

23 July 2019

To,
Shri Narendra Damodar Modi
Honourable Prime Minister of India

Dear Prime Minister,

We, as peace loving and proud Indians, are deeply concerned about a number of tragic events that have been happening in recent times in our beloved country.

Our Constitution describes India as a secular socialist democratic republic where citizens of all religions, ethnicities, gender and castes are equal. Hence, to ensure that every citizen enjoys the rights given to her/him by the constitution, our submission is:

1. The lynching of Muslims, Dalits and other minorities must be stopped immediately. We were shocked to learn from the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) reports that there have been no less than 840 instances of atrocities against Dalits in the year 2016, and a definite decline in the percentage of convictions.

Further, 254 religious identity-based hate crimes were reported between January 1, 2009, and October 29, 2018, where at least 91 persons were killed and 579 were injured (FactChecker. indatabase (October 30, 2018). The Citizen's Religious Hate-Crime Watch recorded that Muslims, (14% of India's population) were the victims in 62% of cases, and Christians (2% of the

population), in 14% of cases. About 90% of these attacks were reported after May 2014, when your government assumed power nationally.

You have criticized such lynchings in Parliament Mr. Prime Minister, but that is not enough! What action has actually been taken against the perpetrators? We strongly feel that such offences should be declared non-bailable, and that exemplary punishment should be meted out swiftly and surely. If life imprisonment without parole can be the sentence in cases of murder, why not for lynchings, which are even more heinous? No citizen should have to live in fear in his/her own country!

Regrettably "Jai Shri Ram" has become a provocative 'war-cry' today that leads to law and order problems, and many lynchings take place in its name. It is shocking that so much violence should be perpetrated in the name of religion! These are not the Middle Ages! The name of Ram is sacred to many in the majority community of India. As the highest Executive of this country, you must put a stop to the name of Ram being defiled in this manner.

2. There is no democracy without dissent. People should not be branded 'anti-national' or 'urban Naxal' and incarcerated because of dissent against the government. Article 19 of the Constitution of India protects freedom of speech and expression of which dissent is an integral part.

Criticising the ruling party does not imply criticising the nation. No ruling party is

synonymous with the country where it is in power. It is only one of the political parties of that country. Hence anti-government stands cannot be equated with anti-national sentiments. An open environment where dissent is not crushed, only makes for a stronger nation.

We hope our suggestions will be taken in the spirit that they are meant - as Indians genuinely concerned with, and anxious about, the fate of our nation.

With best regards,
Yours sincerely

Aditi Basu (Social Worker)
Adoor Gopalakrishnan (Filmmaker)
Amit Chaudhury (Author)
Anjan Dutt (Filmmaker, Actor)
Anupam Roy (Singer-Songwriter, Music Director)
Anuradha Kapoor (Social Activist)
Anurag Kashyap (Filmmaker)
Aparna Sen (Filmmaker, Actor)
Asha Achy Joseph (Academic, Film Maker)
Ashis Nandy (Scholar, Sociologist)
Baisakhi Ghosh (Floral Designer, Artist)
Binayak Sen (Physician, Social Activist)
Bolan Gangopadhyay (Social Activist, journalist)
Bonani Kakkar (Environmentalist, Founder – PUBLIC)
Chitra Sirkar (Designer)
Darshan Shah (Founder, Weavers Studio)
Debal Sen (Cardiologist)
Goutam Ghose (Filmmaker)
Iftekhar Ahsan (Founder CEO, Calcutta Walks/ Calcutta Bungalow)
Jayasri Burman (Artist)
Joya Mitra (Environmentalist, Author)
Kani Kusruti (Actor)

Kaushik Sen (Film and Theatre personality)
Ketan Mehta (Filmmaker)
Konkona Sensharma (Filmmaker, Actor)
Mani Ratnam (Filmmaker)
Mudar Patherya (Citizen)
Narayan Sinha (Sculptor)
Naveen Kishore (Publisher, Seagull Publications)
Parambrata Chattopadhyay (Filmmaker, Actor)
Partha Chatterjee (Historian, Social Scientist)
Piya Chakraborty (Researcher)
Pradeep Kakkar (Founder, PUBLIC)
Ramchandra Guha (Historian)
Ratnaboli Ray (Mental health activist)
Revathy Asha (Filmmaker, Actor)
Riddhi Sen (Actor)
Rupam Islam (Singer-Songwriter, Musician)
Rupsha Dasgupta (Director, Kolkata Sukriti Foundation)
Sakti Roy Chowdhury (Professor of Sanskrit, Theatre personality)
Samik Banerjee (Scholar, Film & Theatre Critic)
Shivaji Basu (Surgeon, Urologist)
Shubha Mudgal (Singer, Musician)
Shyam Benegal (Filmmaker)
Soumitra Chatterjee (Actor)
Suman Ghosh (Filmmaker)
Sumit Sarkar (Historian)
Tanika Sarkar (Historian)
Tapas Roychaudhury (Cardiac Surgeon)