

September 17, 2019

Mr. Bill Gates and Mrs. Melinda Gates  
Co-Chairs  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
PO Box 23350  
Seattle, WA 98102

**RE: Request to Rescind Award Offer to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Citing Human Rights Abuses**

Dear Bill and Melinda Gates:

We, the undersigned 52 state, national and international organizations, write to request that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation not award its premier Global Goalkeeper Award to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at your Goalkeepers event this month. We furthermore express our serious concern that you would offer this award to Modi given his government's well-documented human rights abuses targeting minority Muslim, Dalit, and Christian communities, as well as its recent and [illegal](#) revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, stripping the state of Jammu and Kashmir of its protected status, and laying siege to its eight million residents.

While it is praiseworthy for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to recognize the positive impact India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan sanitation campaign has had in eliminating open defecation by constructing 90,000,000 toilets and adopting other community-based approaches, you cannot in good conscience bestow an award on Prime Minister Modi while he oversees a brutal military campaign of collective punishment in the Kashmir Valley that includes:

- Revocation of the region's protected status;
- A near-constant curfew leading to an urgent humanitarian crisis of severe shortage of food and lifesaving medications;
- The forced unwarranted detention of some 4,000 elected Kashmiri political leaders, business leaders, civil society members, and rights activists in secret jails by Indian forces, including mass arrest and beatings of children and widespread torture of detainees;
- Gross human rights abuses of Kashmiri residents by Indian security forces in the Kashmir Valley;
- A halt on the publication of all local news and prevention of international journalists from entering the Kashmir Valley; and,
- A continued communications and internet blackout of Kashmir.

In August, the Indian government illegally revoked Article 370 of the constitution, taking away the protected status of the Indian-controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir. The legal maneuvering that led to the revocation of Article 370 has been widely panned by legal experts as unconstitutional and a complaint has already been filed in the Indian Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the revocation. The Indian government's mobilization of more than [50,000](#) additional military personnel to the existing 700,000 stationed troops in the region has also made it the most militarized region of the world.

Since revoking Article 370, India's military has maintained a continued communications and internet blackout of Kashmir, [forcibly detained](#) some [4,000](#) elected Kashmiri political leaders, business leaders,

civil society members, and rights activists in secret jails, and levied a near-constant curfew on the region's 8 million residents. There are widespread reports of [torture](#) of detainees. Indian security forces have also arrested [children](#) and kept their whereabouts secret from their parents.

The siege has led to an urgent and grave humanitarian crisis in which residents are facing a serious [shortage](#) of food and other life essentials. The Kashmir Valley has now [run out](#) of lifesaving medications, turning "hospitals into graveyards."

The Modi-led Indian government continues to shut down all local media and is not allowing any international journalists to enter the Kashmir Valley. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the news from the Kashmir Valley is smuggled out on flash drives that are then published in international media. The United Nations' Human Rights Council has called the blackouts a "form of [collective punishment](#)" lacking "even a pretext of a precipitating offense."

You should also be seriously concerned that under Modi's leadership, the Indian state of Assam has [stripped](#) 1.9 million Bengali-speaking Muslims of their citizenship and is constructing prison camps to detain these now stateless people. The Indian government has now expelled all international journalists from the State of Assam. Prime Minister Modi's [plan](#) to open similar detention centers across India is causing widespread fear and panic in the Indian Muslim community.

Modi's government has tried to pass a [new citizenship bill](#) in the Indian Parliament that would create a pathway to citizenship for migrants from neighboring countries that are Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or adherents of other faiths — but leaves out Muslims. While that discriminatory bill passed the lower house it has thankfully stalled in the upper house of parliament.

Leaders of Modi's political party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have been credibly accused of [emboldening](#) "communal violence" and failing to forcefully condemn or put a stop to recent mobs of violent Hindu nationalists lynching, murdering, and brutally beating minorities, especially Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and members of lower castes within India's society.

Since Mr. Modi was elected as Prime Minister in 2014, there has been a [400% increase](#) in hate crime violence against Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Dalits. Reports in the media indicate that victims of such communal violence are beaten and murdered while mobs shout or force their victims to repeat the phrase: "Jai Shri Ram," which means "Praise Lord Ram," one of the gods in the Hindu pantheon.

Moreover, the 2019 University of California at Berkeley study titled "[Islamophobia in India: Stoking Bigotry](#)," found that the 10 Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Telangana, and Assam collectively accounted for 1,972 cases of politically-motivated violence, and implicated BJP leaders of stoking "communal violence" and hate.

Prior to becoming prime minister of India, in 2005 the U.S. Department of State [banned](#) Modi from entering the United States. Modi was denied a visa because as then-head of the state government in Gujarat between February 2002 and May 2002, he comprehensively failed to stop Hindu nationalist riots that resulted in the killing of more than 1,000 Muslims, including the reported gang-rape and murder of 250 women and destruction of countless homes and businesses. Modi and his government's silence during the rioting earning him the shameful title "Butcher of Gujrat."

Again, we request that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation not offer the Global Goalkeeper Award to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he will use this prize to deflect criticism of his government's egregious human rights violations in Kashmir, Assam, and throughout all of India.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

Action Center on Race and the Economy  
Afghan Diaspora Equality and Progress  
American Muslim Empowerment Network  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Franciscan Action Network  
Indian American Muslim Council  
Islamic Association of North America  
Islamic Leadership Institute America  
Islamophobia Studies Center, Berkeley, California  
Muslim American Society  
National Lawyers Guild International Committee  
Only Through US  
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross USA Province  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
United We Dream  
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights  
US Council of Muslim Organizations  
Win Without War  
Yemeni American Merchants Association

**State Organizations:**

American Muslim Voice Foundation, California  
Baltimore County Muslim Council, Maryland  
Capuchin Franciscans Province of St. Joseph, Midwest Office  
Faith in Public Life, Ohio  
Flint Islamic Center, Michigan  
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor US Area, Ohio  
Franciscans for Justice, California  
Islamic Center of Detroit, Michigan  
Islamic Center of Old Bridge, New Jersey  
Jewish Voice for Peace - Atlanta Chapter, Georgia  
Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission, Province of Our Lady of Consolation, New Mexico  
Majlis Ash-Shura: Islamic Leadership Council of New York, New York  
Montgomery County Muslim Council, Maryland  
Muslim Identities & Cultures, Townsend Center and Center for Race & Gender Working Group, Berkeley, California  
Order of Franciscans Ecumenical, California  
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans, California  
Showing Up for Racial Justice - Montgomery County, Maryland  
United Maryland Muslim Council, Maryland

Women in Black, California  
Women in Black, Maryland  
Women in Black, Pennsylvania  
Women in Black, Washington

**International:**

American Friends Service Committee  
Education Justice for Global Peace  
Global Justice and Human Rights Law Network  
Independent Old Catholic Church  
International Center for Rights and Justice  
Joining Hands for Justice in Israel and Palestine  
Mujeres de Negro, Madrid, Spain  
One Billion Rising  
V-Day  
Women in Black, Vienna, Austria  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom