



Coalition Against Genocide

Letter to President Obama from India's Parliamentarians demands continuation of Modi visa ban

Coalition welcomes broad consensus on the role of Narendra Modi in continued violations of human rights and religious freedom in Gujarat

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Coalition Against Genocide (CAG), a broad alliance dedicated to justice and accountability for the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, hailed the letters signed by over 60 members from both houses of India's Parliament, calling on President Obama to maintain the ban on a US visa for Mr. Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of the Indian State of Gujarat [1]. The letters, written in November and December 2012, and released to the media today by the Coalition Against Genocide, represent a broad consensus among 15 political parties from across the ideological spectrum that Mr. Narendra Modi is culpable for violations of human rights abuses and religious freedom in Gujarat and should continue to be denied entry to the United States [2].

The letters represent an unprecedented move by MPs from various parties belonging to both houses of Parliament, in writing a candid missive to the US President on gross violations of human rights violations committed within India's borders.

In 2005, in the wake of a campaign spearheaded by the Coalition Against Genocide, Mr. Modi's US visa was revoked and his entry to the US was banned by the State Department, under the provisions of the International Religious Freedom Act, which makes any foreign government official who "*was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom*" ineligible for a visa.

"We wish to respectfully urge you to maintain the current policy of denying Mr. Modi a visa to the United States. Given that legal cases against the culprits including many senior officials in Mr. Modi's administration are still pending in the court of law, any revoking of the ban at this juncture would be seen as a dismissal of the issues concerning Mr. Modi's role in the horrific massacres of 2002," the letter stated. "It would legitimize Mr. Modi's human rights violations and seriously impact the nature of US-India relations by sending a message that the United States values economic interests over and above the universal values of human rights and justice," added the MPs in their joint communique to Mr. Obama.

The letter gains added significance in the light of BJP President Mr. Rajnath Singh's visit to the US, with the intent of lobbying in Washington DC for Mr. Modi's US visa. The party had long maintained that Modi had not applied for a US visa and was not eager to have one.

"The fact that over 60 MPs from 15 political parties across 15 states chose to write a joint letter to President Obama about Narendra Modi's US visa, is a stark reminder that Modi and the divisive ideology he represents continue to be anathema to a cross section of Indians," said Raja Swamy, spokesperson for the Coalition Against Genocide (CAG). "After having long denied any desire on the part of Mr. Modi to acquire a US visa, Mr. Rajnath Singh's visit to the US, to lobby lawmakers here for Modi's visa reeks of hypocrisy," added Mr. Swamy.



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The letter draws the President's attention to the fact that Mr. Modi had engaged in systematic obstruction of justice and failed to even provide rehabilitation to the victims of the 2002 pogrom. The letter also called the conviction of Maya Kodnani, a sitting BJP MLA and then minister in Mr. Modi's cabinet, "a damning indictment of the Modi administration, and proof that the pogrom was planned and executed at the highest levels of the state government. [6]"

The letter also refers to the ban as "consistent with US law and the shared values of the United States and India," and calls on Mr. Obama to "stand in solidarity with the survivors, human rights activists and all those who value justice and freedom of religion."

In a further sign of growing unease over Mr. Modi's ambitions to become prime minister, Nobel Laureate and influential economist Amartya Sen pointed out recently that Mr. Modi's terrible record against religious minorities makes him an unworthy candidate for India's premiership [7].

The Coalition Against Genocide includes a diverse spectrum of organizations and individuals in the United States and Canada that have come together in response to the Gujarat genocide to demand accountability and justice.

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