

March 17, 2021

To

**Jonathan Holloway**

President, Rutgers University

**Nancy Kantor**

Chancellor, Rutgers University

**Enobong (Anna) Branch**

Senior Vice-President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Rutgers University

**Jacquie Mattis**

Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Newark

**Subject:** *Malicious campaign of intimidation against Dr. Audrey Truschke, Associate Professor*

Dear Rutgers Executives,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals based in the United States and beyond, are writing to thank you for unequivocally supporting Dr. [Audrey Truschke](#), Associate Professor of South Asian History at Rutgers University, against an ongoing systematic campaign of vilification against her including vile threats of extreme violence against her and her family.

This letter's purpose is not to defend Dr. Truschke's scholarship -- which, to use your words, she "pursues rigorously" -- for she is competent to defend herself. Yet, we must point out that many claims in the complaint from the Hindu students are dubious or outright lies.

The letter against Dr. Truschke claims that the "perpetrators" at the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol in Washington, D.C. did not include any Hindus. That is a lie.

One "perpetrator", [Krishna Gudipati](#), is [associated](#) with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA), an affiliate of the VHP in India, which the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has classified as a "religious militant organization" for its violence against Muslims and Christians.

Gudipati is an associate of the infamous Member of India's Parliament, Subramanian Swamy, who [heads](#) the Virat Hindustan Sangam of which Gudipati is a [member](#). Dr. Swamy [wants](#) Muslims denied voting rights, a view that [prompted](#) Harvard University to drop his course.

Dr. Swamy belongs to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which, along with the VHP, is an offshoot of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a 95-year-old paramilitary Hindu nationalist outfit that wants to [convert](#) India into a Hindu nation where non-Hindu minorities are subjugated and relegated to the status of second-class citizens. Mahatma Gandhi's assassin [belonged](#) to the RSS. Mr. [Modi](#), India's [President](#) and [Vice-President](#), and many Indian ministers are lifelong RSS members.

The letter of complaint against Dr. Truschke also claims that "reputable sources have demonstrated that [17th-century Mughal emperor] Aurangzeb enslaved and murdered 4.6 million Hindus." However, the [link](#) for "reputable sources" is not a scholarly paper but a New York Times infographic, which is based on *The Great Big Book of Horrible Things* by [Matthew White](#), a librarian who does not have "any degree or formal training in history or statistics."

Mr. White based this figure not on any scholarly work by a historian but on his reading of 17th-century European traveler Niccolao Manucci's memoirs, which are [considered](#) to be "full of factual errors and colorful lies." Author-historian Manimugdha Sharma of *The Times of India*

has [tweeted](#) that Manucchi did not claim Aurangzeb killed 4.6 million Hindus but only that Aurangzeb lost 100,000 soldiers a year in a war, which, too, has never been validated.

The real reason behind the campaign of intimidation against Dr. Truschke is her courageous and unwavering opposition to Hindutva, the supremacist ideology espoused by the RSS and its affiliates. It is this hateful ideology that is the driving force behind the rapidly escalating bigotry and horrific violence in India. The campaign attacking her scholarly integrity is intended to silence her, curtail her academic freedom as well as her advocacy for peace and pluralism.

Hindutva's propagandists loathe that Dr. Truschke deploys her scholarship to devastating effect in debunking its supremacist myths they are desperate to perpetuate. These include the spurious claim that India is foremost a country of Hindus and that Muslims and Christians are outsiders, claims that India's Hindu nationalists use to justify violence against these minorities.

Dr. Truschke has [exposed](#) the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the anti-Muslim citizenship law that is "designed to strip... many Indian Muslims of citizenship." In February 2020, she attended a solidarity protest at Rutgers-New Brunswick where she received a copy of the Indian constitution's preamble, which she joined in reading aloud with other protesters.

In 2019, Dr. Truschke's [wrote](#) that the India's Supreme Court ruling that a Hindu temple be built where stood a 16th-century mosque that Hindu mobs razed it in 1992 "abjures both historical reality and any pretense of equal treatment of religious communities." The ruling was "based on modern faith and has nothing to do with history before the nineteenth century," she added.

In 2018, Dr. Truschke [wrote](#) about anti-Semitic attacks on her by Hindu nationalists. One tweet read: "I hope another Hitler comes back and finishes off your people." "These ugly attacks use vicious anti-Semitic slurs," she wrote, "frequently invoke the Holocaust, and draw on crude anti-Semitic tropes such as that I am somehow pursuing my academic research for money."

Those attacking Dr. Truschke and Rutgers Administration for backing her are intimately connected with the RSS and Mr. Modi. Before becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Modi was denied a US visa for nine years for his role in the massacre of 2,000 Muslims in India in 2002. Over time, Dr. Truschke's powerful voice has helped to bring increased global attention to — and scrutiny of — India's persecution of its religious minorities, who are 260 million of its 1.3 billion citizens.

