

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION

910 Seventeenth St., Suite 316A

Washington, D.C. 20006

hinduamerican.org | 202.223.8222



October 26, 2020
Ambassador M Shahidul Islam
Embassy of Bangladesh
3510 International Drive NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Re: Mass Violence Against Hindus in Bangladesh

Dear Honorable Ambassador Islam,

We, the undersigned, write to you as an international coalition of faith, advocacy, and community service based organizations and leaders to convey our grave concern with the recent mass violence against Hindus in Bangladesh.

We request your government to provide protection to Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh. According to news reports and human rights activists on the ground in Bangladesh, mass organized violence towards Hindus across the country developed out of a single alleged social media post. The police were slow to respond to the violence as it overtook the country. The arrests of individuals who incited the violence is only the first step in addressing this violence, and much more needs to be done to ensure the safety and security of minorities in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh must invest in international human rights norms regarding protection of religious communities within its borders. The targeted killings, assault, rape, arson of homes, desecration of sacred images and temples, and other forms of physical attack are human rights violations as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Furthermore, Bangladesh has ratified several United Nations treaties which condemn the targeted violence of a religious minority, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states, "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." Bangladesh's obligations under this treaty require action to respect and ensure the rights of Hindus.

The mass violence targeting Hindus follows a long litany of violence targeting Hindus in Bangladesh, including the genocide of Hindus during the Bangladesh Liberation War, in which approximately 3 million people were killed, 200-400,000 were raped, and at least 10 million were displaced. Hindus were particular targets of this violence. Regrettably, these types of occurrences are again becoming increasingly common in Bangladesh and are further marginalizing the already vulnerable Hindu community.

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Consequently, we implore you to press the government to:

1. Increase the police presence in minority areas to prevent violent mobs from targeting Hindu homes, businesses, and temples.
2. Ensure that cases of anti-minority violence are properly registered and investigated by law enforcement, and prosecuted in the courts. In addition, establish witness protection laws to allow witnesses to safely testify in cases of anti-minority violence.
3. Strengthen the National Human Rights Commission to support constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and equal protection and to ensure human rights violations are adequately addressed.
4. Create a separate Minority Rights Commission consistent with the demands of minority rights groups and the promises of the Awami League.

We look forward to your response to this letter and action on the issues outlined above.

Sincerely,

Hindu American Foundation

CC:

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Prime Minister's Office

Old Sangsad Bhaban

Tejgaon

Dhaka-1215,

Bangladesh

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION (Washington, D.C.)

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON) (Potomac, Maryland)

BANGLADESH HINDU BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN UNITY COUNCIL (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

BANGLADESH YOUTH UNITY COUNCIL (Bangladesh)

MUSLIM WOMEN SPEAKERS (Los Angeles, CA)

HUMAN RIGHTS CONGRESS FOR BANGLADESH MINORITIES (Silver Spring, Maryland)

BANGLADESH HINDU CHRISTIAN BUDDHIST UNITY COUNCIL (United Kingdom)

WORLD HINDU FEDERATION - BANGLADESH CHAPTER (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

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PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS' INSTITUTE (Toronto, Canada)
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WORLD HINDU FEDERATION (New Delhi, India)
HINDU COUNCIL UK (London, United Kingdom)
NATIONAL HINDU STUDENTS' FORUM (United Kingdom)
HINDU COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA (Sydney, NSW, Australia)
HINDU HUMAN RIGHTS NZ (New Zealand)
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HINDU JEWISH COALITION (Princeton, NJ)
AMERICANS4HINDUS PAC (San Rafael, CA)
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