

REP TRENT FRANKS URGES RICE TO BAR MODI FROM ENTERING U.S.

Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ, <http://www.house.gov/franks/>) circulated the letter below to fellow colleagues, urging Congress to call for the denial of a visa for Narendra Modi, Minister of the State of Gujarat, India, for his engagement in severe violations of religious freedom. The letter was later sent to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Dear Madame Secretary:

We are writing to encourage the denial of a visa for Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat, India, in accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)), for his repeated engagement in particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Mr. Modi is the planned chief guest of the 2005 Annual Convention and Trade Show of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to be held on March 24-26, 2005.

Since taking office as Chief Minister of Gujarat on October 7, 2001, Mr. Modi has pursued a campaign of extremism targeting religious minorities. The most egregious violation of religious freedom engaged in by Mr. Modi was the orchestrated attacks in Gujarat, 2002, where approximately 2,000 Muslims were killed. The aftermath of the riots further demonstrates that Mr. Modi and his BJP government are not in compliance with the spirit or the standards of the International Religious Freedom Act. Of particular note is the statement by the Supreme Court of India in 2004 that trials surrounding Gujarat will never be fairly held due to Mr. Modi's state leadership. Furthermore, the investigation into the impetus for the riots! - a train fire that killed dozens, mostly Hindus - found that it was not planned or executed by religiously-motivated Muslims. That conclusion, announced in January 2005, was contrary to what the Gujarat government had widely propagated in order to incite the people, and lends credence to the theory that Mr. Modi's government planned and assisted in the execution of the riots. Mr. Modi's government involvement is also supported by the State Department's 2003 and 2004 International Religious Freedom reports.

The following are just a few examples of Mr. Modi's violations of religious rights over the past 24 months as listed in the 2004 and 2003 reports published by the International Religious Freedom office at the State Department:

2004

The Gujarat State Higher Secondary Board, to which nearly 98 percent of schools in Gujarat belong, requires the use of certain textbooks in which Nazism is condoned. In the Standard 10 social studies textbook, the "charismatic personality" of "Hitler the Supremo" and the "achievements of Nazism" are described at length. The textbook does not acknowledge Nazi extermination policies or concentration camps except for a passing reference to "a policy of opposition towards the Jewish people and [advocacy for] the supremacy of the German race."

2003

During the period covered by this report, the states of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat passed anticonversion laws. Under both laws, those "forcing" or "alluring" people to convert are subject to criminal action. Since that which constitutes forced conversions or allurements is not specified, human rights groups, Christian religious leaders, and Dalits have expressed concern that authorities will use these laws selectively in the future to shut down educational, medical, and other social services provided by Christian groups to Dalits and "tribals".

The Gujarat state government aggressively surveyed Christian families and Christian agencies during the reporting period, allegedly under the orders of Chief Minister Narendra Modi. The survey activities were carried out by police, often in the middle of the night. The survey was first implemented in February and continued through May, even after the Gujarat High Court ruled in March that the survey was illegal.

Madame Secretary Rice, we ask that you do not allow this egregious violator the privilege of entering the United States, in keeping with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. Narendra Modi's planned campaign of religious violence and persecution has been evidenced through his leadership and is due cause for him to be denied a visa.

Representative Trent Frank