



April 20, 2021

Dear Purnima,

We have reviewed the email and letter you sent to the Chair of the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable this week, in which you “STRONGLY condemn and denounce IRF RT campaign to designate India (world's largest democracy & last remaining Hindu land) as ‘Country of Particular Concern’ in USCIRF 2021 report” and “Request IRF-RT to REJECT such prejudiced and distorted propaganda.” You also say that you want the Roundtable to provide “a process to refute this massive international propaganda against Hindus and India.”

As the Steering Committee of the IRF Roundtable, we are writing to inform you about the Roundtable model and the two rules we ask every participant to respect and follow.

The IRF Roundtable is an informal group of individuals from faith communities, civil society organizations, and governments who gather regularly to discuss IRF issues and share stories of persecution and discrimination on an **off-the-record, non-attribution basis**. It is simply a **safe space** where participants **speak freely** in sharing information and propose joint advocacy actions to address specific situations. Participant-led initiatives are created by Roundtable participants. They are not Roundtable initiatives. These initiatives, focus on the protection and promotion of freedom of religion, conscience, and belief for everyone, everywhere, allowing participants to **self-select into coalitions of the willing** on any given topic.

The IRF Roundtable is unique and remarkable because it is civil society-led, **multi-faith, and radically inclusive** (all faiths and none are welcome), and it is action-oriented and **operates on equal citizenship, participant-driven, opt-in basis**.

The purpose: to bring all faiths (and those of no faith) together in continuous and ongoing dialogue engage civil society and government leaders, **identify and focus on issues of common interest and multi-faith consensus**, practically integrate religious freedom into foreign and national security policy, reduce restrictions on religion, undermine radical ideology and deter violent extremism and terrorism, and increase stability, security, peace, and prosperity.

A practical result: greater social cohesion has occurred as every faith has a seat at the table, a voice in the process, and an equal opportunity to speak, propose policy initiatives, and invite others to support them. Actions are taken together as citizens and lasting relationships are built, creating mutual understanding, respect, trust (the coin of the realm in complicated contexts) and reliance as faith communities stand up for each other's freedom of religion or

belief.

To protect the IRF Roundtable as a safe space, the Chair opens each meeting with two reminders:

1. The meeting is off the record. Everyone shall follow **the Chatham House Rule**. Any information disclosed during the meeting may be reported by those present but the source of that information may not be explicitly or implicitly identified. NO video or audio taping is allowed. A detailed explanation of the Chatham House Rule can be found here: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>
2. The IRF Roundtable has always been a safe space where representatives of all faiths and none can pull together, share stories of persecution and discrimination, and stand up for each other's freedom of thought, conscience, and religion on the basis of mutual respect, trust, and reliance. Everyone shall follow **the Golden Rule** and respect the right of each individual participant to speak at the Roundtable, design, and launch advocacy initiatives, and self-select into multi-faith coalitions of the willing. **Participants may not start arguments, speak ill of, or in any way target or attack any individual participant or group at the Roundtable**—verbally or in the chatbox.

Based on all the above, the Roundtable is a very inappropriate forum in which to express the views stated in your letter. You are more than welcome to speak at the Roundtable and/or launch a multi-faith advocacy initiative and invite all participants to sign on in a reasoned manner or to use other channels to advocate for your position. We cannot allow you or anyone else, however, to use the Roundtable to condemn and denounce other participants for launching an advocacy initiative you disagree with.

As clearly stated above, the IRF Roundtable is a forum for bringing everyone together, **identifying and focusing on issues of common interest and multi-faith consensus**, working together across our deepest differences, and standing up for each other's religious freedom. If you agree with the initiatives that are launched by others, you may sign on. If you do not agree with certain initiatives, the only option available to you and other participants is simple—do NOT sign-on.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Sincerely,

The IRF Roundtable Steering Committee