

# Hindus for Human Rights

June 16, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As Indian Americans, human rights organizations, and concerned allies, we are writing to urge you to engage publicly and meaningfully to push back against the Indian government's escalating attacks on human rights and democracy, especially ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the United States.

Despite objective evidence that India's democracy is under critical attack, you have not spoken out about this crisis. In early 2023, Indian authorities conducted [retaliatory raids](#) on the BBC's Delhi and Mumbai offices for releasing a documentary about Prime Minister Modi. The week before the Summit for Democracy, the Indian government made three successive attacks on Indian democracy. First, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party [expelled Rahul Gandhi](#) from Parliament. Second, the Indian government [shut the internet down](#) in Punjab, severely impacting the rights for Sikhs to peacefully organize and protest. And third, the Indian Supreme Court [ruled](#) that Indians can be found guilty by association for terrorism. And yet, not one representative from the Biden Administration said anything about even one of these developments. Instead, while [Islamophobic violence gripped India](#) in late March, you [invited Prime Minister Modi to speak](#) at the Summit for Democracy. Mr. Modi visits DC at a time when the state of Manipur [has experienced heavy communal and anti-Christian violence](#) after Modi's ruling party pushed an initiative to undermine Indigenous rights in the state.

Even when confronted with questions by Indian reporters about human rights in India, your administration has only had private [two-way conversations](#) about how both of our governments can always improve. Quite frankly, we find it unacceptable to see such equivocation on Indian democracy from an administration that has been strident in its defense of American democracy and the rule of law.

India is one of the fastest autocratizing nations in the world, mostly thanks to the current government. [Freedom House](#) has rated India as a "Partly Free" country for the past three years, and has blamed Prime Minister Modi's government for a rise in discriminatory policies, including persecution against Muslims and caste-based violence against Dalit and Adivasi communities; harassment of civil society, protestors, academia, and the media; and the targeting of political opponents. It has also rated Indian-Administered Kashmir as "Not Free," citing violations of human, civil, and political rights after the Modi government revoked the territory's autonomous status. In [Reporters Without Borders'](#) press freedom ranking, India has dropped to 161st out of 180 countries in 2023. India has appeared in the [Committee to Protect Journalists'](#) [Impunity Index](#)—which examines accountability for unsolved journalists' murders—every year for the past 15 years, and currently ranks in 11th place worldwide. According to [PEN America's Freedom to Write Index](#), in 2022, India was one of the top 10 countries that jailed writers globally. The [Varieties of](#)

[Democracy Institute](#) characterizes India as an “electoral autocracy” and blames India’s descent into autocracy on Prime Minister Modi. And the [U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) has said India has been one of the top 15 countries at risk for a mass atrocity event every year since 2017, which reflects the toxicity of Indian politics under Modi.

Given the magnitude of this crisis, we ask you to engage directly with Indian-American and human rights civil society leaders to explore solutions to address India’s human rights crisis. We also ask you to employ the tools at your disposal to ensure that the Indian government cannot attack Indians’ human rights with impunity. As the [2022 Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor report details](#), several government individuals have committed human rights violations that, under U.S. law, would qualify them to be sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Act. Indian security forces that have engaged in human rights violations should have security assistance rescinded, under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

Finally, we urge you to publicly call on the Indian government to honor its commitments to human rights, including calling on Prime Minister Modi and his cabinet to halt the use of anti-terror laws to arbitrarily detain political critics. You can publicly denounce the rising numbers of political prisoners and the weaponization of the rule of law in India to shut down criticism. Even if you are not willing to personally criticize the Prime Minister, you have ample opportunity to criticize the Indian government’s misuse of public trust and public institutions to consolidate power and undermine the will of the Indian people.

As President of the United States of America, you hold a unique position to lead the fight against authoritarianism. Prime Minister Modi will listen to you when you speak. But he and his allies will only change if you take a stand publicly. We urge you to listen to those of us who care about India and ensure that one man cannot steal the futures and the rights of our loved ones in India.

Signed:

*Organizations*

12Ummah  
18 Million Rising  
Alliance of South Asians Taking Action  
Aotearoa Alliance Of Progressive Indians  
Asian American Feminist Collective  
Asian Children’s Education Fellowship  
Bangladeshi Americans For Political Progress  
Black Lives Matter of Greater New York  
Canadians Against Oppression And Persecution(CAOP)  
Caribbean Equality Project  
Center for Pluralism  
Center for Security, Race, and Rights  
Chicago Coalition for Human Rights in India  
Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans  
Collective Knowledge Works  
Council on American-Islamic Relations

Council on American-Islamic Relations - Minnesota  
Courtyard Dancers  
Dalit Solidarity Forum  
Democratic Socialists of America, Religion & Socialism Working Group  
Desis Rising Up and Moving  
Engage Action  
Ensaaf  
Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations  
Food Empowerment Project  
Food Sovereignty Alliance, India  
Freedom Road, LLC  
Friends of India - Texas  
GEMS USA  
Global Bahujan Group  
Great Truth  
GreenFaith  
Hindus for Human Rights  
Hindus for Human Rights (Australia-New Zealand)  
Hindus For Human Rights UK  
India Civil Watch International  
Indian American Muslim Council  
Indian Muslim Association of Carolinas  
Insaf Bulletin  
Interfaith Community of Treasure Coast  
International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal  
International Commission for Dalit Rights  
International Council of Indian Muslims  
International Network of Democratic Indians Abroad  
Islamic Education Center of Lexington  
Jewish World Watch  
Justice for All  
Justice For All Canada  
Justice News  
LittleSis / Public Accountability Initiative  
Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK  
MPower Change Action Fund  
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative  
Muslims for Progressive Values  
New York State Council of Churches  
North American Network of Malayali Muslim Associations  
Overseas Friends of Socialist Party of India  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace Action Montgomery  
Polis Project

Queer Crescent  
Religions for Peace USA  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Sikh Coalition  
Social Harmony Federation  
South Asian American Coalition to Renew Democracy  
South Asian Network  
The India Observer  
United Against Racism and Fascism-NYC  
Virginia Muslim Political Action Committee  
World Sikh Parliament

*Individuals*

A Syed  
Aadita Chaudhury  
Abdul Gundru  
Abhi Nimmagadda  
Abusaleh Shariff  
Ajay Kumar  
Alekyia Kumar  
Aliya Karmali  
Amar Shergill  
Amrita Shodhan  
Amritjit Singh  
Anamika Haksar Sahu  
Anand Patwardhan  
Andrew J. Nicholson  
Angana Chatterjee  
Angela Rudert  
Anjalee Dave  
Anjali Enjeti  
Anjum Rafiqi  
Anne Murphy  
Antara Dev Sen  
Aravinda Pillalamarri  
Arjun Singh Sethi  
Ashim Jain  
Ashok Daryani  
Ashwin Rodrigues  
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Ayesha Mehrotra  
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Harsh Mander  
Harsha Ram  
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Helen Muddamalle  
Iden Sheng  
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Joel Lee  
John Clifford Holt  
John Dayal  
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Karan Mahajan  
Karen Gabriel  
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Ketaki Tilak  
Kiran Desai  
Kumar Rao  
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Mohamed Sageer  
Mohammed Siddique Pathan  
Mohan Ambikaipaker  
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Nalini Visvanathan  
Naureen Akhter  
Navina Haykel  
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Nazia Shariff  
Neha Ramu  
Nikhil Mandalaparthi  
Nilita Vachani  
Nirmal Kulkarni

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Prasad Venugopal  
Prasanna Parthasarathi  
Prateek Paul  
Pratip Mandal  
Preeti Chopra  
Premkumar Stephen  
Priya Chacko  
Probeshika Dutta  
Pushkar Sharma  
Quaid Saifee  
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Rabbi David Wirtschafter  
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Rachna Dhingra  
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Rahul Sen  
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Rajeev Kinra  
Raju Rajagopal  
Ram Puniyani  
Rama Melkote  
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