



### Degradation of Minority Rights in India

Since Narendra Modi won re-election as India's Prime Minister in the 2019 election, he and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have enacted multiple pieces of controversial legislation that has undermined religious freedom in the country and degraded human rights. Modi's BJP is a right-wing, Hindu nationalist party that envisions an Indian identity synonymous with Hinduism. This is problematic for a country that is the second most-populous Muslim nation in the world, and is also home to multiple other religious minorities such as Christians, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Furthermore, Modi's attempts to marry Hinduism with the Indian identity directly contradicts India's constitution which outlines the country's secular mandate.

The BJP has pressed forward with legislation such as the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a quasi-census that seeks to determine the lineage of immigrants in India. To date, the NRC has only been enacted in the state of Assam, which borders Bangladesh and is home to thousands of Muslim refugees. There has been a longstanding desire among the local population in Assam to limit the undocumented refugees in the state, and the NRC was aimed at pacifying those concerns. Individuals living in Assam were forced to describe their lineage, and if people could not prove their biological ties to India they were described as "illegal migrants" and declared stateless. The Indian government has created six "detention camps" for people who fall under this category, and are planning to build eleven more. Critics have compared the detention centers in Assam to the ones in the United States being used to house migrants from South and Central America.

Prime Minister Modi has also pushed through the highly controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill, which the government says is aimed at providing refuge to religious minorities who face persecution in neighboring countries. India has singled out Muslim-majority countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as being dangerous for religious minorities such as Christians and Hindus, and is offering citizenship to people who can prove they have been persecuted on the basis of their religion in their home country. However, the bill does not have a provision for Muslims, which has led critics to accuse the government of trying to marginalize the large population of Muslim refugees in India. The bill also updates India's citizenship test by adding religion as a basis for which citizenship can be granted or denied. This will again make it more difficult for Muslims in India to obtain Indian citizenship, and will increase the likelihood of Muslims in India becoming officially stateless.

The Indian government under Prime Minister Modi has developed a habit of pursuing policies that are contradictory to both its constitution, and its religious minorities. India's founders viewed it as a secular country, and one in which minorities had equal rights under the law. Since coming to power, Prime Minister Modi has undermined these values, and pushed a strong religious nationalist agenda. Additionally, it is unlikely that the Modi Administration will reverse course on this agenda, as the BJP maintains a strong majority in India's legislature.