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Open Letter to Corporate India to De-fund Hate

By: The India Forum

An open letter by current and former faculty members at the IIM Bangalore calling to defund the hate speech.

We, some of the current and retired faculty members at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, in our personal capacity, are writing this open letter to the leaders of corporate India, drawing their attention to the fragile state of internal security with an increasing risk of violent conflicts in the country, and appealing that they de-fund the spread of misinformation and hate speech through news channels and social media.

Over the past few years, an open and public exhibit of hatred towards minorities in public discourse has become common practice in India: in political discourse, television news, as well as on social media. The usage of othering, dehumanizing and demonizing language while referring to minorities has reached alarming levels, and acts of violent hate crimes, often by organized and radicalized groups, against minorities have seen a rise. The inaction of police and security forces during recent communal riots, as well as the acquittal or pardoning of culprits involved in rape and mass murder during previous instances of riots, coupled with the silence of authorities, has signalled a glaring level of complacency in place of urgency by the government.

These trends concern corporate India, as they point towards an increasing risk of violent conflicts in the country. In the worst case, such acts of violence could culminate into a genocide, which would annihilate the social fabric as well as the economy of the country, casting a long dark shadow over India's future. Corporate India, which hopes to reach new frontiers of international growth and innovation in the 21st century, cannot afford to live with even a small possibility of such a scenario.

India has a long history of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different faiths, and we would like to believe that the risk of large-scale violent conflicts or genocide in India is still small. However, this risk is no longer close to zero, as the rapidly increasing levels of radicalization of citizens are fermenting an atmosphere conducive to large-scale violence being triggered due to unexpected disturbances. Even if India does evade such a risk, it is certain that the deteriorating social fabric in the country, due to increasing hate and dehumanizing speech and radicalization, shall inevitably lead to escalating violence and socioeconomic uncertainty, permanently paralyzing the future of the country.

We believe that maintaining peace, stability and cohesion in the country is of paramount importance to corporate India without which India cannot become an economic powerhouse. The leaders of corporate India have an important and substantial role to play in curbing the spread of hate and misinformation. We appeal to corporate India to:

1. STOP FUNDING HATE: Stop funding any and all news and social media organizations that publicly air hateful or genocidal content against a community of people.

2. SUPPORT RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS: Conduct an internal audit to ensure that their funds, in forms like advertising or donations, go to only such stakeholders, like news and social media organizations that conduct themselves responsibly, and not fan the flames of hate and misinformation.

3. CURATE A WELCOMING WORK CULTURE: Mandatorily conduct timely diversity and inclusion sensitization events within their organizations to ensure their work culture remains welcoming to people of a variety of faiths and social backgrounds.

4. USE YOUR VOICE FOR FRATERNITY: Vocally ensure that India's diverse social fabric, public discourse, and democratic institutions remain strong.

Use your voice to rise up against hate!

This letter has been signed by the following faculty in their personal capacity:

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