



April 19, 2018

Dear Mr. Dvorkin,

We write to you on behalf of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a human rights organization which provides a voice for the more than 3 million Hindus living in the United States, as well as for Hindus around the world persecuted on the basis of their religion.

We are deeply concerned over the harassment in Russia of popular Hindu spiritual figure Shri Prakash Ji, Shri Prakash Ji's family, and members of Shri Prakash Dham - The Center for Conservation of Indian Culture, by members of the Expert Religious Studies Council (ERSC), as well as by Russian government officials.

This harassment is the latest in a pattern of assaults on Hindu institutions and Hindus in Russia by ERSC. In 2011, for example, ERSC tried to ban the Bhagavad Gita (one of Hinduism's most sacred texts) claiming that it was seditious literature. The campaign failed due to pressure from the international community, including the governments of the United States and India.

In light of this continued harassment against Hindu institutions and Hindus in Russia, Members of the United States Congress recently sent letters to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, a governmental body, to investigate the religious freedom violations that Hindus are facing in your country.

Hinduism is the oldest major religion and the world's third-largest today, with roughly 1.1 billion adherents. Hindus are the majority of the population in India, Nepal, and Mauritius, with large minority populations in many more countries on every continent.

Hinduism is a non-proselytizing and pluralistic faith. Hindus in Russia do not seek to convert the Russian people, or threaten their traditions or religious institutions.

Shri Prakash Dham is peacefully serving the spiritual needs of its congregants. It serves Russian society by acting on the core Hindu principles of selfless service, non-harming, and devotion to God. Shri Prakash Ji and his institution maintain positive relations with members of the Russian government and Parliament. Members of both have spoken in favor of his work and mission.

We request ERSC immediately cease from targeting, threatening, and harassing Shri Prakash Ji and his family, his institution, and his congregants.



Should the ERSC fail to stop this harassment, HAF will be forced to engage the government of the United States to take action. Such action would include banning members or affiliates of ERSC from entering the United States, under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. HAF will pursue similar measures to censure ERSC activities with the government of India and the United Nations.

Sincerely,

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Samir Kalra, Esq.
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