



## INDIAN AMERICAN MUSLIM COUNCIL

*Empowerment Through Strategic Advocacy for  
Peace, Pluralism, and Social Justice*

January 30, 2023

Elon Musk  
Chief Executive Officer  
Twitter, Inc. 1355  
Market Street Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Musk,

On behalf of Indian-Americans, I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment at Twitter's anti-free speech decision to block BBC's documentary on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's complicity in the massacre of over 2,000 Muslims in 2002 in India's Gujarat state when he was its chief minister.

It is shocking that while you call yourself a "free speech absolutist,"<sup>1</sup> you have taken this decision that exposes your double standards where Muslim lives don't matter to you and your corporation.

You have said that your aspiration is for Twitter to be an "inclusive arena of free speech." You have described free-speech debates as "a battle for the future of civilization." You said: "If free speech is lost even in America, tyranny is all that lies ahead." You promised not to censor Russian news outlets "unless at gunpoint." And yet, Twitter has complied with the Indian government's request to systematically censor<sup>2</sup> the BBC documentary, "India: The Modi Question," which showcases compelling evidence that Modi was directly responsible for Gujarat's anti-Muslim pogrom.

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<https://www.npr.org/2022/10/08/1127689351/elon-musk-calls-himself-a-free-speech-absolutist-what-could-twitter-look-like-un>

<sup>2</sup> <https://theintercept.com/2023/01/24/twitter-elon-musk-modi-india-bbc/>



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You must come clean and explain to the world why Twitter has employed craven double standards, where Neo-Nazis<sup>3</sup> have the right to speak but not the BBC. To reverse this blatant injustice, we at the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), a Washington DC-based nonprofit organization dedicated to social justice, peace, and pluralism, call on you to immediately restore all Tweets referencing this documentary and refuse all future compliance with media censorship requests from the Indian Government.

Your recent Tweet indicates<sup>4</sup> that your flagrant failure to protect free speech may stem from ignorance. Allow us to get you up to speed.

The recently released BBC Documentary “India: The Modi Question” shares the results<sup>5</sup> of a British government investigation into the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. The investigation found that Modi, who was then Gujarat’s chief minister, was “directly responsible” for the “climate of impunity” that enabled mass violence that had “all the hallmarks of an ethnic cleansing.”

The documentary goes on to quote politicians and senior police officers who met with Modi during the days of the violence, and who all allege that he ordered the police to stand down while Hindu-Supremacist groups killed and raped Muslim victims for three days, destroying 20,000 properties, and forcing 200,000 to flee their homes.<sup>6</sup>

The documentary quotes former Senior officer Sanjiv Bhatt, who testified in India’s Supreme court that Modi ordered the police to let Hindus to carry out retaliatory violence against Muslims<sup>7</sup>, instructing them to stand down and “let Hindus vent their anger.”<sup>8</sup> Modi’s vindictive regime has since arrested and jailed Bhatt. The documentary also quotes Babu Bajrangji, a leader of the Hindu extremist, Modi-supporting group Bajrang

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[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2022/12/19/conspiracy-theorists-homophobes-neo-nazis-ten-accounts-that-embody-twitter-s-change-under-elon-musk\\_6008352\\_8.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2022/12/19/conspiracy-theorists-homophobes-neo-nazis-ten-accounts-that-embody-twitter-s-change-under-elon-musk_6008352_8.html)

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1618319479662055426>

<sup>5</sup> <https://time.com/6249393/the-modi-question-documentary-bbc-india-controversy/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/they-burnt-my-parents-alive-gujarat-riots-still-haunt-victims/>

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Proceed-against-Modi-for-Gujarat-riots-amicus/article12828442.ece>

<sup>8</sup> <https://time.com/4004261/sanjiv-bhatt-police-officer-narendra-modi-gujarat-riots-2002/>



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Dal, who told an undercover reporter on video that the pogrom<sup>9</sup> “was [Modi’s] hand all the way... If he’d told the police to do differently, they would have f\*\*ked us.... they could have... they had full control...” Bajrangi was later convicted for orchestrating the killing of 97 Muslim men, women, and children during the pogrom. He is out on bail and claims Modi intervened no less than three times to change his judge and get him out of jail.

The statements quoted here are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to evidence against Modi’s involvement in the 2002 pogrom. But the Indian Supreme Court has systematically refused to investigate these claims<sup>10</sup> and, more broadly, has deployed authoritarian tactics to control the press, imprisoning journalists<sup>11</sup> on false terrorism charges, raiding news organizations, and censoring critics of its handling of COVID-19.

Considering your question a few days ago — “Why did American media go from questioning the State and ‘speaking truth to power’ to doing their bidding?” — these attacks on media and democracy ought to be of grave concern to you. If you want to uphold your stated principles, I, on behalf of Indian-Americans, demand that you immediately lift this cowardly ban on “India: The Modi Question” and refuse all further requests from the Indian government to censor critical reporting produced both in the country and abroad.

Sincerely,

Rasheed Ahmed  
Executive Director  
Indian American Muslim Council

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<https://maktoobmedia.com/2022/06/27/idea-came-from-modi-himself-what-hindutva-men-said-about-narendra-modis-role-in-gujarat-2002/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/24/india-decade-gujarat-justice-incomplete>

<sup>11</sup> <https://thewire.in/media/cpj-jailed-journalists-india-seven>