



Comparison Between Media Coverage Of Ukrainian Refugees And Muslim Refugees

By Yousuf Ali

On February 24th, Russia invaded Ukraine in an escalation of a conflict between the countries which included the Russian annexation of the Southern region of Crimea into Russia following a coup against pro-Russian Yanukovich president in 2014. This has naturally led many Ukraine to flee to neighboring countries not wishing to get caught up between their own country's forces and the invading Russians. The vast majority of the international community has condemned the invasion as an unacceptable escalation further encroaching on the



sovereignty of a foreign country.

Many commentators have pointed out a remarkable difference in the public discourse in the mainstream media between how it treated

refugees from Muslim countries like Syria, Palestine and Afghanistan and refugees from a European country like Ukraine with the latter being universally embraced in the west but

the former being subject to extreme demonization as invaders.

Commentators made comparisons to Iraq and Afghanistan prompting a reaction from Mus-

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Supreme Court Unanimously Supports FBI In Case Related To Spying On Muslim Americans

By Aysha Qamar

In a move that sets the U.S. back in terms of religious freedom, the Supreme Court on Friday unanimously rejected an argument that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) wrongfully applied federal law governing how surveillance-related evidence can be used in



court. The decision overturned a lower court ruling in favor of Muslims in Southern California.

The case follows an FBI operation in 2006 and 2007 in which agents sent a paid informant to some of the largest,

most diverse mosques in Orange County, California, and instructed him to pose as a convert of Islam.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the FBI informant "indiscrimi-

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Indian Christians Persecuted By Movement That Calls Them Traitors



By: Pieter Friedrich

Since 1947, when the Republic of India gained its independence, it has gone through many rough patches. Yet with all the ups and downs, the young country grad-

ually grew into its own as a generally stable, secular democracy.

Bold and courageous Indians debated, and toiled, and not only worked — or began

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Press Release For Ganga To Mississippi: Walking With The Rainbow



by Moon Khan and Shaan Khan

PRESS RELEASE

“Ganga To Mississippi – Walking With The Rainbow” is a memoir, a family history, part family novel, part self-examination, interspersed with generational trauma, and imbued with immigrant folklores, all in a package of realism and ‘counter archive.’

Written by an India-born immigrant, Moon Khan, who had to leave the country like millions of Indians in search of better prospects, the memoir reads like a cinematic play-by-play of life in the rural part of India. Settled in Chicago, USA, Moon provides an absolutely captivating social, cultural, and historical commentary on India’s development from the 1960s to the 1980s.

If you are here for twists on twists, this is the book for you. The book is co-authored by Moon’s son, Shaan Khan, who was born and raised in the United States. Shaan’s perspective gives the book a multi-gener-

ational and an international flavor.

Commenting on the book at the launch of the memoir from the platform of Kalinga Literary Festival, Santosh Singh, Author and Assistant Editor of the Indian Express, portrays the link of the two generations as a link between Ganga and Mississippi. Singh also wrote the Foreword for the book, which is available on Amazon, both in the USA and India. Its Kindle version is only \$4.99 or Rs. 371.

Ramesh Soparawala, Resident Editor, India Post, USA, calls it “a historical story that will linger with readers like memories of their first love.”

“It’s a testimonial of what we can all achieve if we accept the challenges,” says Dianne Pappas, a Yale law school graduate, and an American politician. Moon’s life has been a saga of very poor to very rich. Simultaneously, it was also a tumultuous journey

from ordinary to extraordinary, from despair to repair, from shattered streets to shiny tollways, from a tiny village of Bihar, India, to metropolis like Chicago.

Arun Kumar, Associate Editor, Hindustan Times finds “a super trajectory of identity” in the 233-page book, which was published in January 2022. Moon believes in a multitude of identities. Reinforcing the idea of solitary identity is like asking someone if he likes his wife or his mother, his kidney or heart, his son or his daughter. Moon explains this dilemma in a chapter titled “Who Am I?”

Atul K. Thakur, Author, Columnist, Literary Consultant, calls this an amazing novel of unanswerable questions as well as mysterious and innovative curiosities. “A work to be recognized for its honest reflections. Moon Khan’s journey assures hope,” he added. “With this memoir, you’re in on some very juicy gossip.”

Senior Journalist, Bibhesh Trivedi, advises,

“Come hungry with a gorilla like appetite to a grand buffet. This memoir reminds us that no matter how far you fly, the past is always near and part of your dream.”

According to Danish Reyaz, Group Editor, Maeeshat, Ganga to Mississippi is a provocative, defiant, clever, painful, empowering, and hilarious novel of literary climax that you read while unchecking your biases.

Moon Khan and Shaan Khan have written a captivating memoir, with unique rhythms, dusty winds, and live characters that incarnate the voices and aspirations of most Indians. The father and son duo would take you to places you did not know you wanted to go because they write in a tingling humorous style with a poetic touch.

Reviewing the book, Obaidur Rahman, Founder Chairman, Rahman 30, In Association with Super 30, writes, “Ganga to Mississippi provides an achingly accurate description of an emotional and physical connection that feels

as though it describes a whole life. The memoir is an open letter to progeny, a suturing of past and present – with so many swerves it feels like a Formula 1 track.”

The titles of a few chapters of the book may encourage you to buy this book.

Overcoming the odds: from preterm to awesome

A monster who snatched our hope

When I met an angel
Rooms with holes and rodents

Broken dreams, shattered faith

Violating law to break my shackle

The warmth of other suns

From roti to hotdog

Culture shock vs. clash of cultures

A letter to my son while flying at 30,000 feet

Dreaming with everybody

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Review And Lessons From The Trojan Horse Affair Podcast



By Yousuf Ali

This American Life released a podcast about the Trojan Horse Affair which was a situation in which the headteacher of a United Kingdom school district lost his job over an anonymous letter claiming a conspiracy on his part to Islamize a failing public school district which he had turned around from a failing school district with a remarkably high pass rate.

The podcast was rated by The Guardian as one of the best podcasts of the week. It is an exemplary piece of not only journalism regarding the Trojan Horse Affair and the way in which the perspectives and privileges journalists come with face their reporting as well as the reality of institutional Islamophobia which leads to so many hazards for anyone involved in Islamic work.

To begin, both hosts of the podcasts did a good job of reflecting on the way their backgrounds affect their reporting. This came to head when Hamza Syed shed his journalistic neutrality when one of the people he and his non-Muslim cohost was interviewing expressed ignorance at the importance of the Trojan Horse story. After the non-Muslim cohost called Syed out for showing his biases, this was quickly followed by a reflection after the fact when the cohost understood why Syed was upset as it was his community that had been on the receiving end of the fallout of the Trojan Horse Schedule. This resulted in many mem-

bers of the Muslim community being black-listed and losing their jobs all based on an anonymous letter which very likely was fabricated to distract from a more pressing issue of institutional corruption which had nothing to do with extremism.

He as a non-Muslim couldn't appreciate this fact along with the reality of discrimination and harassment that Muslims have always had to endure especially from mainstream institutions. In that respect, this is something that white non-Muslims have to be conscious of when dealing with their Muslim colleagues and subjects.

Last but not least, the story is a great case study in the occupational hazard of hypocrisy and backstabbing in the Muslim community that anyone involved in Muslim institutions is all too familiar with. The alternate theory explored by the hypothesis was that another Muslim school official fabricated the Trojan horse letter to distract from the plausible accusations that she had fabricated letters of resignation for rebellious employees.

Whether or not this alternate version of events is true, the effect is indisputable in that all attention from law enforcement and the courts was diverted from her to Tahir Alam and his school which had seen a remarkable increase in student competence rate. Even if the alternative version isn't true, it aligns with stories and facts those of us who have been involved with Islamic work are

familiar with.

Just 2 months CAIR-Ohio discovered that one of its leaders was leaking information to one of the most notorious Islamic organizations and was dismissed, not to mention the realities of spying and entrapment which have made so many of us distrustful of each other and the society at large. This can only happen because members of our community know that law enforcement won't provide the serious scrutiny that they would usually do if they were dealing with privileged non-Muslims.

The result is the western countries which are extolled for their rule of law and justice abandoning evidentiary standards and due process when it comes to dealing with Muslims. For that reason, Muslims can't just count on the benevolence of the government to be fairer to our community but have to actively pressure it to apply the principles it claims to apply to all to our community in particular.

This includes having the commitment and courage to apply for Islamic injunctions against spying against Muslims and backbiting/slander even if it comes at personal cost and not selling each other out for the fleeting gains of this world whether that be a business advantage or protecting one's job. Until we develop the principles and loyalty to not sell each other out, we can't expect non-Muslim governments to treat us any better.

The Muslim Observer ISSN 1531-1759 (USPS. 018-739) is published weekly for \$100 per year by Muslim Media Network, Inc., 29004 W. 8 Mile Rd., Farmington, MI 48336. Periodicals postage paid at Farmington Hills, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Muslim Observer; 29004 W. 8 Mile Rd.; Farmington, MI 48336. Subscriptions: \$75/1 year; \$140/2 years; Advertising: for rates contact: advertising@muslimobserver.com

Teen Arrested With Backpack Full Of Explosives Planned To Commit 'Mass Murder' In Mosques



by TMO Staff.

As hate crimes across the country continue to increase, places of worship are particularly being targeted. Across the country, houses of worship are not only receiving threats but experiencing violence. On Tuesday, after a teen identified as Xavier Pelkey was arrested for having explosive devices in his backpack, prosecutors told a federal court judge that the 18-year-old Waterville, Maine, man charged with possession of unregistered destructive devices had planned to commit "mass murder" in mosques in Chicago.

Pelkey was arrested on Feb. 11 by FBI agents and was charged with one count of possession of unregistered destructive devices. Affidavits filed in U.S. District Court in Bangor, Maine, include photos taken by FBI agents in Pelkey's home. The photos depict three homemade explosive devices containing fireworks, some with rows of staples wrapped around the fireworks.

Prosecutors said the devices were designed for maximum injury. According to court documents, when asked about the way the fireworks were made, Pelkey told FBI agents he had taped fireworks together to get a "bigger boom."

FBI agents were alerted to Pelkey's plan by two juveniles who were communicating with Pelkey online. In a now-sealed declaration, the two said Pelkey planned to use the explosives at a mosque in Chicago to "commit mass murder," Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig Wolff said at the detention hearing on Tuesday.

According to the Associated Press, the juveniles said that after detailing his plans to attack not only one but multiple mosques, Pelkey also considered attacking a synagogue.

"It's fair to say that based on the information that investigators received, that this was more than just talk," Wolff said.

The declaration is expected to be unsealed at some

point. Pelkey will be held without bail until his case goes to trial. According to Wolff, no date has been set yet. If convicted, Pelkey faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Despite what his client planned to do, Pelkey's attorney, Christopher MacLean of Camden, described his client as "an intelligent young man with a bright future ahead of him."

In response to Pelkey's arrest, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the

country's largest Muslim civil rights organization, issued a statement Wednesday calling for hate crime charges to be made.

"This disturbing case highlights the real threat posed by anti-Muslim bigotry, antisemitism and other forms of hate," Edward Ahmed Mitchell, CAIR's deputy director, said in a statement. "We thank law enforcement authorities for stopping this alleged terrorist plot. We urge state and federal prosecutors to pursue hate crime charges in this case, and we urge

law enforcement agencies nationwide to crack down on bias-motivated crime."

While Pelkey's intentions were clear—he planned to carry out bombing not one but several religious spaces—whether he will be charged with a hate crime is not clear. According to the Associated Press, Wolff has declined to comment on whether more charges could be forthcoming.



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Dozens Killed In Blast At Shia Mosque In Pakistan's Peshawar?



By Sophia Saifi, CNN
Following is reposted
A blast struck a Shia mosque during Friday prayers in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar, killing at least 56 people and injuring another 196, police and

hospital officials said. More than 50 people were injured in the explosion, according to Mohammad Asim, the spokesperson for Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital, where victims were being treated. The source of the blast is

suspected to be a suicide attack, but investigations are ongoing, Peshawar's police chief Muhammad Ejaz Khan told CNN. There has been no claim of responsibility so far for the attack, one of the deadliest in recent

years on Pakistan's Shia minority, which has long been the target of violence by Sunni Muslim Islamist militant groups, including the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Soldiers inspect a

mosque after the explosion. Thousands have been killed, many of them Shia Muslims, in sectarian violence in Pakistan, according to Human Rights Watch and other monitoring groups.

