

Ambassador Krishan Kumar
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Your Excellency,

I would like to congratulate you for the achievements in the legislative elections. The strength and vitality of Indian democracy is proven again. However, with great power comes even greater responsibility.

Your Excellency, I am concerned about the upsurge in religious intolerance against religious minorities in India. As documented by civil society reports, vigilante attacks against religious minorities, particularly Christians and Muslims, are increasing. Hate Crime Watch documented 254 reported incidents of crimes targeting religious minorities between January 2009 and October 2018. About 90 percent of these attacks happened after 2014, and they resulted in at least 91 persons being killed and 579 injured. Muslims were victims in 62 percent of the cases and Christians in 14 percent. These include communal clashes, attacks on inter-faith couples, and violence related to cow protection and religious conversions. According to a recent report by Open Doors the number of reported instances of religious persecution against Christians increased more than four times between 2014 and 2017. In the first three months of 2018, more incidents were reported than throughout the whole of 2014 or 2015.

At the same time, attacks against minorities are largely carried out with impunity. At times, the authorities will side with the perpetrators of religious freedom violations, making it difficult for the survivors to receive help and claim their rights. There are also reports of police perpetrating and exacerbating incidents. In a number of cases concerning vigilante attacks against alleged cow slaughter, police have filed complaints against victims' family members and associates under laws banning cow slaughter. Police have also arrested members of religious minorities for "religious expression".

I understand that India has a rich tradition and legal framework supporting the freedom of religion or belief. Indeed, the right to freedom of religion or belief for all Indians is guaranteed by the Constitution of India and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a party. Accordingly, all Indians have the right to freely adopt and change their religion, thought and conscience. They also have the right to practice and express their faith peacefully, publicly or privately, alone or with others.

I humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- the Indian authorities implement the Supreme Court's directive for "preventive, remedial, and punitive" measures to address lynching;
- minority groups' right to practice freedom of religion or belief is respected and upheld by the authorities at every level and in all states of India; and
- perpetrators of violence against religious minorities are brought to justice.

I thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your home country.

Yours sincerely,