

Statement from Hindus for Human Rights on Delhi Violence of February 2020, Citizenship Laws, and Religious Freedom

March 4, 2020

From: The Board of Directors, Hindus for Human Rights

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We are a US-based progressive Hindu organization, with volunteers who participated in relief work in Delhi following the recent violence. Our advisory board includes notable Indians like Rajmohan Gandhi, T.M.Krishna and Faisal Khan, whose organization Khudai Kidmatgar has been engaged in tireless relief efforts this past week. We know first-hand (our own board member and several advisory board members are in Delhi) that even though both Muslims and Hindus have been affected, much of the violence was perpetrated by Hindutva mobs chanting "Jai Shri Ram" and specifically targeting Muslim neighborhoods, homes and mosques. This past week has been reminiscent of the anti-Sikh pogroms in Delhi in 1984 and the anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat in 2002.

We are deeply concerned about the Citizenship Amendment Act, coupled with the National Register of Citizens, because this combination of citizenship laws has the potential of sparking the disenfranchisement of India's Muslims. Furthermore, India's constitution itself is in jeopardy because the current BJP government, along with the RSS, aim to transform India from a secular democracy to a Hindu nation where minorities could become either stateless or second class citizens.

We are especially horrified because all of this is being perpetrated in the name of our religion. We argue that Hinduism is a religion which is pluralistic at its core, and that Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) is an aberration of Hinduism. We call on Hindus to reject Hindutva and call for peace and democracy.

We are grateful to USCIRF for its strong advocacy for religious freedom in India. We echo USCIRF's demand, "One of the essential duties of any responsible government is to provide

protection and physical security for its citizens, regardless of faith. We urge the Indian government to take serious efforts to protect Muslims and others targeted by mob violence." And as such, we call for USCIRF to add India to Tier 1 on the list of Countries of Particular Concern.

Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR) is a U.S. based non-profit recently formed with the mission of upholding the ideals of multi-religious pluralism in the United States, India, and beyond. We advocate for shanti (peace), nyaya (justice) and the manavtha (human rights) of all communities from a Hindu perspective. Our Vision is lokasamgraha (universal common good) -- a world where there is peace among all people, and our planet is honored and protected.