

National Hindu Congress of Afghanistan ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations

WHEREAS we, the representatives of the Hindu community of Afghanistan, declare:

- A. The main ethnic groups in Afghanistan which practice Hinduism today are the Punjabis and Sindhis who are believed to have come along with Sikhs as merchants to Afghanistan in the 19th century. Afghan Hindus were traditionally a thriving vibrant community that was well respected in Afghanistan.
- B. Violence against Hindus has caused a rapid decline in the Hindu population over the years, with many Afghan Hindus seeking asylum abroad. It is estimated that until the 1970s there were at least 80,000 Hindus living in Afghanistan, but by 2020, it had declined to less than 600 Hindus.
- C. Afghan Hindus have legal and moral obligations to protect their culture in a manner that respects their historical, spiritual, linguistic and religious heritage within modern Afghan society.
- D. We, the members of the Afghanistan Hindu Council, upon this historic meeting of Afghan Hindu leaders, have through the ratifying of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations rights secured under thus treaties and agreements with the Jalalabad and Kabul tribes
- E. The National Congress of Hindus of Kabul and Jalalabad, Afghanistan was established and convened with the aim within the first one hundred days of signing of:
 - a. Establishing a government with certain powers delegated to the council leadership;
 - b. Addressing security concerns of Afghan Hindus;
 - c. Codifying Afghan Hindu community bylaws; and
 - d. Establishing a framework for Hindu justice tribunals.
- F. As part of ratifying the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations, our community acknowledges that Hindu communities retain the inherent right to self-determination that has been recognized by the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations.
- G. There is an ongoing need for the Hindu community of Afghanistan to work collectively to protect and advance communal rights across Afghanistan, including the right to enter into agreements with other communities and nations for their mutual interest and benefit, in part by ratifying the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations.
- H. Hindu leaders from Kabul and Jalalabad met from April 11-12, 2021 to establish an autonomous Hindu Council of Afghanistan in order to create a representative body for Hindus from across Afghanistan to work collectively to defend their rights as articulated in the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations.
- I. On June 11th 2021 Afghan Hindu leaders convened and agreed to ratify and implement the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations.
- J. Hindu leaders from Kabul and Jalalabad have formed an interim Executive Council to draft this ratification document and to plan for a General Assembly in 2021.
- K. The Hindu leadership of Kabul and Jalalabad agrees that ratification and implementation of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations will help Afghan Hindus as an ancient nation to protect and advance our rights both domestically and internationally.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hindu Afghanistan Council hereby endorses and ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations in a way that recognizes and affirms the inherent rights of self-determination of Hindus with their universal rights including their own legal system.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of the National Hindu Congress of Afghanistan until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing ratification of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations was adopted by the General Assembly of the Hindus of Afghanistan on June 22, 2021 of the Common Era.

[signed]

Devdutta Bhai