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Bibi Muskan: The Defying Icon Of Resistance



by Dr. Aslam Abdullah

She is now the face of Islam. History chose this hijab-wearing, veiled Muslim girl to symbolize resistance and self-confidence. Her courage will inspire Muslim girls and boys and everyone else who faces intense opposition for their convictions.

It happened in Karnataka, an Indian state ruled by Hindu nationalists. It happened in a government-run educational institution. She was alone, walking to the college building to submit her assignment. Upper-caste Hindu youths wearing saffron colors surrounded her, howling like wolves while shouting Jay Sri Ram. Many of them were not students. They tried to intimidate and prevent her from entering college.

Walking with dignity and adjusting her Hijab, she spaced towards her destination, occasionally raising her fist with an equally strong voice with Allah o Akbar. She reminded herself that its God, the ultimate protector, was her guardian. No fear in her

face and no trembling in her steps, she continued to walk. Her college principal and teachers shielded her, but her determination to face the challenge was defiant.

The young Bibi Muskan became an icon of resistance and bravery in a few seconds. She relived the defiance of the Tiananmen Square man, who tried to stand the advancing tanks of the Chinese power structure bravely. Tiananmen's resistance was against a regime. Muskan's defiance is against an ideology of hate that targets Muslims of India and Islam in general. Hijab is an excuse; the purpose of the Hindu nationalist is to turn India into a Hindu Rashtra with no rights to Muslims and minorities. The roots are in Manusmriti, a sacred upper-caste Hindu book that seeks to reduce humans into enslaved people at the service of whom they believe were born from the head and chest of their deities.

Muslim women in India are the targets of Hindu nationalists who play with their honor. Dignity

and lives. Rather than receding into passivity, Muslim girls are now at the forefront of standing up for the constitutional rights of their community and other minorities.

Two years ago, they defied the odds and braved the police onslaught on Jamia University. Wearing hijabs, they forced the Delhi police to retreat from attacking unarmed students. Shaheen Bagh became the most significant world movement of defiance against a regime that sought to deprive Muslims of citizenship rights. In the organized campaign of humiliating Muslim women, through conducting auctions of Muslim women on the internet, they shook the nation through legal routes.

Now in Karnataka, they spearheaded the movement to safeguard women's constitutional rights by refusing to remove their Hijab in educational institutions. They asserted that women are independent and capable of choosing their destiny. The self-assertion of young Muslim girls chal-

lenges the Manusmriti vision of a submissive, domesticated woman at the mercy of patriarchy.

Muslim women are breaking the barriers in education. From a 6.1 literacy rate in 1901. There are 70 percent literate Muslim women in India. Over 15 percent go for higher secondary and graduate schools. They are relentlessly trying hard to advance in all fields of education.

However, the following factors are responsible for many Muslim girls achieving higher education.

1. Poor economic condition of the parents.
2. Had to look after their young siblings and old, ailing ones.
3. The schools' teaching and learning procedure are not attractive and practical.
4. Failing to enjoy teacher's attention due to poor student-teacher ratio.
5. Marriage at an early age.
6. Lack of female teachers in a school.

7. Engaged in wage-earning activities to help their parents.

8. Schools are not available within walking distance and closer to the place of dwelling,

9. Parents are a bit reluctant due to the feeling of insecurity.

Hijab offers protection and dignity to Muslim girls in a society that wants women to Manusmriti vision. It is this fight young Muslim girls have taken upon them to continue. Through their Hijab, they assert their dignity and resolve. They remind others they will pursue their education on their terms, not as objects but as contributors to social growth. When Bib Muskan raised the slogan Allah o Akbar, she told everyone that she was under God's protection in her determination to pursue her divinely given right, the right to have education with dignity.

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Is The NFL Heading Into A New Era?

By: Zain Ahmed

Seven-Time Super Bowl Champion and Three-Time MVP, Tom Brady officially announced retirement on Feb.1, 2022, after 22 seasons in the NFL (National Football League) according to ESPN. With one of the greatest athletes leaving the sport, it is expected to make a major impact on the league according to NBC Sports. The 44-year-old has many accomplishments and records under his name, such as record-high 624 touchdown passes, and 84,250 passing yards in his playing days. His wins in seven championships is also the most by any player yet in NFL history with six as the New England Patriots quarterback, and the last as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback.

However, Brady's retirement from the game is not the only thing that's causing a potential shift in the NFL. There's a mix of older players aging and retiring, as well as younger players striving and making a name for themselves in the league.

Just a few weeks before Brady's retirement, two-time Super Bowl Champion Ben Roethlisberger announced his retirement after 18 seasons in the NFL. After the Pittsburgh Steelers were eliminated by the Chiefs in the Wild Card Round according to ESPN, the 39-year-old quarterback announced that he will put an end to one of the most remarkable careers in NFL history.

Moreover, Drew Brees, who is second on the all-time passing yards list only behind Tom Brady also announced retirement on his Instagram in early 2021, after a legendary 20-year career with the Chargers and Saints. After losing the NFC Divisional Round to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Brees, 42-years-old at the time, called it a career.

Only a year earlier, two-time Super Bowl Champion Eli Manning decided to call it a career as well. He finished as one of the greatest to put on a Giants uniform,



retiring at 39-years-old in 2020. "It's rare to have the privilege of playing an entire career with one organization," Manning said during his retirement speech according to CBS.

Those are just a few examples of how the league has changed, as many other memorable star players of the past generation either retired, regressed, switched teams, or just do not look

the same as they have before.

On the bright side, however, we are now seeing many younger stars emerge into the new faces of the NFL. With young talents like Patrick Mahomes, Justin Herbert, Joe Burrow, Josh Allen, and many more already finding success, we are seeing a new wave of players succeeding in the NFL.

For example, Patrick

Mahomes, who is only 26 years old already has multiple Super Bowl appearances, and even a championship in 2020 according to CBS Sports. According to BleacherReport, he also has an MVP award to his name and has either broken or is on pace to be high on many all-time records.

Rookie Ja'Marr Chase, as well as second-year pro Joe Burrow have already taken the Bengals for a

trip to the Super Bowl according to ESPN. Bills Josh Allen, Chargers Justin Herbert, Cardinals Kyler Murray, and many more have also had strong performances in the regular season, as well as the playoffs according to NFL.com.

During Super Bowl 56 the Rams drove to a last-minute touchdown in a 23-20 victory over the Bengals. Quarterback Matthew Stafford found star receiver Cooper Kupp for the go-ahead, 1-yard touchdown with 1:25 to play, USA TODAY reported.

Although it may be tough and may take some time for fans to let go of the stars of the past, at least they are given a bright future, as they now have a new generation of talent in the NFL, a new era, to look forward to, and cheer for in years to come.

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Op Ed: A Muslim Perspective On A Trip To Spain; Part 4

by Harris Imam

The following is part of a series- read the first part here, part two here, and part three here.

The morning after our trip around Madrid, we took an early morning tour bus to Toledo and Segovia. The bus first took us a little south to Toledo, the former capital of Spain. The city is very well preserved, and it felt as if I was transported into another historical era walking through the alleys of the remarkable city. The city's historic quarter, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, still preserves its original medieval layout. The city is referred to as the "city of three cultures" by many travel sites, as Christians, Muslims and Jews coexisted once within the city walls during the Middle Ages.

Our bus tour guide told everyone on the tour about the history of the region including that in the year 711, the new religion of Islam conquered the Iberian Peninsula. For several centuries, North African Muslims dominated Spain, including Toledo.

Upon researching more about the Spanish history of that era you will learn that the Muslims were very tolerant rulers allowing Christians and Jews to practice their religions freely. While the period they ruled in is referred to by many as Europe's "Dark" Ages, in the Iberian Peninsula it was the Islamic age of enlightenment. Under Muslim rule Mathematics, astronomy, literature and architecture all thrived. After Toledo went back under Christian rule in 1085, the Muslim and Jew population faced forced conversions if they chose not to flee. I would advise every person, especially Muslims to learn about Spanish history during that time. I was in awe to say the least with how much history the city of Toledo alone held. You can definitely see the Islamic architectural style in many of the buildings of the city.

We stopped at the "Mezquita (Mosque)" del Cristo de la Luz, the for-

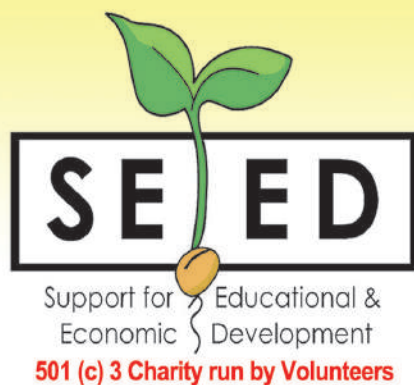
mer the Mosque of Bab al-Mardum – located adjacent to one of Toledo's oldest city gates—City gates of Bab al-Mardum (Puerta Mayordomo). It was later converted to a Christian chapel.

Our bus took us next to the city of Segovia, a historical city about 90 kilometers north of Madrid. The journey took us back through the fringes of Madrid and past La Mujer Muerta. Literally meaning "the Dead Woman," La Mujer Muerta is a mountain subrange just north of Madrid. After another 20 kilometers, we finally arrived at the historic city of Segovia.

The first and foremost, obvious architectural element of the city is the magnificent granite aqueduct built in the first century during Roman rule. This aqueduct spanned the height of multiple stories with numerous stone arches. To my surprise, this structure was not only aesthetic but also functional. It served to move water from the nearby river, Rio Frio, to the city of Segovia. We were told by our tour guide that the aqueduct maintains its structures solely with its arch shape, an engineering marvel for the time it was built.

Like Toledo, Segovia also consisted of narrow cobblestone streets, some of which would lead to larger rectangular plazas. The history in the city was omnipresent, but our time here was not. Like sponges, we soaked in as much of the city as we could including exploring the Alcázar of Segovia, a medieval fortress that stood on the opposite side of the city from the aqueduct. Posing next to a medieval soldier's battle armor, I truly felt like a kid in a candy store. From the openings in the walls of the castle, appeared a picturesque view of the vast rolling yellow hills. I stared out the window profoundly thinking about how many others in history shared the same view. Before I knew it, our time at Segovia had come to an end, and the tour bus waited to take us back to Madrid.





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American Critics Of Hindu Nationalism Risk Sustained Attacks

This article was first published in TwoCircles.net.

by Pieter Friedrich

When US Senator and then-presidential candidate Bernie Sanders criticized then President Donald Trump's "failure of leadership on human rights" for having dismissed the issue of the February 2020 anti-Muslim pogrom in Delhi as "up to India," it was not long before a senior leader of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) openly threatened interference.

"How much ever neutral we wish to be you compel us to play a role in Presidential elections," responded BJP National Secretary BL Santhosh to Sanders on Twitter. Santhosh deleted his Tweet within hours, but the message was clear: any international criticism of affairs in an India ruled by the Hindu nationalist BJP would prompt a harsh backlash. The incentive for such backlash was equally clear considering top BJP officials were implicated in instigating the 2020 violence.

Threats against Sanders, however, are far from the first time that critics of Hindu nationalism — and the movement's actions — have faced such backlash. As American awareness and, consequently, criticism of Hindu nationalism (or "Hindutva") spreads, attacks on critics correspondingly escalate. Politicians, academics, journalists such as myself, and even prominent interfaith bodies have endured pressure, censure, and protest for years.

One of the most recent and sustained onslaughts occurred in September 2021, when faculty from over 50 mostly US-based universities organized an online conference called Dismantling Global Hindutva (DGH). In reprisal, they faced everything from denunciations to death threats.

Ram Madhav — a BJP General Secretary and former spokesperson of the party's ideological parent, the Rashtriya



Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) paramilitary — denounced DGH as "nothing but a front to attack Hindu religion and culture." Leading up to the conference, branches of RSS's international wing, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), were among its most vocal opponents.

HSS-UK "vehemently" condemned the conference as "anti-Hindu/anti-India," while HSS-USA claimed that discussion of the religious-nationalist ideology of Hindutva would "amplify Hindu-phobia, encourage Hindu hate, and incite violence against the minority Hindu population."

Yet the only violence — or threat of it — occurred against conference organizers and speakers. Death and rape threats forced many to withdraw from the event. One shocking email even warned organizers: "If this event will take place then I will become Osama bin Laden and will kill all the speakers."

"More than 1m emails were sent to the presidents, provosts and officials at universities involved in the conference pressuring them to withdraw and dismiss staff who were participating, pointing to an organised campaign by groups

in India and the US," reported The Guardian. "At Drew University in New Jersey, more than 30,000 emails were received in just a few minutes, causing the university server to crash."

"The backlash was a concerted, somewhat coordinated effort among the many arms of the global Hindu Right," Dr. Rohit Chopra, an organizer and professor at Santa Clara University, told me. "When a million emails are sent to universities in protest, so much so that one university's server crashed in a few minutes, there has to be a coordinated effort and one engineered by an entity with significant resources. Whether that was the RSS, the BJP IT cell, a Hindu Right organization in the US, or some combination thereof — we don't know. But just as politicians in India claim riots are spontaneous when we know they are engineered for political gains, there was nothing spontaneous about this backlash."

In fact, the backlash against those who speak against Hindu nationalism — or, in one case, simply disassociate from Hindu nationalist outfits — has a long history. One of the earliest waves of pushback against Hindutva's American critics

began in 2013 just as the BJP mobilized its election machinery in India to make Narendra Modi Prime Minister.

In September 2013, the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR) withdrew from a Chicago event organized by Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA). One reason was VHPA's association with India's VHP, which is the religious wing of the RSS. Another was co-sponsorship of the event by Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP), the BJP's international front which, in 2020, registered as a foreign agent in America. Yet another was the involvement of BJP speakers at a time when the party's candidate for Prime Minister, Modi, was still banned from entering the US.

CPWR's disassociation provoked an outcry. In a coalition letter issued by American Hindus Against Defamation (a project of VHPA), signatories accused the interfaith body of "lack of understanding and respect" which "jeopardized the reputation and credibility of CPWR." Insisting it was now necessary to "heal relations with the Hindu and Indian community," they demanded a public apology.

The few national signatories to the letter included HSS-USA and Hindu American Foundation (HAF).

In December 2013, HAF "launched a major campaign" to block US House Resolution 417, which was not only perhaps the most significant congressional attempt to warn against the "violent agenda" advanced by "strands of the Hindu nationalist movement" but also affirmed Modi's ban on entry to the US. Every congressional representative who backed the resolution received a visit from HAF, revealing a staffer in one such office. He added that HAF was "definitely trying to undermine anyone in Washington who is critical of Modi."

Incidentally, HAF had only three board members at the time, including Rishi Bhutada. He joined HAF's board in 2012, the same year that he became Vice-President of Finance for a large industrial corporation founded by his father, Ramesh, who is vice-president of HSS-USA.

The same month that HAF, with Rishi as one of its top leaders, began working to block a congressional resolution

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Hindu Nationalism**

critical of Modi, Ramesh spoke at an OFBJP rally in Houston, TX. “We are not only for BJP, but for a strong India, and we consider Narendra Modi and BJP to be strong vehicles for the same,” said Ramesh at the rally. In early 2014, while HAF was still campaigning against H. Res. 417, the senior Bhutada was organizing US-based call-centres to urge Indian voters to support the BJP and even “inspired and encouraged” a team to travel to India to campaign directly for Modi.

Modi was elected and the resolution failed, but HAF did not forget one of its initial sponsors: then-Congressman Keith Ellison, the first Muslim ever elected to US Congress.

In 2016, as Ellison was being considered for chair of the Democratic National Committee, HAF voiced “concerns,” saying they were “disturbed” by his “legislative activism against India,” citing H. Res. 417 in particular. Their complaints compelled him to join a conference call with them (as well as, among others, HSS-USA and VHPA); remarkably, he caved on his concerns about Modi’s role in the 2002 Gujarat Pogrom, calling it a “closed issue.”

The only other congressional representative reported as on the call was then Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, who later made Indian headlines in 2018 after publicly withdrawing from the World Hindu Congress (WHC) in Chicago, an event hosted by VHPA.

To protest the choice of RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat as WHC’s keynote speaker, several young South Asian activists — mostly women — infiltrated the conference to raise a banner and chant anti-RSS slogans. They were swiftly assaulted, spat upon, and even choked by attendees. A year later, VHPA filed a lawsuit against them seeking \$500,000 in “damages.”

Meanwhile, Gabbard had long faced allegations of close ties to Hindu nationalist outfits like

HSS-USA, VHPA, and OFBJP.

In a January 2019 op-ed, she denounced such allegations as “religious bigotry and attempts to foment fear of Hindus.” In March 2019, as she ran for the presidency, she repeated that tactic when I questioned her at a campaign rally about her direct interactions with the RSS itself. Dodging the question, she said, “It is this kind of attacks that are rooted in religious bigotry that we must stand together and condemn.”

Yet Hindu-American Congressman Ro Khanna seemed to disagree. In August 2019, after I published a comprehensive investigation of Gabbard’s Hindutva links, Khanna affirmed the article on Twitter as “important,” adding, “It’s the duty of every American politician of Hindu faith to stand for pluralism, reject Hindutva, and speak for equal rights for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhist[s] & Christians.”

Khanna’s simple statement soon made him yet another Hindutva critic to face targeted backlash.

In September 2019, HAF hand-delivered a coalition letter — including signatures by HSS-USA and VHPA — to his office, demanding he retract the Tweet. In October, 25-30 alleged members of HSS protested him (as well as myself) outside one of his constituent town halls. By month’s end, local businessman Ritesh Tandon announced he would challenge Khanna. Boasting that his father was “a strong RSS person,” Tandon admitted he was largely motivated to run by the congressman’s anti-Hindutva position.

In contrast to that position, Tandon spent his first month on the campaign trail in frequent company with former OFBJP President Chandru Bhambhra, attending a VHPA event, and even meeting with BJP Spokesperson Sambit Patra.

Although Khanna refused to reverse his statement, Congressman Tom Suozzi succumbed to pressure when he

faced backlash in August 2019 for a letter expressing concerns about Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, including that “the Modi government’s move could embolden Hindu nationalists to engage in acts of violence and discrimination against India’s minority religious groups.”

The outcry was led by Jagdish Sewhani, who pressured Suozzi to attend a community meeting where Sewhani lectured the congressman about his “tone and tenor,” claimed it “hurt” Indian-Americans, and demanded he withdraws it.

Yet not all local Indian-Americans shared the outrage. As one local community leader noted, “A group of people with vested interests attacked him for his letter.” Perhaps he meant Sewhani, who has reportedly served as a coordinator for HSS as well as on the National Executive Committee of OFBJP, of which he is reportedly a founding member. Allegedly an intimate associate of Modi, he not only organized US-based efforts to support Modi’s election but personally reports travelling to India in 2014 to serve as “part of Modi-Ji’s campaign team” and participate in “brainstorming sessions.”

Despite the vested interests — that is, the crystal clear pro-BJP bias — of those pressuring him, Suozzi issued a public apology.

Other members of Congress who have dared to speak up about the Kashmir issue have also faced backlash. In 2019, after Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal — herself an Indian-American — introduced a resolution on Kashmir, she was accused of having “betrayed” her community, HAF denounced it as an “anti-Hindu, anti-India resolution,” and India’s External Affairs Minister refused to attend a congressional meeting because she would be there. In 2020, after Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib introduced a similar resolution, the Bhutada family sent her challenger a surge of campaign donations.

Attacks on critics of Hindutva, however, have, in some instances today, passed beyond peaceful pressure and protests.

One of the most ominous incidents was in late 2020. Dr Vinayak Chaturvedi — a noted scholar on Hindutva who is writing an upcoming book about VD Savarkar, who popularized the term — was on the phone with his octogenarian parents when they told him armed police were outside their home. Police reported they had received an anonymous tip that Chaturvedi’s mother had, in a Zoom call, been witnessed shooting a person. The elderly couple, it turned out, were victims of swatting: a malicious tactic to weaponize police against innocent people by falsely reporting a violent crime.

Considering his parents had previously been harassed due to their son’s work on Hindutva, Chaturvedi concluded that the swatting incident “has all the traces of the invisible hand of the Right that is no longer interested in intellectual debate.”

“Scholars who conduct research on India are also aware that they are being monitored on their campuses here in the United States,” Chaturvedi later noted. “American organizations that propagate Hindutva and are sympathetic to Modi, the BJP, and the Sangh Parivar have trained their scrutiny on the American academy.”

Dr Audrey Truschke of Rutgers University is among the most prominent and regularly outspoken American academics to criticize both the Modi government and Hindu nationalist ideology. The outcome has been a nonstop onslaught of death threats. “For more than five years, I have received hate mail from Hindu nationalists or Hindu supremacists nearly every single day,” she said in 2021. “I have been the target of so many death and rape threats that I have lost count.” Even her young children are routinely threatened.

As a journalist focused on Hindutva, I can identify at least a little

bit. I’ve been physically assaulted while protesting Modi’s 2015 visit to America, roughly manhandled by Gabbard staff while protesting her, repeatedly attacked in print by HAF, protested (as mentioned) by HSS, regularly threatened with violence on social media, and faced attempts to dox not only myself but my family.

“India has no doubt become quite dangerous for visible critics of Hindutva since 2014,” Dr. Chopra told me. “I should emphasize that it is people on the ground in India combating the vile ideology of Hindutva who deserve the bulk of praise and support. They are on the frontlines.”

He adds, “The backlash will also continue in the US, unfortunately, but it is also heartening that academics, journalists, and critics of the Hindu Right here are standing firm and pushing back.”

Yet the sentiments of the Hindu Right says Chopra, “do not trump constitutional rights, democratic principles, the principle of free inquiry.” Although critics of Hindutva in America may continue to face escalating attacks, they can stand strong and take courage in the protection offered by the rule of law — something which Hindutva critics in India (who are often also its victims) cannot, unfortunately, currently rely upon.

Indeed, as the violence of Hindutva continues to grow unabated in India, its critics in America — particularly considering they are both legally and physically in a far more secure position — have a duty to continue to expose and oppose the Hindu nationalist movement despite the backlash.

Pieter Friedrich is a freelance journalist specializing in the analysis of South Asian affairs. He is the author of “Saffron Fascists: India’s Hindu Nationalist Rulers” and co-author of “Captivating the Simple-Hearted: A Struggle for Human Dignity in the Indian Subcontinent.”

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Indian Christians**

working — through many of the country's social issues, but also helped lift millions upon millions of their fellow citizens out of poverty, vastly boost the economy, and differentiate India from many of South Asia's far more authoritarian States and their various communal conflicts.

The sea change began in 2014, when the current ruling party in India first came to power. That party is the Bharatiya Janata Party (or BJP), a fairly young party — founded only in 1980 — which is quite different from most political parties with which we are familiar. The BJP, you see, is actually the political wing of an older organization called the RSS and was founded to bring the RSS's Hindu nationalist philosophy into the political realm.

The RSS is a paramilitary that was founded in 1925, the same year that Adolf Hitler published *Mein Kampf* and founded his own SS. It grew in the years before the Second World War, and its founders not only explicitly praised the fascist movements that were developing in Europe at the same time, but actually traveled

there to visit them. They then explicitly pointed to their own organization, the RSS, as a group that they considered to be the Indian equivalent of the European fascist groups.

They also detailed their view that India is, always has been, and always should be a nation reserved solely for Hindus. They believed that only Hindus possessed a "birthright" to Indian citizenship, and, variously, called for stripping non-Hindus of citizenship, ejecting them from the country, or simply eliminating them. They went even a step further, praising — yes, I said praising — Hitler's treatment of the Jews as a model for the RSS to follow.

Their primary targets were — and are today — Muslims and Christians, whom they, in so many words, termed as "foreign elements," "internal threats," and "traitors."

Why traitors? Because they were Indian citizens who had chosen to follow a different religion than Hinduism — and the RSS believes that only Hindus can be true Indians.

This is the ideology of the paramilitary whose political wing, the BJP, has been in complete control of India since 2014.

For the past eight years

of the RSS-BJP regime in India, Muslims have faced an ever increasing persecution that has ramped up to the point that international experts and think tanks are now issuing genocide warnings. Christians, too, have faced growing persecution.

Every year since 2014, the total number of violent incidents reported against Indian Christians has increased, reaching an all-time high in 2021 of 505 attacks.

Now, despite such a high number of incidents, the figures must be properly contextualized to avoid underestimating the true impact on the Indian Christian community.

For one thing, 505 attacks in 2021 represents only documented incidents; a great many more may have gone unreported. For another thing, it's crucial to remember that the vast majority of documented attacks were mob attacks by, at times, hundreds of people. Most attacks were not against individuals, but rather against entire congregations of dozens, scores, or more, meaning that thousands of people may have been directly victimized. Moreover, such attacks — especially considering how they usually involve impunity for the attackers and

arrests for the victims — spread psychological terror which almost certainly impacts tens and tens of thousands, if not millions, of other Indian Christians. National Indian Christian organizations and leaders have described 2021 as a "year of fear" and the "most violent" that they have experienced.

Last year, International Christian Concern — a DC-based nonprofit — awarded India, its prime minister, and the RSS's family of Hindu nationalist organizations its ignominious "Persecutor of the Year" award. Voice of the Martyrs, in its most recent reports, categorizes the environment for Indian Christians as "hostile." And Open Doors USA, a watchdog group monitoring global persecution of Christians, labels the situation as one of "extreme" persecution.

Open Doors also issues annual rankings of countries according to the level of persecution faced by Christians.

In 2013, a year before the BJP came to power, Open Doors ranked India 31st among the top 50 countries in the world where persecution of Christians is most severe. This year — and for the past four years — India has ranked as

the 10th most dangerous country in the world in which to be a Christian.

That's higher than, for instance, China or even Saudi Arabia.

Notably, while there are nine other countries where persecution of Christians does rank higher, India has three distinguishing factors from them all: first, it is the only legitimate, officially secular democracy on the list; second, as the second-most populated country in the world, its population is more than twice that of all the other nine combined; third, it is the only country which is an ally of the United States.

Persecution of Indian Christians is skyrocketing, but we here in America generally remain not only unaware of the severity of the situation, but are all too often — especially as American Christians — totally ignorant of the reality that there is even any persecution occurring at all.

That needs to change. Indian Christians are being backed into a corner. Speaking from personal experience interacting with that community, I can assure you with full authority: they are pleading for the American Church to speak out for them.

At Least Three States Give Go-Ahead To 15 Week Abortion Ban

By: TMO Staff

At least three states have advanced a 15-week abortion plan this week. The decisions come ahead of the Supreme Court decision regarding the Mississippi law that has the ability to limit abortion rights across the country by overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the Associated Press reported.

Most recently Florida's GOP-controlled House passed the ban after several hours of debate in which Democrats argued the measure would create an undue burden on women. Florida currently allows abortions until 24 weeks of pregnancy. According to NPR, while about 3.5% of abortions in Florida happen after 15 weeks, the result is still thousands of preg-

nancies.

"This is the right to life and to give up life is unconscionable to me," said Republican Rep. Dana Trabulsy, a supporter of the bill. Trabulsy also shared that while she has previously had an abortion, she has "regretted it everyday since."

Republicans also described the ban as a "very reasonable" and "generous" alternative to the current six-week ban effective in Texas.

"I believe we have a unique opportunity in the fact that the Supreme Court is considering 15 weeks right now," Rep. Erin Grall said. "This would allow Florida to save as many babies as possible as soon as possible after that decision is made."

While bill supporters claim the bill "protects" all lives, it clearly disregards that of the pregnant person. An amendment to include an exception for rape, human trafficking, and incest survivors was denied. Instead, the only exceptions are for the life of the mother and for "fatal fetal anomalies."

"As a woman it is my right to make decisions about my body and what is in the best interest of my family," said Rep. Robin Bartleman, a Democrat. "God forbid your 11 year old is raped and pregnant and you find out after 15 weeks, you don't get to get your daughter that abortion, that's what this law says."

According to The Wash-

ington Post, the bill will now move to the Florida Senate on Monday, where it is expected to pass before going to Gov. Ron DeSantis' desk. DeSantis is expected to sign the bill into law as he has openly expressed his support against abortions.

It follows a similar bill being passed on Tuesday in Arizona. The restrictive abortion bill not only makes it illegal to have an abortion after 15 weeks of being pregnant, but makes it a crime for doctors to perform such an abortion.

According to Senate Bill 1164, medical officials who conduct abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy could lose their medical licenses or face up to a year in state

prison.

"The state has an obligation to protect life, and that is what this bill is about," one of the bill's co-sponsors, Sen. Nancy Barto, said during the debate. "A 15-week-old baby in the womb has a fully formed nose, lips, eyelids, they suck their thumbs. They feel pain. That's what this bill is about."

All state Democrats opposed the bill, noting it does not make exceptions for rape or incest.

"Until we find a way to completely stop rape and incest, we cannot put barriers in place for those survivors to have the freedom to dictate their own futures," Sen. Christine Marsh said.

**Cont. from page 1.
Media Coverage Of
Ukrainian**

lim commentators and accusations of bias. In The Guardian, Mousata Bayoumi wrote, "ts – add up to is not real human solidarity for an oppressed people. In fact, it's the opposite. It's tribalism. These comments point to pernicious racism that permeates today's war coverage and seeps into its fabric like a stain that won't go away" in response to CBS foreign Correspondent Charlie D'Agata saying "isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq

or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilized, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully, too – city, one where you wouldn't expect that, or hope that it's going to happen".

Bayoumi went on to give other examples who made their careers of demonizing Syrian refugees jumping to welcome Aghan or Syrian refugees who were different in terms of religion and color. He went on to make it clear that Ukrainians did deserve rogue but pointed out that western countries were doing so

not out of compassion and humanity but nationalism. He concluded by saying "if we reserve our help exclusively for them while denying the same help to others, then we have not only chosen the wrong reasons to support another human being. We have also, and I'm choosing these words carefully, shown ourselves as giving up on civilization and opting for barbarism instead."

The situation of Ukrainians has also attracted empathy and support from Muslim refugees given their shared experience of being displaced by foreign invasions.

According to The New York Times, "Many in the region[the Middle East] took to social media to express sympathy for Ukrainians forced to flee," while pointing out hypocrisy on how Europe treated people from their region who wanted to make a life after fleeing conflicts which the continent did have a role in creating.

For example, Dr. Khoury said, "like many others, I also saw how these same countries who have put up so many obstacles to refugees fleeing conflicts in the Middle East open their borders to Ukrainians." Furthermore, there

was shared sympathy in that Syrians also fled Russian bombing in support of Syrian dictator Bashaar al-Asad, "Many Syrians who oppose the government of President Bashar al-Assad watched the invasion of Ukraine with particular interest, having personally experienced a Russian military intervention in their country that destroyed cities and displaced huge numbers of people." In that sense, there is an increasing sentiment that refugee policy that welcomes all in need regardless of what they look like or how they pray.

**Cont. from page 1.
Supreme Court**

nately gathered" names, telephone numbers, and email addresses, in addition to information on the religious and political beliefs of hundreds of Muslim Americans. Conversations were recorded during religious prayer groups in the mosque through the use of a hidden recording device in a car key fob that was left behind. Hidden cameras were also allegedly used to not only record mosque activities but those in homes and businesses.

The informant's handlers told him they were conducting electronic surveillance in at least eight area mosques, including plaintiff Sheik Yassir Fazaga's office, the ACLU said.

Identified as Craig Monteilh, the FBI informant was said to have failed to produce any public evidence of wrongdoing. Instead, he himself made mosque-goers uncomfortable by starting conversations about jihad and violence at a mosque in Irvine, California. As a result, a community leader contacted the FBI to report him. As more information was revealed, three of the men Monteilh spied on sued the FBI and the agents responsible for directing him, claiming that their right to exercise their religion had been violated. The plaintiffs including Fazaga, Ali Malik, and Yasser AbdelRahim.

They were represented by the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at UCLA School of Law, the ACLU of Southern

California, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Council for American Islamic Relations, and the law firm of Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai.

The District Court for the Southern District of California then dismissed their claims that the FBI unlawfully targeted Muslim community members for surveillance based on their religion and supported the FBI's argument that further proceedings could reveal state secrets. However, while the government agency and district court attempted to dismiss the claims under the guise of state secrets privilege, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in 2019.

According to the appeals court, a provision of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) specifies how courts should handle sensitive cases. The court also noted that the trial judge should have used them instead of dismissing the case after the government invoked the state secrets doctrine.

Following the ruling, the FBI appealed, arguing that its invocation of the state secrets privilege barred the plaintiffs' religious discrimination claims. The Supreme Court then agreed to hear the case.

"As the Imam of the Orange County Islamic Foundation, I worked diligently to establish trust between my community and the U.S. government after the horrifying attacks of September 11 more than 20 years ago. I

invited the FBI to speak with the members of my Mosque. They looked us all in the eyes and assured us unequivocally that they were not spying on us. We trusted them. But they lied, and our sacred community was shaken to its core," said Fazaga, a religious leader and one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, according to the ACLU. Fazaga was hopeful the Supreme Court would hold the individuals "accountable for treating people who practice Islam as second-class citizens."

But while the plaintiffs were hopeful they would be supported, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the FBI and surveilling Muslim Americans. "Today's decision addresses only the narrow question whether 1806(f) (of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) displaces the state secrets privilege," Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. said, writing for the court.

He also said there was an improper reading of FISA. He noted there was no indication that Congress had meant to affect the privilege.

"FISA makes no reference to the state secrets privilege," he wrote. "It neither mentions the privilege by name nor uses any identifiable synonym, and its only reference to the subject of privilege reflects a desire to avoid the alteration of privilege law." He added that under FISA, "the central question is the lawfulness of surveillance." But despite this essential question,

he noted that "we have never suggested that an assertion of the state secrets privilege can be defeated by showing that the evidence was unlawfully obtained."

Friday's ruling did not address the religious freedom issues raised in the lawsuit, neither did it address the question of when the government can invoke the state secrets privilege to get a case dismissed.

Alito did leave room for questions in the case that could potentially bring about another outcome since Section 1806(f) does not displace the privilege and remanded for further proceedings.

"While we are disappointed that the court did not recognize that FISA displaces the state secrets privilege," said Brian R. Frazelle, a lawyer with the Constitutional Accountability Center, in a statement. "We're relieved that the court stopped there, leaving other questions open in a way that may allow for accountability in this and other cases."

According to The New York Times, the Supreme Court's decision came a day after the justices discussed another case involving the state secrets doctrine. The doctrine sometimes requires the dismissal of lawsuits that would disclose information that could harm national security, the Times reported. In that case the court ruled Thursday that the doctrine barred Abu Zubaydah, who was waterboarded more than 60 times, from obtaining testimony from two CIA

contractors who were instrumental in his brutal interrogations.

This outcome "could have been better, but ... today we live to fight another day," Fazaga said Friday.

The case of FBI v. Fazaga originated in 2011 and despite the setback, the community is not willing to give up. The FBI has yet to explain its actions and the case will now return to the Ninth Circuit, which will decide how to proceed. Community members expect there to be years' worth of cases to come but are up for the challenge as such a case benefits the community for the long haul, Fazaga said.

"I was in my early twenties when I learned that my own government was spying on me and attempting to entrap me because of my religion. I felt deeply betrayed and sad. I also did not understand how the U.S. government could get away with violating a right I knew was guaranteed to all of us by our Constitution. I decided to hold my government accountable and, today, over fifteen years later, I'm relieved that the Supreme Court will allow our case to continue. I believe the most patriotic thing someone can do is to fight for the Constitution, so that all Americans can be protected by it and the sacred rights it bestows. I will continue to fight on behalf of my family, community, and all Americans to ensure that all of us are protected by the US Constitution," Malik said.



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