Last June, the US Department of State's annual report on global religious freedom [recorded](#) "mob attacks by violent Hindu groups against minority communities, including Muslims," as well as "religiously motivated killings, assaults, riots, discrimination, vandalism and actions restricting the right of individuals to practice and speak about their religious beliefs."

Genocide Watch, a global watchdog on genocides founded by academician, international activist and former US diplomat Gregory Stanton, has categorized India as being at an advanced stage in the "10 Stages of Genocide" due to the violent conflict in Kashmir, preparations to deport Bengali Muslims in Assam, and anti-Muslim violence in north India.

In April, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) [recommended](#) that the US Department of State designate India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) — the list of the world's worst offenders of religious freedom — for "engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing and egregious religious freedom violations."

The USCIRF [said](#) Mr. Modi's government had instituted "national-level policies violating religious freedom across India, especially for Muslims." These policies include an anti-Muslim citizenship law and the "continued enforcement of cow slaughter and anti-conversion laws." It

added: ““Discriminatory policies, inflammatory rhetoric, and tolerance for violence against minorities... [had] increased the climate of fear among non-Hindu communities.”

Saying that the “invaluable” USCIRF report would “help hold bad actors accountable,” 14 US Senators [asked](#) then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to accept it. Separately, four US Senators [cited](#) India’s “troubling steps,” including the “controversial” citizenship law, that “threaten the rights of certain religious minorities and the secular character of the state,” to ask Mr. Pompeo for a review of human rights and religious freedom in India.

Senator Bob Menendez (NJ) [said](#) the Citizenship (Amendment) Act “violates India’s international legal obligations and its constitution,” and [urged](#) then President Donald Trump to seek its “swift reversal.” Congressman Tom Malinowski (NJ) [criticized](#) Indian Government’s crackdown in Kashmir. In 2017, a bipartisan group of five U.S. Senators [wrote](#) to Mr. Trump asking him to raise the issue of India’s deteriorating religious freedom with Mr. Modi.

This month, Freedom House, a reputed American research institute founded by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, [downgraded](#) India’s status from “Free” to “Partly Free” because Mr. Modi had “continued to crack down on critics.” “India’s Hindu nationalist movement,” it said, had “encouraged the scapegoating of Muslims [who] faced attacks by vigilante mobs.”

In 2018, the US Congressional Research Service [wrote](#) that the RSS and its affiliates “share a core motive to protect India’s assumed Hindu identity from the perceived threats of Islam and Christianity, by some accounts through “purging” those religions from Indian society.” In testimonies before the US Congress’s Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, [Amnesty](#) and [HRW](#) have detailed the Modi government’s persecution of India’s religious minorities.

Over the years, Hindu nationalists in the US have relentlessly trolled anyone who has vocally criticized such religious persecution in India. In 2019, they organized a [protest](#) outside the Washington Post newspaper’s office in Washington, D.C. because it was reporting accurately on India’s persecution of its minorities. Last month, Washington Post [wrote](#) that the arrest of an environmental activist put India’s “title as a democracy in question,” and that there was a “broad pattern of speech suppression and other violations of democratic norms” in India.

Last week, several British Members of Parliament [slammed](#) Mr. Modi’s government for its crackdown on thousands of farmers protesting against new agricultural laws.

Despite global criticism, the Indian Government is unmoved. India’s Home Minister Amit Shah has [said](#) that Western human rights cannot be “blindly” applied to India.

In the end, we would like to share with you that the RSS has long been an admirer of Adolf Hitler. In 1939, then RSS chief M. S. Golwalkar [said](#): “To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the country of Semitic races — the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here.” He added: “Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.”

That, in essence, is the ideology of Hindu nationalism, adhered by the RSS and its followers, in India and in the U.S. They are the people who attack Dr. Truschke for her erudition and courage. They are the people behind the petition against her.

Signed —

Hindus for Human Rights  
Students Against Hindutva Ideology  
Ambedkar International Center  
Ambedkar King Study Circle  
Dalit Solidarity Forum  
Boston South Asian Coalition  
Council on American Islamic Relations - CAIR (New Jersey)  
Islamic Society of Central Jersey  
Indian American Muslim Council  
India Civil Watch International  
Coalition to Stop Genocide  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Justice for All  
Center for Pluralism  
South Asian Left Activist Movement  
API Chaya  
Stand With Kashmir  
The Humanism Project, Australia  
Dr. Chloe Breyer, The Interfaith Center of New York  
Dr. Aslam Abdullah, Interim President, World Council of Muslims for Interfaith Relations (WCMIR)  
Dr. Rehan Khan, President, International Society for Peace and Justice=