

USA: Rep. Tulsi Gabbard and extreme right hate groups in India and the USA

Wednesday 26 September 2018, by [India Civil Watch](#) (Date first published: 5 August 2018).

We would like to bring to your attention the horrific nature of the hate groups organizing the World Hindu Congress (WHC), and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard's ties with these organizations. Our hope is that you, and other progressive voices persuade Tulsi Gabbard to not only withdraw from the WHC, but also to issue a public statement that she will not associate with such groups in the future. We feel strongly that such a statement is necessary given this video in which Gabbard states that she is honored to be the chair of WHC thus lending legitimacy, as a U.S. Congressperson, to the hate groups organizing the WHC.

What is the WHC?

The second World Hindu Congress is being organized in Chicago, September 7-9. The stated purpose of WHC 2018 is: "The World Hindu Congress (WHC) is a global platform for Hindus to connect, share ideas, inspire one another, and impact the common good". Officially, the World Hindu Congress is being organized by the World Hindu Foundation (based in Gurgaon, India). But going through the names of WHC's Organizing Council, it becomes amply clear that the real organization behind the event is Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (World Hindu Council of America, [VHPA](#)), along with the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh or HSS, the official U.S. arm of India's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS. The coordinator of WHC 2018, Dr. Abhaya Asthana, is also the president of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), and Dr. Shamkant Sheth, the official conference host is also the president of VHPA's Chicago chapter, while Mr. Shailesh Rajput, secretary of VHPA-Chicago, is listed on the WHC website as the main contact for the conference, with all queries being directed to . Further, Mr. Sanjay Kaul, a VHPA operative, is WHC's East USA coordinator, while Mr. Darshan Soni and Mr. Moulik Shukla, WHC coordinators for Central and Western USA, respectively, are both members of the HSS.

VHP-A is the American arm of the nefarious Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organization whose role in various incidents of communal violence in India is very well [documented](#). VHP is also officially [classified](#) as a "militant religious organization" by the U.S. administration.

Why should progressives oppose the WHC?

The VHP and its sister organizations, the RSS and Bajrang Dal are part of the Sangh Parivar, a network of Hindu nationalist organizations. They have a long track record of intimidation of minorities, incitement of hatred and violence, and are linked to many acts of terror in India which have been documented by the Indian and international media, as well as Indian and international human rights organizations such as [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), etc. The political party BJP is the political wing of the Sangh Parivar. Since the BJP came to power in India in 2014, there have been 100+ [mob lynchings](#) of minorities, including members of Dalit and indigenous communities, by these extremist organizations under the guise of "[cow protection](#)". In most of these instances, the [perpetrators are roaming free](#) while the victims, if they survive the lynchings, are being harassed with trumped-up cases for consuming or transporting beef. Elected officials from the BJP have been fostering this environment of hatred- in a recent instance of such [brazen endorsement of this violence](#), a cabinet minister of the BJP was photographed garlanding 8 people convicted of lynching a muslim man when they were released on bail a year after the incident. In fact, this endorsement of violence goes all the way up to the prime minister- Mr. Modi has continued to follow individuals on social media that celebrated [the murder of an investigative journalist](#), even after that fact was reported and debated in mainstream media.

Many of the attendees of the WHC are elected officials from the BJP that either directly engage in hate speech or have silently endorsed hate speech [inciting people to kill and rape minorities](#). Many instances of such hate speech have been captured on video. For instance, one of the invitees, Ajay Singh Bisht, known

as [Yogi Adityanath](#), who is the chief minister of most populous state in India, has many cases pending against him, including for murder and hate speech, and is also the founder of Hindu Yuva Vahini, a vigilante organization. Another attendee, Mohan Bhagwat, is the head of the RSS, an organization that was banned multiple times in India for its involvement in violent communal riots. The [perpetrators](#) of many [terrorist attacks](#) on minorities in India are either current or former operatives of the RSS. In fact, one of the masterminds of these attacks [confessed](#) that WHC speaker, Mohan Bhagwat, directly ordered some of these attacks.

How is Rep. Tulsi Gabbard associated with the Hindu Right?

- Rep. Gabbard participated, in multiple instances, in events organized by the Sangh Parivar in the U.S. :
 - Among others, she attended an 'Overseas Friends of BJP' (OFBJP) [conference](#) in Atlanta on 22nd August 2014, and was photographed wearing a BJP sash.
 - In this [video](#) of her speech at the event, she admits that she is in touch on a "if not daily basis, a weekly basis" with HAF [0:52]. She also admits that she attended another event with the same group an year earlier [0:05].
 - In the same video, she congratulates the audience for their efforts to get the BJP elected
 - Another [video](#) of the same OFBJP conference, in which Dhiru Shah of the HAF encourages the audience to donate to Tulsi Gabbard's campaign because they need her support [at 1:00].
- [Attended](#) and spoke at the World Hindu Economic Forum in Irvine, CA in November, 2016
- Criticised the testimonial that the vice-Chair of U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, Katrina Lantos, offered to Tom Lantos' Human Rights Commission regarding the impact of the BJP government on minority rights in India.
- In December 2013, prior to Modi's election, Gabbard opposed [HR 417](#), which praised India's "rich religious diversity and commitment to tolerance and equality" but reaffirmed "the need to protect am the rights and freedoms of religious minorities," specifically referring to incidents of deadly violence against minority Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002, when Modi was the state's chief minister.
- Attended and spoke at World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)'s Diwali celebration in Atlanta in 2013.

What are our demands?

We believe that an elected representative of the U.S. congress like Tulsi Gabbard getting involved with an event organized and attended by such extremist individuals will lend legitimacy to these despicable organizations. Therefore, we demand that

1. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard should not attend the WHC.
2. Tulsi Gabbard should issue a public statement clarifying that she will not be attending the WHC.
3. Politicians and media outlets should hold Tulsi Gabbard accountable for her association with these hate groups.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to the concerns raised above.

Sincerely,

(Endorsing Organizations):

Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, San Francisco, CA [asata.org](#)

Ambedkar King Study Circle, San Jose, CA [akscusa.org](#)

Chicago Desi Youth Rising (CDYR), Chicago, IL [chicagodesiyouthrising.wordpress.com/](#)

Chicago South Asians for Justice, Chicago, IL

India Civil Watch, New York, NY

Indian-American Muslim Council, Boston, MA [iamc.com/](#)

Organization For Minorities of India [ofmi.org](#)

Periyar Ambedkar Study Circle- America, San Jose, CA [pascamerica.org](#)

Sadhana: A Coalition of Progressive Hindus, New York, NY [sadhana.org/](#)

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