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**“If Kashmir is occupied by an army, right now India is occupied by a mob,”
says Arundhati Roy**

“If Kashmir is occupied by an army, right now India is occupied by a mob,” said Arundhati Roy, speaking today with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The Indian author of Booker prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things* discussed her literary career and political activism, particularly concerning the current situation in Kashmir.

“Kashmir is a great tragedy.” She said. “The Indian government has locked it down, cut off all communications, about half a million soldiers on the street, and it has dissolved the former state of Jammu and Kashmir - it’s unbelievable what has been done in the last two weeks.

“In India there is an organisation called the RSS, which stands for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. It is a far-right Hindu nationalist organisation, started in 1925 and [Indian Prime Minister Narendra] Modi belongs to it, so do most of his ministers.

“The western world went through fascism, it was dismantled and now it’s coming back. But this organisation has just been coming. It has the ideas of Aryan superiority, it has the sacred texts that claim Hindu supremacy. But it also has the boots on the ground, it also has the myriad organisations, the armed militias. It has penetrated every institution of the Indian state now. We are watching lynchings, we are watching people of particular communities, Muslims, Christians, and of course their big enemies are intellectuals and the left, being targeted.”

The First Minister asked Roy whether it was safe for her to remain in India considering the political violence.

“There’s a lot of people who are standing up to this and all of them are in danger.” She said. “Already there have been journalists assassinated by these right wing vigilante groups. If Kashmir is occupied by an army, right now India is occupied by a mob, by the mob.

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“It would be foolish to not be cautious, and at the same time there is something so enraging about it, about what’s going on, that you just feel like standing your ground as many people are, even though we are pushed to the wall and even though sometimes it feels like that juggernaut is impossible to stall. So there is that sense of, to put it politely, fuck you.”

Speaking about whether there was anything which could be done, she said; “Can anybody help? I doubt it, in some real way. Ultimately the story of fascism is that it dies but what is the price that we will pay as it plays itself out? Is there any ray of hope? There are... many people who understand what is happening but there are many factors that prevent that understanding from becoming a real political resistance. So it’s down to the people to find a way out but it is the people too who are becoming so frightening.

“I don’t want to tell you some fairy tale about hope, I don’t know, it’s terrifying. Let me say many of us just stay awake at night, thinking about it all the time. The danger is clear and present and all the time there.”

Roy was also asked about her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and how she managed to write a book so complex.

“You shouldn’t ever write a novel that you can summarise because then you should just write a summary.” She said. “What is the point of writing something that isn’t a challenge? I can’t think in a simpler way anymore. I really can’t.”