

## [Launch of the digital archive "The Long Emergency. Media and Democracy in India"](#)

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The government of India declared a national emergency citing internal instability in June 1975. By June 26th, the day after emergency had been declared, media outlets in the country had received instructions on news that must be censored. Some newspapers ran blank editorials as protests. In the eighteen months that followed, the press censorship rules remained in effect and additional forms of pressure were exerted on the media. These ranged from the withdrawal of state advertisements to income tax raids on media owners and phone calls to journalists conveying “helpful suggestions” about the news they might (or might not) carry. Many journalists were arrested for protesting the emergency, or for holding views that were considered inimical to state authority. Many others supported the emergency as a necessary measure. Most, however, lay low until the emergency was lifted and the media began reporting actively on the news that they had not covered in the years of the emergency, in a burst of “new journalism” that would shine a light on post-emergency abuses of power as well.

The Long Emergency Collection was primarily conceived as a series of oral history interviews documenting journalistic praxis around the time of the Indian emergency (1975-1977). To convey a sense of the “spirit of the times,” the collection also includes a selection of material from this period such as films, cartoons, news clippings, government documents, and court judgements.

The oral histories collected here suggest some of the many ways in which the ‘Long Emergency’ resonates for readers and researchers today: they are clearly shaped by retrospect—the act of recollection and reflection some 40 years after the fact. Many of the narratives unravel the threads that link the political discourse of the past four decades to the events of the 1970s. Some also recall the ‘prehistory’ of conflicts around press freedom in even earlier events.

The Long Emergency Collection seeks to develop the conversation and understanding of this significant but under-examined rupture in modern Indian history. The Emergency is too often dismissed as a straightforward cautionary tale of authoritarian hubris vanquished by righteous democrats. We hope this project will help deepen the discussion of the politics of the 1970s—and the present.

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The Long Emergency Collection is a project of the Merian-Tagore International Centre of Advanced Studies: 'Metamorphoses of the Political in the Long Twentieth Century' ([ICAS:MP](#)), an

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