

Less humanitarian and more religious bigotry



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Yasmin Saikia 11 September 2015 Updated 11 Sept 8473 views

The refugee [crisis](#) in the international scene is one of the most heart rending issues we are dealing with today. Vast numbers of Syrians, Afghans and Nigerians are fleeing their countries and undertaking perilous journeys to Europe in the hope of regaining some semblance of a [normal](#) life. Despite the fact that these people have suffered incredible loss due to the violence of long drawn [wars](#), loss of livelihood, destruction of home and family, European [leaders](#) are unable to agree on a basic humanitarian [policy](#) to address the surge of humanity into their countries. They are debating on the status of the people – are they refugees or migrants? What should be the [policy](#) toward refugees? How to discourage migrants from coming into Europe? And so on.

The recent announcement by the Government of India allowing [Hindus](#), Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Buddhists who are nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh to stay in India without adequate travel documentation is quite the opposite from the European approach. India is throwing open its doors to particular groups of people from neighboring countries to come to India. It claims it is doing this on “humanitarian grounds.” If such is the case, is our humanitarianism confined to only people who believe like us? How can that be humanitarianism? Humanitarianism calls for compassion for people on the whole, particularly to distant strangers and promote their [welfare](#).

India's [policy](#) is not humanitarian but it is religious bigotry. Based on made-up and reinvented history of oppression and destruction of non-[Muslims](#) by [Muslims](#), assuming that our current neighbors in Pakistan and Bangladesh are violent and discriminatory, the NDA government is reversing and rewriting India's past and future. The suggestion of preemptive religious persecution [as](#) a ground for encouraging migration to India from Pakistan and Bangladesh is ludicrous. The use of terms such [as](#) "seek shelter in India" is even more disturbing. It is creating space for foreign nationals based on their religious affiliation to the majority Hindu [community](#) in India, while threatening the well-being of India's Muslim citizens.

More than six decades ago, the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic people of India had won independence from British colonialism after a long drawn struggle. The promise made to Indians then was a secular, democratic country in which everyone would have equal [rights as](#) citizens. This promise has been rescinded and a new India [as](#) a Hindu country is under construction under the present NDA government. This is a frightening turn of history and all of us should be alarmed by this development. It can take India on a slippery slope of religious nationalism [as state policy](#), which, [as](#) students of history we know, is the beginning of fascism. Fascism nearly destroyed the world in the twentieth century, it did not build humanitarian communities/nations.

If our attitude is pro-humanitarianism, we should open our doors to all groups of people who are suffering or are likely to suffer from persecution and violence, from loss of livelihood due to climate and environmental change, from human degradation due to oppressive policies of their governments. We should do this because we believe in the dignity of human beings and their [welfare](#). Limited humanitarianism based on religious identity is politics of the worst kind; it signals the destruction of humanity.

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