

To  
The Honourable Prime Minister of Canada  
Mr. Justin Trudeau  
All the Members of Parliament & Senate  
And My Fellow Canadians.

Greetings of Peace.

I was born in Bangalore, South India and I have lived in Canada since January 13, 1968. My children and grandchildren are all Canadian citizens but many of my relatives and extended family members live in India.

I am writing to express my concern regarding India's increasingly oppressive treatment of its minority Muslim community.

As you know, India is the most populous (over 1.3 billion) democracy in the world. It is also a \$2.3 trillion dollar economy and the seventh largest globally. It is obviously in Canada's interests to maintain positive, constructive relations with India.

Those interests must, however, be balanced by Canada's historic and ongoing concerns with respect to international human rights and civil liberties, including the treatment of minorities. India is home to approximately 200 million Muslims. Only Indonesia and Pakistan are home to more.

The challenges faced by India's Muslims have been longstanding. The 2006 Sachar Committee report documented the disproportionate discrimination and victimization that Indian Muslims face on a daily basis. The Committee was a federal, seven-member commission headed by a retired chief justice of the Delhi High Court and appointed by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It found, among other concerns, that Muslim neighbourhoods across India were "easy targets for neglect by municipal and government authorities. Water, sanitation, electricity, schools, public health facilities, banking, ration shops, roads and transportation facilities are all in short supply in these areas."

Since 2014, under the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's Muslims have found themselves in increasingly dire straits. Most recently, the Modi regime has:

- besieged the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir by revoking its historic special status, shutting down the internet, closing schools, jailing local leaders and effectively incarcerating the people of that region;

- implemented a National Register of Citizens (NRC) targeting Muslims in the State of Assam, leading to the proposed establishment of a National Population Register (NPR) which has the potential to render millions of Indian Muslims stateless; and
- passed the Citizenship Amendment Act which specifically targets the Muslim community by using faith as a determining criterion for citizenship.

As many prominent Indians have noted in a letter of protest, “for the first time there is [in India] a statutory attempt to not just privilege peoples from some faiths but at the same time relegate another, Muslims, to second-rate status.”

The Modi government appears to be on a path towards the systematic disenfranchisement and dehumanization of Indian Muslims. Canadian values and basic human decency require us to take reasonable steps to prevent this from happening.

I therefore call on the Canadian government to:

1. Condemn the physical and communication lockdown of Kashmir; seek the release of all political prisoners there with full restoration of freedom of assembly and movement; re-opening of the internet and the withdrawal of the Indian army.
2. Condemn the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that affected Muslims disproportionately in the Indian state of Assam; ensure that the (latest) proposed National Population Register (NPR) has independent oversight to ensure that minorities are treated like all others in the registration process.
3. Demand that the Indian government withdraw the Citizen Amendment Act recently passed by both houses of parliament.

Sincerely,

Nazira Naz Tareen

Founder & First President of  
The Ottawa Muslim Women's Organization.  
613-829-5159