



Coalition Against Genocide

February 25, 2005

Mr. Chris Matthews
MSNBC, One MSNBC Plaza
Secaucus, NJ 07094

Dear Mr. Matthews,

We at the [Coalition Against Genocide \(CAG\)](#), are writing to request that you cancel your participation in the 2005 Asian American Hotel Owner's Association's (AAHOA) Annual Convention and Trade Show, to be held at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center in Florida on March 24-26, 2005, unless the AAHOA disinvites its chief guest, Mr. Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat in India. Mr. Modi is directly implicated in the massacre of more than 2,000 people and is a member of a violent and bigoted Hindu nationalist organization called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS – National Volunteers Corps) that was inspired by Nazi Germany and the Italian fascist party. Addressing the AAHOA convention along with Mr. Modi will associate your name with a figure and a political party that are the face of religious persecution against Christians and Muslims in India, while giving them legitimacy. We at CAG respectfully ask you to reconsider your decision to appear at the AAHOA convention alongside Mr. Modi.

CAG is a U.S.-based coalition of fourteen bodies including grassroots organizations, human rights advocacy groups and community based NGOs. Our membership is broad based and our members come from diverse religious, ethnic and political backgrounds. We are determined to disallow any kind of legitimation of Mr. Modi in the United States and are demanding justice for the victims of the Gujarat genocide.

In Gujarat, between February 28 and March 30, 2002, under Narendra Modi's leadership, more than 2,000 people, mostly minority Muslims, were killed, aided and abetted by the state. The systematically executed pogrom, also left more than 200,000 people homeless and internally displaced. Today, three years after the event, the victims of the violence still await justice and reparations. Mr. Modi, not only failed to take preventative measures against those who were planning the violence with his knowledge, but undertook a series of actions which either tacitly or explicitly condoned the genocidal violence, which included torture of children and mass rapes of women.

Numerous inquiries and commissions, such as the Indian National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), have condemned the role of the Government of Gujarat headed by Mr. Modi in providing leadership and material support in the politically motivated attacks on minorities in Gujarat in 2002. The European Union, and every major Indian and international human rights organization: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Commonwealth Initiative for Human Rights, Citizen's Initiative, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), have condemned the Gujarat violence, and pointed to the complicity of the Government of Gujarat in the execution of the event.

In the US, the State department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor released a report on International Religious Freedom in 2002, pointing to the culpability of the Government of Gujarat in the violence, its violations of human rights and religious freedoms, and the targeting of other minority groups, such as Christians, following the



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event. Coverage in the Indian and international press, including in the New York Times (July 27, 2002), Washington Post (June 03, 2002), Boston Globe (July 07, 2002), reported the failure of the state machinery in Gujarat. There has been non-partisan support in the United States for human rights in Gujarat. Former President Clinton condemned the events in Gujarat, and Congressman Pitts (R-PA) addressed the United States House of Representatives on June 18, 2002, condemning the premeditated brutality in Gujarat and acknowledging insufficient action on the part of the United States. Mr. Joseph R. Pitts also conveyed that Hindu extremist groups receive some of their funds from charities in the United States and the United Kingdom. Research undertaken by two independent groups, Campaign To Stop Funding Hate and Awaaz, South Asia Watch Limited, have demonstrated as well that Hindu nationalist organizations supporting Mr. Modi in Gujarat are linked to corresponding organizations in the United States, that undertake fund raising to sustain the work of Hindu fundamentalism in India.

Three years later, the Government of Gujarat continues to harass and discriminate against its Christian and Muslim minority populations, tribal peoples and other marginalized groups, as well as progressive activists and intellectuals, with new policies and prejudiced application of existing laws. Under Mr. Modi's leadership, more than 2,000 of 4,000 cases filed by the victims of the violence were never investigated or dismissed, leading the Supreme Court of India to rebuke both the Gujarat judiciary and the Government of Gujarat for its handling of the cases, and transferring several cases out of the state for trial. There are currently two suits filed against Mr. Modi for crimes against humanity and genocide. For these reasons, Mr. Modi is in violation of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and other international laws, and should not be honored, legitimized or otherwise felicitated by any institution or individual of public standing.

The Coalition Against Genocide first wrote to AAHOA asking that they disinvite their chief guest. AAHOA, however, has issued a public statement affirming their invitation to Mr. Modi.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to cancel your participation at the AAHOA convention. The invitation to Mr. Modi is part of an effort by his supporters in the US to rehabilitate his image. We understand that your office may have been entirely unaware of the invitation to Mr. Modi when you were approached by AAHOA. We sincerely hope that you will not be an unwitting party to their plans. At a time when the international community has questioned the commitment of the United States to human rights, it is imperative that government and government affiliated institutions, businesses and the media, and residents and citizens of the United States act affirmatively to demonstrate support for human rights advocacy.

Enclosed, please find a brief appendix that documents some of the relevant information pertaining to Mr. Modi and his political party's involvement with violence against Christians and Muslims in India. Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like further information.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. George Abraham, Non Resident Indians for a Secular and Harmonious India
Prof. Angana Chatterji, Anthropology, California Institute of Integral Studies
Ms. Sapna Gupta, South Asian Progressive Action Collective
Dr. Ashwini Rao, Campaign to Stop Funding Hate
Dr. Shaik Ubaid, Indian Muslim Council