

Hindus in South Asia and the Diaspora: A Survey of Human Rights 2005

Executive Summary

The human rights of Hindu citizens are consistently violated in five regions where Hindus constitute a minority: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Pakistan, and the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Highlights

- Hindus, one billion strong, are the third largest religious group in the world.
- Hinduism is one of the oldest surviving religions and its origins can be traced back to at least the third millennium BCE.
- Hindus are liberal in their beliefs about the myriad means of worship and prayer available to human beings to seek spiritual enlightenment.
- Even in their homeland, Hindus have been targets of attack by aggressive proselytizing followers of other religions.

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

- Hindus have an ancient history in Afghanistan with ties back to the Vedic age (anywhere between 7000 BCE and 1000 BCE).
- Today, Hindus do not send their children to public schools due to fear of persecution or ridicule.
- Governments of several nations where Afghan Hindus live in exile are exerting pressure on the refugees to return to Afghanistan despite the continued violence toward and persecution of Hindus.

Recommendations

- The United States should pressure the German government to desist from involuntary deportation of Hindus from Germany to Afghanistan.
- India should decrease the application fee for naturalization to its original rate of 2,100 rupees (US\$49), particularly for Afghan Hindu refugees.

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People's Republic of Bangladesh

- In 1947, Hindus constituted nearly 30% of Bangladesh's population.
- By 1991, 20 million Hindus were "missing" from Bangladesh.
- Today, they are less than 10% of the population.
- Hindus of Bangladesh continue to be victims of the low intensity war waged by Islamic fundamentalists.
- This low intensity violence includes daily acts of murder, rape, kidnappings, temple destruction, and physical intimidation.
- Human rights activists and journalists are continuously harassed and abused in Bangladesh.
- Nearly 500 acts of murder, rape, kidnappings, temple destruction, and land grab targeting Hindus in the twelve month period have been recorded in this report.
- The data regarding attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh during the month of December 2005 is not available at the time of completing this report. It will be included later in an addendum.

Recommendations

- Bangladesh should demand immediate cessation of attacks against Hindus and protect Hindus' human rights.
- Bangladesh should repeal the anti-minority and racist laws such as the vested property legislation.
- Bangladesh should set up a Human Rights Commission and/or a Minorities Commission to monitor the human rights situation and to provide redress to minority grievances.
- The United States should demand accountability from the Bangladesh Government, and all aid to Bangladesh should be contingent on the improvement of the human rights situation.

Republic of the Fiji Islands

- In Fiji, Hindus constitute approximately 38% of the Christian majority population and have lived in Fiji for over 200 years.
- Fijian Hindus continue to face a barrage of anti-Hindu speeches and criticism.
- Several dozen Hindu temples were desecrated, destroyed by arson or looted with continuing reports arriving monthly.



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- The Methodist Church of Fiji repeatedly calls for the creation of a Christian State and has endorsed forceful conversions of Hindus during a previous coup d'état against a Hindu leader in 1987. Many Fijian Methodist leaders today perpetuate hate and intolerance against Hindus on the island.

Recommendations

- Fiji should stop granting preferential treatment to members of the Christian community.
- Fiji should repeal the “Truth and Reconciliation” (TRC) Bill and successfully prosecute and punish the criminals of the 2000 coup.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

- In 1947, Hindus were approximately 25% of the population of Pakistan.
- Now Hindus constitute less than 1.6% of the population.
- Pakistan officially discriminates against non-Muslims through a variety of laws and strictures, and Hindus are targets of kidnappings, rape, and intimidation.
- On March 24, 2005, Pakistan restored the discriminatory practice of mandating the mention of religious identity of individuals in all new passports.
- An alarming trend in Pakistan is that of Muslims kidnapping Hindu girls, forcing their stay in madrassas or religious schools, and then coercing their conversion to Islam.
- Hindus continue to be targeted in Balochistan, and more than 5,000 Hindus have been forced to flee.

Recommendations

- Pakistan should remove all blasphemy laws. Those imprisoned under blasphemy laws should get their day in court within a period of two weeks. Long imprisonments without court appraisal constitute human rights abuse.
- Pakistan should reverse the March 24, 2005 decision to mandate religious identification in passports
- Pakistan should set up a Human Rights Commission and/or a National Minorities Commission to monitor the human rights condition and to enable minorities to enjoy the rights provided to the majority population.



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- The United States should demand that Pakistan stop aiding all groups who seek to resolve the Kashmir dispute through violent means. Any aid to Pakistan should be contingent on Pakistan's acceptance of a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir

- Jammu and Kashmir is a state in India that has been claimed by Pakistan since 1947.
- The Maharaja of Kashmir ceded his kingdom to India in 1947 when Pakistan invaded Kashmir in order to conquer the kingdom. Pakistan occupies about one-third of the region, and India governs about two-thirds.
- India and Pakistan have fought major wars over Kashmir.
- Since the mid to late 1980s, Islamist terrorists from Pakistan and Afghanistan have targeted Kashmir in a jihadi insurgency that continues today with several massacres of Hindu citizens of the state.
- The 300,000 Kashmiri Hindus are refugees in their own country, sheltered in temporary camps near New Delhi, Jammu and elsewhere.

Recommendations

- Kashmiri Hindus should be allowed to return to their homes, and their human rights and lives must be protected by the Indian central government and the Jammu and Kashmir state government without interference from Pakistani terrorists.

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