

*Man arrested in India for
Facebook appeal to hoist
Palestine flag*

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Yasir Akhtar called on residents in his Saraimeer village to display the flag after the congregational prayers on Friday

New Delhi, May 21 (RHC)-- Police in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh have arrested a Muslim man who had appealed on social media to hoist the Palestinian flag on homes and vehicles in a show of

solidarity against the Israeli offensive on Gaza.

Azamgarh district's senior superintendent of police Sudhir Kumar Singh told Al Jazeera that they have arrested the man, identified as Yasir Akhtar, after he posted a message on his Facebook page, calling residents in his Saraimeer village to display the flag after the congregational prayers on Friday.

"He was running a page and he made the message viral through Facebook that after Friday prayers, people should hoist the flags on their vehicles and homes," Singh said, adding that "the man has been arrested and sent to jail."

Yasir Akhtar who was arrested in Azamgarh [Photo released by Uttar Pradesh police]

"This is a congested area and multiple Muslim sects live here. Making a mass appeal post prayers could have resulted in violence. If he wanted to hoist a flag, he could have but calling others is not right. Many people opposed it, so we had to take action."

While many people in India have expressed their solidarity with the people of Palestine, New Delhi was seen doing a "balancing act" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during an open United Nations Security Council (UNSC) session held in the backdrop of the Gaza bombing on Sunday.

At the session, India, a non-permanent UNSC member, reiterated its "strong support for the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-state solution". TS Tirumurti, India's permanent representative at the UN, condemned the rocket attacks from Gaza but made no direct reference to the disproportionate bombing by Israel on the territory.

"India's policy on the longest-running conflict in the world has gone from being unequivocally pro-Palestine for the first four decades, to a tense balancing act with its three-decade-old friendly ties with Israel," wrote journalist Nirupama Subramanian in The Indian Express on Thursday.

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