway's record is not historical alone. Fosen (HR-2021-1975-S), unanimous Supreme Court judgment, October 2021: 277 turbines on South Sámi grazing lands in continuing violation of Article 27 of the ICCPR. State apology, March 2023. Turbines, still operating in 2026. Sixty-five Barmevenet cases at Strasbourg. Forty-three judgments lost on the merits. Three Indian families on that list. None of this is allegation. All of it is court record.

Sixth, the pulpit is not the pulpit. India in 2026 is the world's largest democracy by population, the most linguistically diverse functioning electoral system on earth, the operator of a press environment so vast that any single ranking falsifies it. Norway in 2026 is five-and-a-half million people, recently audited for seven generations of documented abuse, currently in continuing violation of its own Supreme Court. Neither state is perfect. But the moral asymmetry on the documentary evidence runs the opposite way from the asymmetry the cartoon and the index assert.

Seventh, criticism of India is not the objection. A democracy that cannot withstand criticism is not a democracy. The objection is to the presentation of one ecosystem's verdict as the world's. It is not the world's. It is the verdict of a small, named, transatlantic circuit with twenty years of disclosed grant history. The ecosystem is entitled to its views. India is entitled to say so, in public, on the record, and through its own democratic institutions. This is what External Affairs did at the Radisson Blu Plaza on the evening of 18 May 2026, when Secretary (West) Sibi George answered "Why should we trust you?" with: *"We are one-sixth of the total population of the world, but not one-sixth of the problems of the world. If anyone's rights are violated, they have the right to go to court. We are proud to be a democracy. You ask a question, don't ask me to answer in a particular way."* That answer is the closing line of this report. India will continue to be criticised. India will continue to be ranked. India will continue to be caricatured. And India will continue to answer, in its own voice, on its own evidence, and from its own civilisational ground.

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