



International Panel of  
Parliamentarians  
for Freedom of Religion  
or Belief

18 February 2020

The Most Honorable Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister of the Republic of India  
Office of the Prime Minister  
New Delhi, India

Dear Prime Minister Modi:

We write to you as a global network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious, and geographical backgrounds, committed to the promotion and protection of the freedom of religion or belief for all. In this capacity, we have engaged with a wide range of leading political leaders to promote religious tolerance and respect for religious minorities—including Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and other religious minority communities facing challenges around the world. We write to you now to offer our sincere congratulations on your recent landmark electoral victory and to respectfully raise our concerns for ongoing developments in India and the implications for freedom of religion or belief.

India, with its vast mosaic of religions and cultures, has a rich history of respecting religious pluralism and protecting this diversity. For these reasons, we have been concerned by reports we have received that recent developments have had a negative impact on the freedom of religion or belief for India's religious minority communities.

The prevalence of mob violence targeting religious minorities in recent years, especially Muslims in the name of cow protection, is particularly worrisome. We applaud your government's formation of a Group of Ministers, led by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, to find ways to combat lynching and various state governments passing new anti-lynching laws to address this serious problem. We request that you provide maximum support to these important initiatives, speak out in support of religious minorities, and express a zero-tolerance position for extrajudicial violence. Moreover, it is critical that you and other Union government officials work closely with state governments across India to ensure that police are proactive in protecting religious minorities and ensuring that perpetrators are quickly brought to justice.

In addition, we wish to express concern that the recent efforts to update the National Register of Citizens in Assam has negatively impacted Bengali Muslims. With 1.9 million names left off of the updated final list, there are fears that this implicitly creates a religious requirement for citizenship, potentially leaving those denied citizenship stateless. While we understand the importance of verifiable citizenship for any nation, we hope that the integrity of this process will not be compromised to unfairly target religious minorities. We request your government to work closely with local authorities to verify that no Indian citizens are disenfranchised simply because of their religious identity.



We also wish to express concern that security measures taken in Kashmir are having a negative impact on religious freedom in the region. These include reports that prohibitions on assemblies led to the cancellation of Muharram processions; restrictions on movement have limited the ability to visit mosques, particularly during Eid celebrations; and the shuttering of mosques with concerns of anti-government activity. While understanding the political difficulty of that situation, measures should be put into place to protect Kashmiris' right to freely practice their religion or belief.

While these kinds of issues are in no way unique to India, we encourage you to take concrete measures to protect religious minority communities and their ability to freely practice their faith, embracing the traditions found within India's great history.

Thank you for taking our concerns and recommendations into consideration. We welcome any discussions on improving freedom of religion or belief in India.

Sincerely,

*The following parliamentarians support this letter in their personal capacity and not as a representative of their government, political party, or any other body.*

<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Current/Former Parliamentarian</b>
Hon. Amadou Camara	The Gambia	Current Parliamentarian
Asiya Nasir	Pakistan	Former Parliamentarian
Anjana Bishankhe	Nepal	Current Parliamentarian
Jamshed Thomas	Pakistan	Current Parliamentarian
Jude Njomo	Kenya	Current Parliamentarian
Pheea Cliff Ntsihlele	Lesotho	Current Parliamentarian
Volker Kauder	Germany	Current Parliamentarian
Bushra Butt	Pakistan	Current Parliamentarian
Antonio De Sa Benevides	Timor Leste	Current Parliamentarian
Kasit Piromya	Thailand	Former Parliamentarian
Mardi Seng	Cambodia	Former Parliamentarian
Cathay Wagantall	Canada	Current Parliamentarian



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Russ Hiebert	Canada	Former Parliamentarian
Meity Magdalena	Indonesia	Former Parliamentarian
Ajough Ngam Honoré	Cameroon	Current Parliamentarian
Angel Alvarado	Venezuela	Current Parliamentarian
David Anderson	Canada	Former Parliamentarian
Nqabayomzi Kwankwa	South Africa	Current Parliamentarian
Solomon Maren Bulus	Nigeria	Current Parliamentarian
Musambya Kabwe Freddy	DR Congo	Current Parliamentarian
Steven Kamsiyamo	Malawi	Current Parliamentarian