**[Songs of slaughter](https://www.dawn.com/news/1798800/songs-of-slaughter)**

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WE all have soundtracks to our lives; background music that plays in our heads depending on our mood and situation. We know which songs we like to listen to when we are sad or happy — sometimes to magnify the mood and sometimes to dampen it — because music has the power to unleash and tame emotions. William Congreve was right when he wrote in 1697 that “Musick has Charms to sooth a savage Breast”, but the reverse is also true: music also has darker charms that do not soothe, but inflame that breast, making it savage.

In Israel’s genocide in the Gaza Strip, music of the latter type has come to the fore. These are the soundtracks of genocide, the musical accompaniments to mass murder.

Recently, one such song topped the Israeli charts. Charbu Darbu (swords and strikes) celebrates Israel’s murderous actions with lyrics that call Palestinians “rats and sons of Amalek”, and calls upon Israelis to “write names on the bombs, for the children of the Gaza envelope”. It also includes death threats against Bella Hadid, Dua Lipa and Mia Khalifa, who have been vocally opposed to Israel’s indiscriminate mass slaughter.

In keeping with the psychopathic nature of Israeli society, the song was hugely popular, with Israelis posting videos of themselves dancing to it. Similar songs are favourites of the Israeli occupation forces too, with one group of soldiers dancing to lyrics that go: “We know our slogan: there are no ‘uninvolved civilians’.” Charming, coming from a military famous for murdering children, women and unarmed men.

Hate music is played to whip up supporters.

This genre of music isn’t recent, nor limited to Israel. In recent years, with the rise of the fanatical Sangh Parivar in India, Hindutva hate pop has also secured itself a large, growing audience. Lyrics to these popular tracks — which incite hate against the minority Muslim community — go like this: “Hinduo kaa hae Hindustan, Mullo jaao Pakistan” (India is for Hindus, Muslims should go to Pakistan) and “Insaan nahi ho saalo, ho tum kasaayi; Bahut ho chuka Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai” (you’re not human; you’re butchers. Enough of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood).

Highly popular in Hindutva circles, these songs are played at Hindu supremacist rallies and marches through Muslim neighbourhoods, events that are almost always followed by violence and hate crimes. They also seem to enjoy official sanction as one of the singers, failed Bollywood singer Prem Krishnavanshi, recently received an award from Yogi Adityanath, the fanatical chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

In 1994, the world watched as the Rwandan genocide unfolded. In just four months, anywhere from 500,000 to 800,000 Tutsis were slaughtered by Hutu militants belonging to Interahamwe and their supporters in a murderous orgy where the wea­pons of choice were machetes and firearms. This genocide had its specific sound­tracks as well — songs that extolled the power of the Hutus and vilified the targeted Tutsis.

Prominent among the hate singers was Simon Bikindi who was indicted in 2005 by the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda on six counts for crimes perpetrated during the genocide, including one count of “direct and public incitement to commit genocide”.

According to the indictment, during bro­adcasts on extremist Hutu radio stations — known collectively as Radio Rwanda — “appeals on RTLM to attack the enemy were often preceded or followed by songs written and performed by Simon Bikindi”. His music worked as a recruitment tool as well. Deeply involved in Rwandan cultural life, Bikindi was the director of a popular ballet company where “succumbing to the mobilising effects of his music, members of the ballet were re­­c­­ruited into the In­­terahamwe militia, underwent military training and went on to kill Tutsis”.

It wasn’t just the Tutsis who suffered this lyrical violence as Bikindi also targeted what he saw as ‘moderate’ Hutus in songs with titles like Njyewe nanga Abahutu (I hate these Hutus). These Hutus were also targeted by Interahamwe and their allied mobs.

Neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the Western world have also used hate music, known as ‘hatecore’ in those circles, to whip up supporters and for recruitment. Accord­ing to the racism watchdog organisation, the Southern Poverty Law Centre, National Socialist Black Metal “has proven a potent recruiting force, especially among youth”.

That this genre of music has deadly consequences is an established fact: in 2012, Wade Michael Page murdered six people at a gurdwara in Wisconsin, before killing himself to avoid capture. It emerged that he had been active in the hatecore scene for over a decade, playing for and listening to bands like Jew Slaughter, Final Solution, and Ethnic Cleansing. In Israel today, as in Rwanda, we see the consequences of this type of ‘entertainment’ applied on an industrial scale.

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