

THE TRAGEDY OVERLOAD: SUPPRESSION TO EXODUS OF AFGHAN HINDUS AND SIKHS (1992-2021)

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Abstract

The exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs hastened with every regime change in Afghanistan. From the high of 220,000 in 1992, their numbers were reduced to merely 65 individuals in 2021. The marching of Mujahedeen parties into Kabul, in 1992, resulted in full scale civil war in the country, the starting point of the worst situation for these religious minorities. Since then, the Hindus and Sikhs have encountered several threats—socially deprived, politically neglected, and religiously intimidated. Their economic, cultural, and educational conditions sunk into their worse in history. Although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in 1979, was considered the beginning of their exodus from the country, the fact is that they had been forced to leave Afghanistan decades before the onset of the political turmoil in the country. As a result of such unfortunate circumstances, Afghanistan's long-established religious minorities are now on the brink of extinction.

The topic of this paper maps out the excessively undermined debate around suppression and exodus of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan. Furthermore, it will argue how political exclusion, lack of economic opportunities, land grabbing, lack of education opportunities, and religious conversion forced leave them no choice except to leave the country of their ancestors en masse. This study examines three historical trends of the Hindus and Sikhs Exodus: Pre-2001 era, 2001-2020, and 2021-Current. Along with these historical trends, this paper will illustrate how and

why the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs as indigenous residents of the country treated as strangers and foreigners.

This paper reveals that these minority groups have no political party in the country and their political representatives are in very small numbers (i.e., two to three persons). Without any executive authority, for this reason, they can neither advocate nor bargain for their safety and protection as well as for their civil rights. The corruption and judicial discrimination within judicial system and law obstructed them in regaining their land and properties. The study on the exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in this paper concluded that threats of target attacks, life insecurity, hostility, communal violence and social exclusion are the most pressing reasons for their migration and exodus from Afghanistan.