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For some with ties to India, attacks a 9/11 of their own

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Nikishka Iyengar woke up last Wednesday to text messages telling her about the bombing at the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel in Mumbai, India. Frantically, she got up and began calling family and friends to make sure they were OK.

"I broke down," she said. "I mean, it was home."

Iyengar, an economics junior, was born and raised in Mumbai, and her boyfriend lives and works there. Like many Indian students with ties to Mumbai, the financial center of India, the horrific events transpiring thousands of miles away this weekend might as well have occurred around the corner.

"This is our 9/11," Iyengar said.

Reports about terroristic activity at the Taj hotel began to surface at about 11 p.m.

Wednesday night in India, or 11 a.m. Wednesday morning Central Standard Time, when finance junior Narayan Bhargava was flipping through channels and saw reports about the attacks.

He flipped to the Indian News Network and watched as the events unfolded. Terrorists took hostages and went on killing sprees at two five-star hotels, a train station, the police headquarters, a hospital, the popular Leopold Cafe and a handful of other locations.

It was the siege at the Oberoi Hotel that left a friend of Bhargava's family dead.

"One of our very close family friends was eating dinner at the Hotel Oberoi with one of his employees and his consultant when [the terrorists] came in and started opening fire," Bhargava said.

The three were ordered to follow the terrorists, who then shot all three of them. Bhargava's friend and his consultant died, and the employee survived with two gunshot wounds.

"I'm really shocked," Bhargava said. "You don't think it affects you until it does, and then you see the reality of what we see on TV, and the truth really starts to settle in."

Iyengar said she used to frequent the Leopold Cafe.

"That was one of my favorite hangouts," she said. "When I went home, we would always go there, and there were terrorists there that broke down the doors and fired gunshots."

Accounting junior Uren Dhanani said his extended family lives in southern Mumbai, where the attacks took place, and his grandparents live right next to the train station that was peppered with gunfire.

"I was familiar with all of those areas because most of them are historic sites," Dhanani said. "It's pretty terrifying."

Like Dhanani, business sophomore Siddharth Dadhich was lucky not to lose any family or friends but was stunned by the assaults on such familiar turf.

"Stuff like that has been happening [in India] for a long time, but nothing of this scale," Dadhich said. "Some of the places I



Dino Vournas, The Associated Press

Bhavisha Shukla of Cupertino, Calif., stands on the Market Street sidewalk in San Francisco on Sunday during a demonstration against the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India.

had visited when I went to Mumbai are just razed now because of the bombing.”

Early reports show that the three-day standoff left more than 183 killed and hundreds of others injured. Emerging from the tragedy are rubble, wrecked lives and a general sense of anger.

“I’m angry at the government because they haven’t been paying enough attention to national security,” Dhanani said. “The terrorists wanted to shake up the people, and they got what they wanted.”

Iyengar said her outrage is directed more at the Indian political parties, who are finger-pointing and trying to use the atrocities to their advantage.

“The government is playing the blame game,” she said. “This is absolutely disgusting because they’re trying to politicize something horrible that’s happened.”

Iyengar worries that nothing will be accomplished, as Indians have become desensitized by yearly attacks. Much of India’s past terrorism has involved bombings rather than face-to-face attacks.

“We can’t afford to go through something like this again,” she said. “It’s hit people because we’ve actually seen the face of terror, literally.”

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