

PPFA demands a concrete refugee policy



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To,

Shri Banwarilal Purohit
Honourable [Governor](#) of Assam
Raj Bhawan, Kharghuli
Guwahati-781004

Dated: Guwahati, 31 October [2016](#)

Your Excellency,

Warm greetings from the Patriotic People's Front Assam (PPFA). We would like to bring to your kind attention some of the recent misleading and manipulative statements by some individuals and organizations on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill [2016](#) issue. We are shocked that these groups of vested interests are trying to communalise the issue instead of helping to find an amicable solution. The extremely volatile utterances targeting the Hindu minority [community](#) of Assam is deplorable and condemnable to say the least. We are from this land of glorious civilization & culture and we feel that our spirit should be that of accommodation of Hindu, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs and other religious minorities who have had to face extreme suppression in erstwhile [East](#) Pakistan (now [Bangladesh](#)) and also [West Pakistan](#) and have been the true [victims](#) of partition of [India](#). We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the historical truth that cannot and should not be forgotten and which will attempt to build an honest perspective on the issue of who is a 'foreigner' in Assam ([India](#)) which has been a touchy and thorny issue since long.

Hence, we must all look back and see what transpired in 1942 when Mahatma [Gandhi](#) called for the 'Quit [India](#)' movement. The [Muslim](#) League raised another slogan 'Divide [India](#) And Quit'. In 1946, the 'Pakistan' demand of [Muslim](#) league, supported by the undivided Communist Party of [India](#) (CPI), was accompanied by 'Direct Action' or the violent communal riots like the 'Great Calcutta killing' where nearly 5000 people were killed or massacred in only 4 days. Assam's eminent poet Amulya Barua was one of the [victims](#) in that killing field.

[History](#) bears witness to the fact that [Muslims](#) of undivided [India](#) that followed the ideology of [Muslim](#) League and who wanted a separate homeland for the [Muslims](#) were granted Pakistan and thus they became 'foreigners' to Indians. In fact the moment they created a foreign land for themselves they lost their [rights](#) to get into [India](#) again without passports or related legal [documents](#). So, post 15 August 1947 [India](#), all those who demanded and chose to live in Pakistan (including East Pakistan) was legally foreigners.

However, history is also witness to the fact that the minority [Hindus](#), Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists who were left behind in Pakistan were continuing to face brutal suppression at the hands of the new non-secular government, which prompted the Prime Minister of Independent [India](#) Jawaharlal Nehru to issue a historic statement in [Parliament](#) that non-[Muslims](#) would be safe and secure in Pakistan [as](#) both the new nations pledged to be good and friendly neighbours. However, Nehru also declared in the [Parliament](#) that if, in future, non-[Muslims](#) felt unsafe and insecure in Pakistan due to religious or communal persecutions, they would be always welcome in [India](#) and they would not be treated [as](#) 'foreigners' in [India](#).

It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction that the Union government in [New Delhi](#) has taken steps lately to provide shelter to these 'Victims of Partition' all [over](#) the country following a process of equal distribution. In fact, it is a long pending moral responsibility which [India](#) should have shouldered much earlier ([soon](#) after Nehru made the promise in the [Parliament](#)).

But better late than never, and we must all support the government's action to give [citizenship rights](#) to the [victims](#) of Partition who have taken shelter in [India](#) from Pakistan and [Bangladesh](#) till 2014. We must not forget that among these people are many whose ancestors also fought and sacrificed their lives along with many others for an independent [India](#), which has made us free citizens of an independent nation today. Let all of us be grateful to them.

We are also fully aware that since the formation of [Bangladesh](#) and the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, [Bangladesh](#) made Islam the State religion setting into motion the persecution of minority non-[Muslims](#). In [Bangladesh](#), the [Hindus](#) include Bengali, Rajbongshi, Hajong, [Adivasi](#), Jayantiya and Bishnupriya communities, Buddhists (represented by Chakmas) and some [Assamese](#) people also, who fled to the Chittagong hill areas during the Burmese invasion. The Christians include Bengali, Garo, Khasi and [Adivasi](#) people. All these people became the [victims](#) of 'Pakistan Plan' & 'Partition' and had to therefore live in a 'foreign land,' for the creation of which they were not at all responsible.

So, under no circumstances these people can be termed [as](#) 'foreigners'. The foreigners are those who created the 'foreign land' in the name of religion, but again these are the same [group](#) of people who are infiltrating into [India](#), the country they hated to live in, before 1947 for reasons best known to them. If the history of Partition is properly studied, we can clearly understand who these 'Foreigners' are and who are the actual 'Victims of Partition' and who came to [India](#) to protect their religions, cultures and their lives.

However, we have no intention of communalizing the issue but we want to provide a clear understanding of how history unfolded lest some vested interests and parochial mindsets for their own narrow political gains and cheap mileage would continue to resort to disturb the peace and tranquil atmosphere of Assam. There is a need for a solution to this vexed issue and we would fully agree if those that have been truly victimized owing to Partition and religious persecution are given a place not just in Assam but in all other States of [India](#), a country where the underlying tenets of democracy are tolerance, secularism and freedom of religion, faith, practice and freedom of expression.

Finally, we also raise our voices for a concrete refugee [policy](#) for [India](#) so that we can [deal](#) with the issue of immigrants logically and legally. We sincerely believe [India](#) should [sign](#) the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. Moreover, our government has to ratify the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of [refugees](#).

With Regards,

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