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India: The Ram Temple Inauguration sets a dangerous precedent for minorities in India

Sunday 4 February 2024, by [Indian diaspora groups](#) (Date first published: 22 January 2024).

Montreal. January 22, 2024. Over 20 Indian diaspora groups in the UK, USA, Australia, France, Canada issue a joint statement on concerns regarding Ram mandir inauguration.

Joint Statement

Indian civil society organizations are extremely concerned about the dangerous precedent set by the inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to mark the beginning of India's general elections, taking place in April – May 2024. This is clearly the beginning of the BJP's election campaign. Taking place four days before Republic Day, it is also an attempt to sideline and replace India's secular Constitution which was drafted by Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

The Ram Temple has been built on the ruins of the 16th century Babri Masjid Mosque, destroyed by Hindu supremacists in 1992. In 2019, the Indian Supreme Court ruled [1] in favour of Hindu supremacists' claim to the land to authorize the construction of the temple, despite deeming the destruction of Babri Masjid Mosque as a criminal act. The ruling did not go as far as to condemn the cultural erasure of a historic Muslim site, however, nor did it seek to address the subsequent violent communal clashes in the country arising from its destruction.

The planned 'consecration' of the temple by Prime Minister Modi and other members of the ruling BJP party and RSS stalwarts is a signal that India has moved to the brink of implementing the long-term RSS goals of making India a Hindu Rashtra (State) and replacing the Constitution with the Manusmriti, a violently Brahminical, anti-Dalit and patriarchal ancient Hindu text. It also, of course, makes it clear that Hindutva will be front and centre of the BJP's election campaign.

This is happening against a backdrop of a horrifying escalation in discrimination and violence against religious minorities, particularly Muslims, and is against the secular fabric of the country and its Constitution.

The BJP party under Modi's leadership has been actively seeking to erase traces of Muslim heritage in India, for example, through the revision of school textbooks and by rewriting history as told in popular media, and in public and political spheres. This is in a bid to present the minority community as alien and the Other, without any ties to India as construed by Hindu supremacist ideology.

The appropriation of Muslim religious sites, such as the Babri Masjid Mosque, is one of the tools in the Hindu nationalist arsenal. The Supreme Court's verdict on the Babri Masjid Mosque in 2019 has given rise to similar claims [2] and well-planned campaigns by Hindu supremacists against Muslim places of worship elsewhere in India. In Mathura city in Uttar Pradesh, a lawsuit is pending to determine whether the location of the Shahi Idgah mosque is the birthplace of Hindu God Krishna. In Varanasi, also in Uttar Pradesh, the Gyanwapi mosque is similarly being claimed by Hindu groups aligned to the ruling BJP party. By entertaining legal claims to these historical mosques, courts including the Uttar Pradesh High Court have enabled these acts of appropriation. India's Supreme Court has itself opened the doors to legal challenges to the Places of Worship Act 1992 [3], which sought to protect the religious character of historical buildings after the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque.

As India prepares for the upcoming General Election, the inauguration of the Ram Temple – on land where the Babri Masjid mosque once stood – is a potent symbol of BJP's disregard for the right to exist for religious minorities in India's public sphere, and to exert their right to freedom of belief. It also cements a dangerous precedent [4] already set in motion, further appropriating minorities' cultural and religious heritage, and taking away their rights [5] as Indian citizens.

As the Indian Republic enters its 75th year, we in the diaspora stand with all of those in India who are bravely resisting the Modi regime's murderous and dehumanising offensive against Muslims, Christians, Dalits and other minorities, its virulent casteism and misogyny, its persecution of dissenters, and its attempts to replace or undermine the secular Constitution.

Signatories:

South Asia Solidarity Group
South Asia Justice Campaign
Uniting Ummah of Australia Organisation
Indian American Muslim Council
Hindus for Human Rights - UK
Alliance Against Islamophobia . Australia
Strive UK
Anand Shakya, Maharashtra Officer Forum, Nagpur
UK Indian Muslim Council
Indian Alliance Paris, France
India Civil Watch International, North America
Periyar Ambedkar Thoughts Circle of Australia. (PATCA). Australia.
Melbourne Grand Mosque
Asim Jaleel - Craigieburn Masjid and Community Centre
Muslim Collective, Australia
Peace in India (UK)
Scottish Indians For Justice
South Asian Diaspora Action Collective (SADAC)
Women Against Caste
India Labour Solidarity (UK)
International Solidarity for Academic Freedom in India (InSAF India)
Coalition Against Fascism in India
The Rights Collective (UK)
CERAS (South Asia Forum)

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Source:

South Asian Diaspora Action Collective (SADAC) & CERAS (South Asia Forum)

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[1] <https://www.thehindu.com/.../ayodhya.../article61621466.ece>

[2] <https://thewire.in/.../ayodhya-mathura-varanasi-why-the...>

[3] <https://thewire.in/.../why-the-places-of-worship-act-must...>

[4] <https://caravanmagazine.in/.../hindu-mahasabha-ayodhya...>

[5] <https://thewire.in/.../delirium-over-ram-mandir-a-nation...>



Image : demolition of Babri Masjid, 1992

<https://countercurrents.org/.../the-conspiracy-behind...>

Collective

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SADAC - South Asian Diaspora Action Collective

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