

Where has all the online activism post 26/11 disappeared?

When the 26/11 [Mumbai](#) terror attacks happened last year, the tremors also shook the virtual world. Filled with rage and a passion to set things right, people, especially youngsters, used the web world to create discussion forums and pledged not to let the carnage be forgotten. A year later, most of these groups have fizzled out.

The entries are months old, and the discussions, if at all, are on random topics.

Take the example of one such group created on the popular social networking site, Facebook.

'Mumbai Terror Attacks: I condemn it' was created soon after the terror siege of the country's business capital on the night of Nov 26, 2008. The three-day mayhem by 10 terrorists left 166 dead and 244 injured.

The group, which started in December last year, now has 35,150 members. It started with a spurt of passionate discussions, heated debates and heart-wrenching stories. The aim of this cross section of people was the same -- keep the pressure mounting on the government to take steps so that such incidents don't happen again.

While the online activism continued for a few months, it started waning by the middle of this year. By August there was a post announcing a gay rights rally and on Nov 9 -- almost a year after the attacks -- there was a discussion topic on Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray.

The story of another group, Mumbai 26/11, is similar. The last post on it was three months back and that too on the trend of Indian youngsters going abroad for education.

'The good news is that even if you are following the herd of about 2.64 lakh students going abroad to study, you don't have to score 90 percent. Students with as little as 40 percent are making a beeline for a foreign degree...' so went the last update on the 450-member-strong group's profile.

Abhilasha Sharma, an advertising executive in Delhi who is a member of one such online group, admitted that she has not bothered to check the updates of the group in the last six months.

'When I joined this group, the terror attacks had just taken place. The images of that episode kept flashing on the TV, therefore the emotions were raw. Not just me, but a number of my friends and people I knew joined these various groups that were created overnight on the web and pledged not to take things lying down,' Sharma told IANS.

'I remember I had gone for a candlelight vigil in India Gate too... However, as time passed, the memories started fading. There were no face-to-face meetings and the online momentum was soon lost amid the daily rush of life,' she said.

Anshuman Dey, a college student, said that while he signed up for one such group in December last year, he lost interest after people started posting updates on random topics.

'When I signed up for the group on Orkut, I really believed that we can keep the pressure mounting on the government to ensure better security and putting the culprits on the dock. But after the first

candlelight vigil, we never had a second meeting,' he said.

'There was no face of the group -- it was just a congregation of people. I am not blaming anyone, but I really feel that if a person or a group of people had kept the momentum going by organising meetings or rallies, it would have worked,' Dey said.

Trying to explain the fizzling out of the 26/11 online groups, Anisha Das, a lawyer and human rights activist, said: 'Public memory is very short. People mostly feel for the moment and then get busy attempting to negotiate through their daily lives.

'For families of victims, they probably think it's best to move on and rebuild their lives. Very few actually have the strength to follow up on their cases.'

Online activism in the form of petitions and otherwise have started becoming the latest tool for campaigns by NGOs as well. However in order to sustain these campaigns, it is important to have face-to-face meetings complementing them, feels Parvinder Singh of the international NGO ActionAid.

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