

## **Statement of support from Women's Organizations**

We, the undersigned women's organizations, protest the decision of the Asian American Hotel Owner Association (AAHOA) and Association of Indian Americans of North America to felicitate Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat. The Gujarat government under Mr. Modi had actively and covertly encouraged violence against women during the Gujarat pogroms when sexual mutilation and rapes of women and children were used as an ethnic cleansing tool.

In Gujarat, during February 28-March 02, 2002, under Narendra Modi's leadership, more than 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed, aided and abetted by the state. In the aftermath, 200,000 people have been rendered homeless and internally displaced. Mr. Modi's government has not fulfilled its obligations to protect fundamental rights guaranteed in India's constitution or in international treaties to which India is a party. The state machinery under Mr. Modi has encouraged rape and sexual assault by frustrating the victim's attempts at legal redress. Mr. Modi was criticized by the Supreme Court of India as a modern day Nero for his actions during the 2002 massacres and has two cases lodged against him in the State of Gujarat. The former President of India, KR Narayanan, has also asserted that the pogroms were planned by Mr. Modi's BJP Party. The International Initiative for Justice and Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women report on Gujarat criticized the failure of Mr. Modi's government in acknowledging and taking action against the sexual victimization of women from minority communities.

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 rapes and massacres. Women and girls were beaten, thrown into wells, targeted for rape, gang rape, and collective rape, sexually mutilated and burnt. Mobs participated in the severing of women's breasts, the tearing open of women's vaginas and wombs, forcing the abortion of fetuses and their display on spears. The elderly and children, even unborn children, were not spared. In the aftermath of the violence, Mr. Modi ordered that the refugee camps in Gujarat be shut down even as thousands of people had nowhere to go. In a public meeting, he further mocked the victims of the genocide labeling the refugee camps "baby making factories."

The ultra nationalist Hindu formation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to which Mr. Modi pledges allegiance, glorifies Hitler and his genocidal policies, and has been instrumental in terrorizing Christian and Muslim minorities in Gujarat. In the last few years, Gujarat has witnessed burning of churches and intimidation of many non-governmental organizations working in the rural and tribal areas of Gujarat. Under Mr. Modi, Gujarat school text books have been rewritten to exalt Nazism and Fascism.

Propaganda of the RSS and its allies exhort their members to defile, violate, and destroy minority women and girls as they are seen as repositories of Muslim and Christian religion and culture. The State police and task force under Narendra Modi did not provide protection to women and children from rape during the pogroms and in many cases refused to allow them to file reports. Mr. Modi's government has taken no action to rehabilitate or provide medical relief to the victims of sexual violence.

AAHOA's decision to invite and honor Narendra Modi displays an unconscionable tolerance of the misogynist nature of Mr. Modi's BJP party and his Hindutva allies. It lends legitimacy to a man who is in violation of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and other international laws.

We strongly denounce the Association of Indian Americans for North America and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association for dishonoring the victims of the Gujarat pogrom, and insulting the moral dignity of us all. The undersigned organizations support the Coalition Against Genocide's (CAG) campaign to protest Narendra Modi's arrival in US.

Signed,

SAHELI for Asian Families

Narika for South Asian Women

Sakhi for South Asian Women

Sneha (A network for women of South Asian origin)

Manavi (An organization for South Asian women)

Daya Inc. for South Asian Families

Tulane Amnesty International Stop Violence Against Women Committee

March 11, 2005.