

Dr. George Joseph
Consul General of India
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Dear Dr. Joseph,

We write to you as office bearers of South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD) to urge that the restrictions previously imposed on the visa application of Dr. Hari Sharma be removed and he be granted an unconditional visa for a five-year period.

Dr. Sharma's last application was subjected to the condition that he provide a detailed itinerary of his visit to India. Such conditions are the right of the Government of India, and the suspicion implied in this particular condition is understandable in the government then in power because Dr. Sharma, as the President of SANSAD, had identified himself with the activities of our organization, which is dedicated to the promotion of peace, democracy, secularism, social justice, human rights, and the rights of minorities. Our principles had compelled us to take strong positions against the BJP-government in India because we saw this government as enabling the domination of an extremist form of Hinduism in the political, social and cultural life of India against the inherited pluralist and syncretic culture of India and the secular democratic political vision enshrined in the constitution of India. It was reasonable, therefore, that the government that we challenged for its violations of human and democratic rights and for threatening peace and democracy, should cast a suspicious eye of surveillance on our President. But by the same token, it was not possible for him to accept this suspicion without a tacit admission of wrongdoing and submission to the regulative eye of the government that we criticized.

That government has been replaced by the democratic will of the people of India in another demonstration of the profound democratic spirit of the Indian people. The government that has come to power professes the same principles that we do, which we believe is the mandate that the electorate has given it. Under these circumstances there can be no reason for maintaining the eye of suspicion on Dr. Sharma and for imposing any conditions on his application to visit India. We urge you, Sir, for these reasons to grant Dr. Sharma the visa he has applied for without any conditions.

Sincerely,

Abid Pittalwala, Vice President

Dr. Chinmoy Banerjee, Secretary (604-421-6752)

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