



To:

- Honorable Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General of the United States
- Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States
- Honorable Matthew G. Olsen, Assistant Attorney General for National Security
- Honorable Letitia James, Attorney General of New York State
- Honorable Damian Williams, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York
- Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of New York City
- Mr. Christopher Wray, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

**Subject: Request for Investigation into the –**

- (1) Role of the Indian Consulate in New York City for potential violation of Vienna Convention in Promoting Divisive and Islamophobic Activities**
- (2) Possible violation of Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) by the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA); Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA); Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS); and Swaminarayan Temple by failing to register as foreign agents and disclosing their activities in working for the Indian Government and the BJP party**

**Date:** August 17, 2024

Dear Attorney General Garland, Secretary Blinken, Assistant Attorney General Olsen, Attorney General James, United States Attorney Williams, Mayor Adams, and Director Wray,

We, the undersigned members of a multi-faith, multi-racial coalition, write to formally request immediate federal and state investigations into the Consulate General of the Government of India based in New York City for its involvement in bringing a hate-filled, divisive and Islamophobic float to an India Day Parade, scheduled for August 18, 2024, Sunday.

The Indian Consulate's active involvement in this float, that will showcase a controversial Indian temple, and parade likely violates Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations that specifically says foreign missions "have a duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State" and can only conduct their "official business through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs," which would be the US Department of State.

We also request immediate federal and state investigations into possible violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) by several US-based organizations – the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA), the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), and the Siddhivinayak Temple – that are openly working to advance the interests of the Indian Government and India's ruling party, namely, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in bringing this float of the Ram Temple to the parade.

Parading this float will clearly constitute hate speech in the United States because the Ram Temple that the float intends to showcase has for decades been responsible for government-backed mass violence against India's Muslims that has included mass killings, rapes, torture, demolitions, displacement and disappearances.

The Ram Temple is built on the ruins of a historic 16th-century Muslim mosque that was demolished by BJP-led Hindu extremists in 1992. In 2019, the Supreme Court of India ruled that "the destruction of the mosque and the obliteration of the Islamic structure was an egregious violation of the rule of law."

The symbiotic nature of this float with India's ruling party, a foreign entity, is evidenced in the fact that Manoj Tiwari, a BJP Member of Parliament, will be the Guest of Honor at the parade. Mr. Tiwari holds no position in the Government of India.

This float is being organized by the VHPA, which the Bridge Initiative of the Washington, DC-based Georgetown University has called a "Hindu far-right organization and the US offshoot of India's Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)." India's VHP is a known affiliate of India's ruling BJP party. In 2015, the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) World Factbook designated the VHP as a "militant organization."

The publicity material of the parade, which is being organized by the FIA, carries the official logo of the Government of India and names India's Consulate General, indicating the Indian government's clear partnership with the FIA and the VHP.

On July 8, 2024, India's Consul General in New York, Mr. Binaya Pradhan, officially collaborated with the FIA-VHPA to launch the parade's curtain-raiser. At that event, representatives from the VHPA, BAPS, and the Siddhivinayak Temple unveiled their plans for the Ram Temple float.

The violent Ram Temple campaign in India has always been a political Hindu supremacist project central to the BJP's campaign to solidify power in India. The direct involvement of the

Indian Government in promoting such a symbol of hate within the United States strongly indicates potential violations of diplomatic protocol and U.S. laws, especially FARA.

We urge the U.S. Department of Justice, the US Department of State, the New York State Attorney General's Office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to thoroughly investigate the role of the Indian Consulate in New York City in this matter. Furthermore, we request that the FIA, the VHPA, BAPS (which has been reported to be under FBI investigation for labor law violations), and the Siddhivinayak Temple be investigated for possible violations of FARA and other relevant U.S. laws.

As you know, the US Attorney in the Southern District of New York has filed indictments against individuals connected with the Indian Government for the attempted assassination of a US citizen in New York. The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US House Homeland Security Committee and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the US House of Representatives have also held full hearings since December and openly criticized the Government of India for its involvement in this assassination plot. The Washington Post has also reported that a shadowy website attacking US-based Indian American democracy activists is run by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the international spy agency of the Government of India.

New York City has long been a beacon of diversity, inclusivity, and respect for all communities. The participation of a foreign government and US entities in promoting hatred and division within our city through this float is unacceptable and must be addressed with the utmost urgency.

We thank you for your attention to this critical matter and trust that you will take the necessary actions to ensure that such divisive and hateful activities are not tolerated on American soil.

Sincerely,

Indian American Muslim Council  
Black Lives Matter  
Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
Hindus for Human Rights  
New York State Council of Churches  
Sikh Assembly of America  
Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America  
Dalit Solidarity Forum  
Muslims for Progressive Values - NY  
Sadhana  
Muslim Community Network  
Desis Rising Up and Moving  
Sakhi for South Asian Survivors