



# Coalition Against Genocide

For Immediate Release

Press Advisory

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## **CHRIS MATTHEWS NOT TO APPEAR AT AAHOA CONVENTION: FIRST VICTORY FOR THE COALITION AGAINST GENOCIDE**

The Coalition against Genocide (CAG) is pleased to announce that Chris Matthews, host of Hardball on MSNBC, will not appear at the Asian American Hotel Owners Association Convention (AAHOA), as scheduled. This announcement comes in the wake of a concerted campaign by CAG, seeking the withdrawal of Mr. Matthews from the AAHOA convention. CAG calls on sponsors of events such as American Express and Madison Square Garden to follow the example set by Mr. Chris Matthews.

AAHOA has scheduled its annual convention from March 24-26 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The chief guest of the program is Mr. Narendra Modi, chief minister of Gujarat and the main architect of the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 in which 2000 Muslims were killed, including women who were sexually assaulted and raped. Mr. Chris Matthews was also scheduled to speak at the convention alongside Mr. Modi. In a letter dated February 26th, 2005 (letter enclosed), CAG sought to impress on Mr. Matthews that his participation in the convention would legitimize a politician who can be held accountable for the Gujarat pogrom under the guidelines of the international convention on genocide.

CAG's letter to Mr. Matthews was followed by numerous calls, emails and faxes from human rights activists, professors, students and other concerned community members to Mr. Matthews' office. The coalition's action alert on this issue is also enclosed.

Mr. Modi, as chief minister of the state of Gujarat, has been implicated by human rights organizations for his complicity in and sponsorship of the systematic and violent pogrom against Muslims. A number of the reports from human rights organizations and a special dossier on Mr. Modi is available on the coalition website (<http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports.php>).

While the mass violence against Muslims stopped in mid-2002, the Modi government has continued to threaten and victimize Christians, Dalits, Adivasis (tribals) and secular Hindus who have raised their voice in search of justice for the victims of the Gujarat pogrom, even as it prevented victims from gaining legal and social justice. The continuous efforts of thousands of secular activists in India and abroad, attempting to bring the perpetrators to trial in courts of law, had resulted in exposing Mr. Modi's role in the violence and his undying faith in the sectarian and violent ideology of Hindutva. This visit to the United States is seen as an attempt to rehabilitate the severely tarnished image of Mr. Modi.

A spokesperson for CAG confirmed with Mr. Matthews' office late this evening, that he was not attending the AAHOA convention, due to "scheduling conflicts". Prof. Usha Zacharias said that "Mr. Matthews' withdrawal is the first victory for the coalition" and appealed to Indian Americans, "to boycott Mr. Modi's entire US trip and his attempt to stir up and secure funding for hate politics from Indian Americans." CAG urges Chris Matthews to take this opportunity to report on the growing influence and fundraising activities in US of groups who financially and ideologically support the persecution of minorities in India.

CAG has launched its campaign on multiple fronts, including a protest at Madison Square Garden in New York City on March 20<sup>th</sup>, where Mr. Modi is scheduled to appear and at the convention center in Ft. Lauderdale on March 24<sup>th</sup>. The coalition is confident that AAHOA will be isolated in the community for its shameful decision to sponsor a person who has committed crimes against humanity.

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