

To, Commissioner Tony Perkins, Chair
Commissioner Gayle Manchin, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Nadine Maenza,
Vice-Chair Commissioner Gary L. Bauer
Commissioner Anurima Bhargava
Commissioner James W. Carr
Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee
Commissioner Sharon Kleinbaum
Commissioner Johnnie Moore

Subject: Put India in Tier 1 of USCIRF's "Countries of Particular Concern" list

Dear USCIRF
Commissioners,

We, the undersigned, are writing to urge you to place India in Tier 1 of your list of "Countries of Particular Concern" in your report for 2019.

For years USCIRF has placed India in Tier 2. However, since 2014 when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party led Mr. Narendra Modi came to power, the violations of human rights and religious freedom of India's religious minorities, especially of Muslims, has worsened at a shockingly alarming pace.

In recent months, since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi won re-election in May 2019, the government's policies have resulted in Muslims facing an existential crisis. Experts agree that India's existence as a secular democracy is now severely at risk.

The brutal crackdown on Kashmir that began on August 5 with the revocation of that state's special status under Article 370 of Indian Constitution has virtually turned the region into the world's largest open prison. Thousands of people, including minors, have been arrested arbitrarily with many placed in faraway prisons in other Indian states.

Last August, fully half a million Muslims were designated as outside the National Register for Citizens in Assam state. These Muslims now face a loss of citizenship and statelessness. They are also marked for lengthy incarcerations in detention centers.

Genocide Watch, an independent body that is widely considered to have expertise in the prediction of genocide in conflict-ridden areas around the world, has issued two separate genocide alerts for the states of Assam and Kashmir. Comparisons to Nazi Germany just before the onset of World War II are not an exaggeration.

Since December, Mr. Modi's Government has ordered brutal police assaults on Muslims, including students, in the national capital of New Delhi to end peaceful democratic protests. These protests were organized by concerned citizens including Muslims, seeking an end to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). In combination with a government program titled "National Register of Citizens (NRC)," the law threatens to render millions of Indians, mainly Muslims and other marginalized communities, stateless within their own country.

Just last week, starting February 24, Mr. Modi's government enabled and provided a cover of impunity to violent Hindu extremist mobs that carried out anti-Muslim violence in Delhi, killing over 43 people, most of them Muslims.

Mr. Modi's Government has also seen attacks on India Christians skyrocket. According to the Evangelical Fellowship of India, the number of violent attacks on India's Christian community have more than doubled, from 147 in 2014 to 328 in 2019.

There is stark and irrefutable evidence that the Indian government as well as governments of states such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka that are ruled by the BJP, have carried out a deliberate pogrom of Muslims by ordering police to torture and shoot them. The police in these states have targeted Muslim children, women and men, jailing hundreds, or stood by while mobs attacked their homes and businesses.

The behavior of Mr. Modi's government is clearly influenced by the Islamophobia long practiced by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the 94-year-old Hindu rightwing organization to which Mr. Modi belongs.

It is no secret that the RSS, whose successive leaders have spoken glowingly of Adolf Hitler and Mussolini and justified the holocaust of the Jews, aims to carry out a genocide of India's 200 million Muslims. The legislation of the CAA and the implementation of the NRC are precursors to this impending genocide.

While USCIRF has recommended that the U.S. Government sanction India's Home Minister Amit Shah for his role in legislating the CAA, we believe the Commission can do more to avert a complete catastrophe and genocide in India. India's continued

placement in Tier 2 of the “countries of particular concern” instead of Tier 1, does not take into account the worsening ground realities in India.

We urge you to consider putting India in Tier 1 of CPC as India’s treatment of its Muslims is one of the most egregious religious freedom violations in the world.

Signed / —