

EU: Diwali at European Parliament: HRWF raises the issue of persecution

HRWF (11.10.2017) – HRWF was invited to participate in the Diwali celebration at the European Parliament on 11 October, hosted by MEP Geoffrey Van Orden and the Hindu Forum of Europe. The event was well-attended, with almost 200 present.

Deputy Director, Lea Perekrests, spoke about the persecution of Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Russia:

“...In the past year, we have documented continuous persecution of Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Russia.

In Pakistan, over the past year alone, there have been countless acts of violence, persecution and discrimination against Hindus. Such forces come against the community from both social and governmental sides.

New developments in online blasphemy laws have resulted in the imprisonment of peaceful Hindus.

Currently, Prakash Kumar remains in Gaddani Jail in Pakistan. He was arrested in May 2017 for allegedly sending blasphemous content through WhatsApp. As a result, before the police intervened, Kumar was attacked by a mob. Even after his imprisonment, mobs gathered outside the jail calling for his execution.

Additionally, there has been little protection of women and girls against kidnappings for the purpose of forced conversions to Islam and marriages to Muslim men.

In Bangladesh, the arrival and activities of the Islamic State and other violent extremist groups have contributed to increased attacks against the Hindu population and other

religious minorities. The attacks have targeted not only individuals, but also places of worship.

Furthermore, these attacks against Hindus are commonly responded to with impunity.

Hindu communities have also been arriving to Bangladesh to escape persecution in Myanmar. They have set up Hindu refugee camps which have received little attention or aid from the government or international communities.

In Russia, we see yet another form of social hostility towards Hindus through hate-speech. Alexander Dvorkin, who is the vice-president of a French-funded anti-sect organisation called FECRIS, has been a particular motivator of discrimination against Hindus.

Dvorkin was an actor in the 2011 attempt to ban the Holy Scriptures of Hinduism in Russia and has been consistent in disseminating defamatory statements against Hindus in Russia.

In February of this year, a rally was held in the capital of India in front of the Russian embassy. Protestors demanded that the anti-religious activities of Alexander Dvorkin be halted. Calls were made to the Russian state to protect Hindus from persecution, but to no avail.

Hindus are persecuted and discriminated against in many ways and in many more places than what I've mentioned. The examples I have chosen, I hope highlight the ways in which you can help the Hindu community.

If you are a strong women's rights advocate, you can help the Hindu women and girls who are kidnapped and forced into marriage and conversion.

If you are a strong advocate for the abolition of hate-speech, you can help the Hindus in Russia gain further protection.

If you are a strong advocate of independent judiciaries and

fair trials, you can help the Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh to be properly respected in law and by authorities, and for their attackers to not be treated with impunity.

If you are a strong advocate of refugee rights, you can help the Hindus in Bangladeshi refugee camps who are not receiving adequate aid.

In short, what I would like to stress is that everyone can play a role in helping the Hindus who are in need.

Thank you again, I wish you all a very happy Diwali.”

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