



March 25, 2021

His Excellency Narendra Modi
Prime Minister
Republic of India
7, Lok Kalyan Marg
New Delhi, India

Dear Prime Minister Modi:

We are writing to you today regarding the continued violence against Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians in Bangladesh and urge you to support the development of secular democracy within the region as you commemorate 50 years of India-Bangladesh relations.

On March 17, 2021, thousands of supporters of the radical group, Hefazat-e-Islam, wielding homemade weapons and sticks attacked the village of Noagaon in Bangladesh. Over 70-80 Hindu homes were vandalized and looted, including many family temples. This violence was in response to an alleged Facebook post by a Hindu man from the village criticizing a Hefazat-e-Islam leader. Police officials have arrested at least 22 suspects, and reports have been filed against the perpetrators, including one against 1,500 “unidentified” people.

Hefazat’s new leader recently demanded that all statues in the country be torn down, all activities by the International Society of Krishna Consciousness be stopped, and that Ahmadiyya Muslims are officially declared “non-Muslims,” amongst other extremist demands.

The March 17 attack was not isolated, but rather part of a larger pattern of systematic violence against minorities in Bangladesh. It also came just days before the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Bengali Hindu Genocide, carried out by the Pakistan army during the Bangladesh War of Independence. During the targeted attacks, between 2-3 million people were systematically killed and 200,000-400,000 women and girls raped, with some 10 million people forced to flee to India. The majority of the victims were Hindus. It was only because of India’s intervention and a thirteen-day war with Pakistan that Bangladesh finally achieved independence and the genocide was stopped.



While we are encouraged by the Government of India's support of Hindus that have fled religious persecution in Bangladesh thanks to the humanitarian Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 we respectfully urge you to take further action to alleviate the dire situation of religious minorities in Bangladesh who look to the secular Republic of India as the only safe haven in the region.

We recommend that the Government of India take the following steps, including but not limited to:

1. Urge Bangladesh to acknowledge and appropriately confront the growing presence and activities of foreign Islamist terror groups, such as ISIS and al Qaeda, as well as Islamist terror groups domestic to Bangladesh such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Hefazat-e-Islam. The Indian subcontinent must work together to identify and eliminate Islamist groups. In order to do that, the rule of law must be enforced in each country, those responsible for anti-minority violence must be prosecuted, and religious minorities must receive the necessary protection from further attacks.
2. Work constructively with the government of Bangladesh to ensure that attacks on Hindus and other minorities cease, past victims of violence are fully rehabilitated, and those responsible for attacks are brought to swift justice. India's officials should be unequivocal in their condemnation of violence in all public statements. In addition, human rights and civil society activists should be supported.
3. Consider employing sanctions against Bangladesh until the country creates and executes a satisfactory response to quell mob attacks and violence against Hindus and other minorities.

We recognize that the continued violence against Hindus in Bangladesh will continue unless there is intervention from the international community. As a leader in the Indian subcontinent, India is well positioned to support Bangladesh in realizing the secular democracy enshrined in its constitution.

As such, we hope the Government of India takes the steps to work with Bangladesh to promote secular democracy and protect its religious minorities, including Hindus.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.



Sincerely,

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CC:

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Ambassador Kenneth Juster
Ambassador Ross Wilson
Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu
External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar