



Coalition Against Genocide

March 11, 2005

Ebery Banks
Director, Special Events
Madison Square Garden
4 Pennsylvania Plaza
New York, NY 10001

CC: Mary Ellen Kelly
Corporate Communications
Madison Square Garden

Dear Ms Ebery Banks,

We at the [Coalition Against Genocide \(CAG\)](#), are writing to request that you cancel your decision to grant a forum to Mr. Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat in India through the public meeting organized by the Association of Indian Americans of North America at Madison Square Gardens on March 20, 2005. Mr. Modi is directly implicated in the 2002 massacre in Gujarat, India, of more than 2,000 persons and is a member of a violent and chauvinistic Hindu nationalist organization called the Rashtriya Swatamsevak Sangh (RSS – National Volunteers Corps). The RSS is a shadowy all-male organization drawing inspiration from Hitler and Mussolini that trains milita-like groups of men and indoctrinates them into ideologies of racial/religious cleansing. Mr Modi has a record of delivering hate speech that incites and legitimizes violence against minorities and moderate Hindus and Madison Square Garden may be providing a forum for such speech (please see excerpts attached). Mr Modi currently faces two civil suits for crimes against humanity in India, and is in violation of international laws and conventions including Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

By offering Mr Modi a platform you will offer a forum for him to legitimize the anti-women ideology of the RSS as well. The RSS ideology of racial cleansing includes moral sanction for the rape, impregnation, and murder of non-Hindu women, and the prevention of the biological reproduction of those it defines as "Other", which we witnessed in horrific detail in the 72-hour pogrom in Gujarat. Amnesty International has clearly held the state of Gujarat, headed by Mr Modi, responsible for gender crimes in its report, *Justice, the victim - Gujarat state fails to protect women from violence* <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa200012005>. Your organizations' name will be associated with a figure and a political party that are the face of religious persecution against marginalized communities, including Christians and Muslims, and who in cold-blood target the women of minority communities through sexual and murderous violence. You will unwittingly end up legitimizing an individual who is directly responsible for upholding and carrying out a plan of extermination of minority groups. We at CAG respectfully ask you to reconsider your hosting of this event.

CAG is a U.S.-based coalition of fourteen bodies including grassroots organizations, human rights advocacy groups and community based NGOs. Our members come from diverse religious, ethnic and political backgrounds. We are bound together by our desire to see that justice is ensured to the victims of the Gujarat massacres, and by our desire to ensure that this is never repeated again. To this end, we are determined to stop Mr. Modi from gaining



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legitimization in the United States from corporate sponsors and hosts who may be unaware of the politics and practice he represents.

Mr Chris Mathews, host of MSNBC's show, *Hardball*, has already withdrawn his planned appearance along with Mr Modi, at an event in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on March 24, 2005. We expect corporate sponsors, as they become aware of Modi's identity, to refrain from attaching their name to his.

In Gujarat, between February 28 and March 30, 2002, under Narendra Modi's leadership, more than 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed, and women subjected to gang-rape, murder, and abortion of pregnancies. These mass killings and violence against women were aided and abetted by the various arms of the state headed by Mr Modi. The systematically executed pogrom also left more than 200,000 people homeless; even now, many fear to return to their localities. Today, three years after the event, the victims of the violence still await justice and reparations. Mr. Modi, not only failed to take preventive measures against those who were planning the violence with his knowledge, but undertook a series of actions which either tacitly or explicitly condoned it.

Numerous inquiries and commissions, such as the Indian National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), have condemned the role of the Government of Gujarat headed by Mr. Modi in providing leadership and material support for the attacks on minorities in Gujarat in 2002.

The European Union, and every major Indian and international human rights organization: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Commonwealth Initiative for Human Rights, Citizen's Initiative, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), have condemned the Gujarat violence, and pointed to the complicity of the Government of Gujarat.

In the US, the State department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor released a report on International Religious Freedom in 2002, pointing to the culpability of the Government of Gujarat in the violence, its violations of human rights and religious freedoms, and the targeting of other minority groups, such as Christians, following the event. Coverage in the Indian and international press, including in the New York Times (July 27, 2002), Washington Post (June 03, 2002), Boston Globe (July 07, 2002), reported the failure of the state machinery in Gujarat. There has been non-partisan support in the United States for human rights in Gujarat. Former President Clinton condemned the events in Gujarat, and Congressman Pitts (R-PA) addressed the United States House of Representatives on June 18, 2002, condemning the premeditated brutality in Gujarat and acknowledging insufficient action on the part of the United States. Mr. Joseph R. Pitts also conveyed that Hindu extremist groups receive some of their funds from charities in the United States and the United Kingdom. Research undertaken by two independent groups, Campaign To Stop Funding Hate and Awaaz, South Asia Watch Limited, have demonstrated as well that Hindu nationalist organizations supporting Mr. Modi in Gujarat are linked to corresponding organizations in the United States, that undertake fund raising to sustain the work of Hindu fundamentalism in India.

Three years later, the Government of Gujarat continues to harass and discriminate against its Christian and Muslim minority populations, tribal peoples and other marginalized groups, as well as progressive activists and intellectuals, with new policies and prejudiced application of existing laws. Under Mr. Modi's leadership, more than 2,000 of 4,000 cases



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filed by the victims of the violence were never investigated or dismissed, leading the Supreme Court of India to rebuke both the Gujarat judiciary and the Government of Gujarat for its handling of the cases, and transferring several cases out of the state for trial.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to cancel your decision to host the March 20 meeting. The invitation to Mr. Modi is part of an effort by his supporters in the US, under the guise of Association of Indian Americans of North America, to rehabilitate his image. We sincerely hope that you will not be an unwitting party to their plans. At a time when the international community has questioned the commitment of the United States to human rights, it is imperative that government and government affiliated institutions, businesses and the media, and residents and citizens of the United States act affirmatively to demonstrate support for human rights advocacy. In lieu of the facts, we urge that Madison Square Garden demonstrate its social responsibility by withdrawing the space it has given to the Association of Indian Americans of North America unless they withdraw their invitation to Mr. Modi.

Enclosed, please find a brief appendix that documents some of the relevant information pertaining to Mr. Modi, especially his hate speech record. Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like further information.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. George Abraham, Non Resident Indians for a Secular and Harmonious India

Dr. Angana Chatterji, Anthropology, California Institute of Integral Studies

Ms. Sapna Gupta, South Asian Progressive Action Collective

Dr. Ashwini Rao, Campaign to Stop Funding Hate

Dr. Shaik Ubaid, Indian Muslim Council

Dr. Usha Zacharias, Communication, Westfield State College, Massachusetts, and the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate.