

COALITION of HINDUS of NORTH AMERICA (CoHNA)

IMPACT: Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA) is a Marietta, Georgia-based Hindu right-wing advocacy organization known for targeting critics of Hindu nationalism and those who highlight the persecution of religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians in India. CoHNA supports the discriminatory policies of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and has engaged in campaigns targeting academics and politicians who call attention to the dangers of Hindu nationalism. Leaders of CoHNA also share close associations with far-right Hindu nationalist individuals and groups.

- Founded in 2020 as a grassroots advocacy group claiming “to protect the collective interests of the Hindu community by working on the issues faced by them and educating the public about Hindu heritage and tradition”, the **group is led by individuals who have held positions or worked closely with other Hindu far-right organizations**. CoHNA president, Nikunj Trivedi, served as the chairman of the Hindu Students Council (HSC), the youth wing of far-right Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA). Currently, CoHNA Board Member Sohini Sircar serves as the chairwoman of the HSC Board.
- Both **Trivedi and CoHNA's current Vice President, Rajeev Menon, share a close association with the United States Hindu Alliance (USHA), a group formed by top Hindu far-right leaders and former members of the India-based Hindu supremacist paramilitary organization Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh** (RSS), including Ved Nanda (former RSS worker and President of Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh (HSS), the US offshoot of RSS), Mahesh Mehta (co-founder of VHPA), and Gokul Kunnath (a former RSS worker and close confidant of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi) in 2001. Kunnath serves as the current President of USHA. He was also part of the Global Indians For Bharat Vikas (GIBV), a US-based group formed to rally support for Modi's election victory in 2014.
- CoHNA's Menon has served as Vice President of Communications for USHA. Archived content of the USHA website from 2003 shows that the group extended open support to the Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) movement in India. “It is the sacred duty of all Hindus to support the efforts of the Hindus who are part of the Hindutva Movement,” the group wrote. At an event in October 2013, USHA appealed to Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard “to initiate efforts to have a bipartisan resolution inviting Narendra Modi,” who was then the Chief Minister of Gujarat.
- In **September 2014, Trivedi, in collaboration with USHA, organized an event in support of PM Modi and against organizations critical of Hindu nationalism and minority persecution in India**. While reducing all the critics to labels like “communist/leftist groups, along with extremist Muslim organizations, Far Right Christian Evangelical Organizations and a set of pseudo secular groups,” USHA wrote that these groups had “engaged in a persistent and aggressive campaign to destroy the political career of Shri Narendra Modi.” Trivedi was listed as one of the contact persons for this event.
- In 2014, Trivedi co-signed a letter to then New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to oppose the nomination of Indian-American attorney Preeta Bansal to the New York Court of Appeals. The letter pointed to her role as the chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) when she recommended that the US Department of State deny Narendra Modi's visa in 2005 for his role in the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat state.
- CoHNA leadership is also connected with VHPA. **Trivedi deeply admires VHPA co-founder Mahesh Mehta, who has promoted conspiracy theories and tropes that generate fear and hatred toward Muslims**. Mehta was inspired by MS Golwalkar, the second RSS chief, who referred to Muslims as India's

top internal threat and proposed a genocide as a solution to address it. In 2015, Trivedi was part of an executive committee that organized the Global Dharma Conference, where Mehta was honored with an award.

- In **2022**, CoHNA organized an advocacy campaign, calling on its supporters to email their lawmakers “**urging them to denounce the Hinduphobic and bigoted resolution issued by the Teaneck Democratic Municipal Committee.**” The resolution, which unanimously passed in **September 2022**, “**strongly condemned Hindu nationalist hate groups operating in New Jersey and across the United States**” and called on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate 6 Hindu far-right groups. In response, CoHNA drafted an email campaign for its supporters to send to their lawmakers, which claimed that “the organizations and groups behind the Hinduphobic resolution are painting Hindu organizations as funding terror and hate when some of them and their officers have been indicted by the US Government for their ties to or support of terrorist organizations and individuals connected to al Qaeda, ISIS, Hamas...”
- The organization has a history of criticizing a number of Indian Muslim and progressive Hindu diasporic organizations, describing them as “anti-India” for their criticism of Hindu nationalism and advocacy in defense of the human rights of religious minorities in India.
- In **November 2022**, the group organized another advocacy campaign calling on its supporters to “**urge India Center of Milpitas to disinvite Hindus for Human Rights (HFHR) and Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)**,” who were to hold an event on India’s citizenship laws. In the draft email campaign, CoHNA claimed that “individuals and groups have spun a humanitarian law into a ‘anti-Muslim’ and ‘anti-Dalit’ law, resulting in significant misinformation, confusion and outright Hinduphobia in the mainstream.” The law in question was the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which Amnesty International has described as standing in “clear violation” of the Indian constitution and international human rights law and “legitimizes discrimination” on the basis of religion.
- In **June 2022**, CoHNA president Trivedi took part in a Youtube interview with “**The Jaipur Dialogues- USA**,” a far-right youtube channel, which has previously featured anti-Muslim writer, Robert Spencer, and whose parent organization (The Jaipur Dialogues) has held events arguing “Islamophobia is a unique concept to shield the historical oppressors from being called out,” and has been accused of inciting hatred against religious minorities. **During the interview CoHNA president Trivedi alleged that Congresswoman Ilhan Omar was being supported by the “Islamist lobby.”** He further targeted Congresswoman Pramila Jaypal for her vocal stand against human rights violations in India and said: “We can’t call them Indian-Americans if they are going to be working against our community,” disingenuously claiming that all Indian-Americans support Hindu nationalism.
- The group has been involved in activities that trample academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas. CoHNA was part of a far-right coalition that sent over 1.3 million copy-pasted emails to dozens of universities to withdraw their support for the virtual Dismantling Global Hindutva conference. Organizers and participating scholars reported intense social media harassment, including doxxing and death threats.
- The **group also targets scholarly initiatives that shed light on Hindu nationalism by equating its criticism to an attack on Hinduism as a religion.** In 2021, when North America-based academics launched the “Hindutva Harassment Field Manual,” which offers resources on how to defend scholars attacked by the Hindu far-right, CoHNA tried to push back by falsely calling it part of an “ongoing pattern to silence Hindu voices and deflect attention from the very real concerns of Hinduphobia and bigotry.”

- CoHNA has also argued that Hindutva is “a charged term,” which it claims is “used to silence dissent from Hindus or indeed any criticism at all.” The group also denies the existence of the Hindu supremacist movement and resists its use in academic discourse.
- CoHNA’s **stance on various India-related issues, especially the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) aligns with that of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other affiliated Hindu far-right organizations.** CoHNA wrote an explainer on CAA, terming it as a “humanitarian law” while labeling the concerns of civil society and human rights watchdogs as “misinformation, confusion, and outright Hinduphobia.”
- In December 2022, the Congressional Research Service, the office that provides issue explainers for U.S. lawmakers, issued a backgrounder on India’s citizenship laws in December 2022, in which it stated: “In tandem with a National Register of Citizens (NRC) planned by the federal government, the as-yet unimplemented CAA may threaten the citizenship rights of India’s large Muslim minority.”
- In **January and February 2020, CoHNA VP Rajeev Menon and treasurer Suresh Krishnamoorthy organized rallies supporting CAA and NRC in Atlanta, GA,** with placards that read, “NRIs support CAA and Indian Government.” It also ran a sustained campaign against various city council resolutions that condemned the persecution of religious minorities and the passage of discriminatory citizenship law. **In 2021, the group played a central role in opposing Resolution R2020-583 in Chicago City Council that condemned violence against certain castes and faith groups in India, the CAA, and human rights abuses in Kashmir.**
- In 2019, when the Indian government revoked Indian-administered Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status, CoHNA called it a “win for progressive rights,” echoing talking points similar to the ones pushed by India’s ruling party.
- **CoHNA board member Sudha Jagannathan, a national team member of the Chingari Project run by the VHPA, has repeatedly used her Twitter platform to spread misinformation and Islamophobia.** In a February 2023 tweet, Jagannathan claimed that “Muslim areas in india prevent, block Hindus/festivals from traversing those areas” and that “Muslims pelt stones, attack Hindus during festivals.” However, there’s been documented evidence in the last few years of Hindu groups carrying out festival processions in Muslim-majority areas with the aim being to antagonize and harass the local population. She has used her Twitter to make prejudicial claims that demonize India’s Muslim and Christian minorities.
- In a tweet response to one news story on the lynching of a Muslim man in India’s Bihar state, Jagannathan called it part of a “sob story list.” When a Muslim Twitter handle wrote a post critical of RSS, she responded by saying, “What else can one expect from someone whose community has produced ISS, Al Qaeda, Muslim brotherhood & many many more.” In another post she targeted Islam by claiming it represents “hate & bigotry”.
- In June 2023, when The Wall Street Journalist Sabrina Siddique was harassed by the Hindu far-right on social media platforms for asking PM Modi a question on violence against religious minorities in India, Jagannathan, in response to a critical post wrote, “Why call Hindus who r challenging the WSJ journalist ‘bigots’?”. In another tweet, she claimed that Siddique had helped “Muslims cry victim!”.

- **CoHNA often collaborates with the HSS, VHPA, and platforms anti-Muslim voices like Madhu Kishwar and General G D Bakshi.** In July 2022, police in India's Uttar Pradesh state booked Kishwar for spreading rumors against Muslims with the intention of inciting violence.
- **CoHNA General Secretary Shobha Swamy participated as a presenter at a September 2017 VHPA conference where Sadhvi Ritambhara, a Hindu militant leader from India notorious for inciting anti-minority violence, was the keynote speaker.** CoHNA's Trivedi has also shared platform with prominent Indian Hindu far-right figures, including Mohan Bhagwat, the current chief of the RSS and Subramanian Swamy, a BJP leader who told Vice News in 2020 that Muslims are "not in an equal category" to Hindus when it comes to constitutional rights.
- In 2020, CoHNA wrote a letter to the Texas Forensic Association, an organization that provides and regulates competition in speech and debate for Texas high school students, to oppose the inclusion of the topic "A resolution to curb Hindu nationalism" for debate. Additionally, in the letter, the group contested the characterization of RSS as a paramilitary organization.
- CoHNA also works to advance the narrative that denies the existence of Muslim and Christian persecution in India by platforming individuals whose views and agenda aligns closely with India's ruling party and its ideology. In one such event, CoHNA invited Jerome Anto, who calls himself a practicing Christian but also claims to be an "ardent" worker for the RSS and the BJP.
- Its members also played an important role in promoting movies that advance anti-Muslim tropes. In a May 10, 2023 Facebook post, Menon shared information regarding the screening of the Bollywood film "The Kerala Story" in the US and Canada. Critics and activists have noted that the movie spreads misinformation and amplifies anti-Muslim conspiracy theories. In a May 2023 interview with CNN, Debasish Roy Chowdhury, co-author of "To Kill A Democracy: India's Passage to Despotism," described the movie as "custom-made to spread hate, trigger Islamophobia and justify violence against Muslims." According to TIME, the film has resulted in "demonizing Muslims and encouraging Islamophobia."
- In **April/March 2023, CoHNA was behind the passage of a resolution condemning "Hinduphobia" in the Georgia Assembly.** According to Hindus for Human Rights, an advocacy group of progressive Hindus, "Hinduphobia" is a term used by Hindu far-right groups to target critics of Hindu nationalism and a cover for "surging violence against Muslims and Christians in India."
- **CoHNA has strongly opposed the bills that aim to add caste as a protected category against discrimination,** again using the broader brush of "Hinduphobia" to push back. It ran a campaign against the Seattle City Council's caste ordinance, which was eventually passed on February 21, 2023 with a 6-1 vote.

This factsheet was produced in collaboration with Raqib Hameed Naik, a US-based Kashmiri journalist who covers human rights, religious minorities, and Hindu nationalism.