

**Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America
(FIACONA)**

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America (FIACONA) is “deeply concerned” about the outcome of the election results in Gujarat, India over the weekend. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a two third majority in just concluded elections. The outcome is seen as a major blow to the ‘pluralist democracy’ and the future of over 40 million Indian Christians and 130 million other religious minorities living in India.

After ordering the police to stand-down, the previous BJP government in Gujarat, unleashed unprecedented level of violence against certain minority religious population last February, with the help of trained Hindu militia. Over 2000 civilians feared killed in less than two weeks of violence, which was for the first time, carried out by the direction of the ruling party in the name of Hindu religion in India. The terror campaign against the religious minorities, ‘an experiment’ (as BJP described it) in the name of ‘Hindutva’ helped the party to consolidate the ‘Hindu’ vote. BJP leaders had vowed to repeat the Gujarat ‘experiment’ in rest of India, if re-elected. One of the influential leaders of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP-World Hindu Council, a sister organization of BJP) Mr. Praveen Togadia, yesterday confirmed that ‘Hindutva’ would be the central theme for future elections in India. Characterizing the Gujarat election results as a turning point in the country's politics, he said only those who talk of Hindu interests could rule India. He further said, the election result in Gujarat is a victory for the ‘Hindutva’ ideology and predicted that India will become a "Hindu Rashtra" (Hindu Theocracy) within the next 2 years. The experiment against religious minorities proved profitable for BJP.

Prime Minister of India, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee said, he was expecting the party to win, but a landslide victory with a two-thirds majority has come as a pleasant surprise to his BJP party.

FIACONA cautions the international governments to take note of this serious development in India. We urge everyone to draw the distinction between India and the Bharatiya Janata Party, which happens to rule the country. We advise the western governments, including the US and British government, to treat the development in India as an immense threat to the “pluralism” in the largest democratic nation with over one billion people.

FIACONA urges the international governments not to ignore such clear and destructive signs like this in India, for any short-term strategic gains the BJP may offer on the war on terrorism. While we understand the importance of the cooperation needed from the present BJP government in India for the war on terrorism, we urge Washington not to compromise the future of the pluralist democracy and lives of over 170 million religious minorities (Christians and others) in India.

We urge the leaders of the international governments and agencies to speak against the tactics and policies of the Bharathya Janata Party in its efforts to establish a Hindu theocratic state in India.

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