

September 17, 2024

To

Bruce Blakeman  
Executive, Nassau County  
New York State

Dear Executive Blakeman,

We, the undersigned representatives of diverse faith and community organizations, write to express our deep concern and disappointment over your county's approval for a public event at Uniondale, Long Island, on September 22, 2024, featuring Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

We strongly believe that Prime Minister Modi should not be welcomed in your county due to his documented role in the oppression of religious and social minorities in India and his administration's alarming human rights abuses.

Prime Minister Modi's role in the anti-Muslim pogroms in India's Gujarat state in 2002, which claimed the lives of over 1,000 Muslims under his leadership as Chief Minister, is well-documented and continues to haunt the conscience of those who value human dignity and justice. Similarly, his Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) involvement in the violence against Muslims in Uttar Pradesh in 2013, which left scores dead, is a chilling reminder of the dangers posed by divisive and inflammatory politics.

Since May 2023, the northeastern Indian state of Manipur has witnessed horrific violence against Christians, which has left hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless. The BJP-led state government, operating under Modi's watch, has failed to provide relief or hold accountable those responsible for the killings and destruction of Christian homes and places of worship. As of today, countless families remain in desperate conditions, without adequate government support or intervention.

According to the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), "the Indian government, led by the (BJP), promoted Hindu nationalist policies resulting in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom" and has enabled "an escalating wave of violence, intimidation, and harassment against religious minority communities in India."

The U.S. Department of State's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the International Religious Freedom Report similarly note that the Modi government has presided over a climate where “religious freedom conditions in India have deteriorated,” and government actions have “contributed to an atmosphere of fear and religious intolerance.”

Reports from leading human rights organizations highlight the Modi administration's oppressive tactics and disregard for fundamental freedoms. Human Rights Watch has reported that “the Indian government’s crackdown on dissent, discriminatory policies against Muslims, and the silencing of activists and critics are steadily chipping away at the country’s constitutional commitment to human rights.”

Amnesty International has criticized Modi's administration for creating “a pervasive climate of fear in which dissent is effectively suppressed,” and religious and social minorities face increasing persecution. Freedom House, a Washington, DC-based research organization, has downgraded India’s democracy from “Free” to “Partly Free,” noting that the Modi administration has systematically eroded democratic norms and freedoms, describing India as experiencing “a multiyear pattern of regression in political rights and civil liberties.”

The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders have condemned the Modi government’s “tightening grip on the media, which has led to a decline in press freedom and an increase in self-censorship,” severely undermining India's democratic framework.

The Modi administration's assault on human rights extends to its treatment of human rights defenders. Prominent activists such as Umar Khalid, a Muslim student leader and scholar, remain unjustly imprisoned on politically motivated charges for speaking out against discriminatory policies. Other Muslim activists, including Khalid Saifi and Sharjeel Imam, have been similarly targeted and jailed under draconian anti-terror laws without credible evidence, highlighting the Modi government's relentless persecution of those who challenge its authoritarian rule.

The tragic case of Father Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, exemplifies the cruelty of this administration. Detained on baseless charges, Father Stan Swamy was denied basic medical care and the use of a simple sipper cup for his Parkinson's disease, leading to his death in custody—a death that can only be described as state-sanctioned murder.

Furthermore, the Modi regime has been implicated in transnational repression, including an attempt by India's spy agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), to assassinate a Sikh American citizen on U.S. soil. This brazen act of violence against a U.S. citizen is part of a broader pattern of intimidation and harassment against members of the Sikh, Muslim, Christian, and other minority communities both within India and abroad, as noted in condemnations by the U.S. government and Congress.

Prime Minister Modi and his ideology represent a direct threat to the values of equality, justice, and freedom that New York state and Nassau County embody. Allowing him a platform here would not only contradict the principles of Nassau County but also send a dangerous message that the county and the New York State are willing to overlook serious human rights violations and the spread of hateful, divisive rhetoric.

We ask you to unequivocally condemn this event and the participation of Mr. Modi in it and also announce that you will not yourself, nor any official from the county, attend it.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your positive response and hope that Nassau County will remain a beacon of hope and justice for all.

Sincerely,  
Indian American Muslim Council