

# Five Questions and an Appeal

*An open letter to Indians*  
by Dr. Zakir Naik

It has been over two months since the ghastly terror attack in Dhaka, and over one month since I've been asking myself what exactly have I done to become the enemy number one of the media as well as the State and Central Government. For someone who has spent 25 years in promoting peace, spreading greater awareness of Islam and talking about similarities between religions and condemning injustices, the last two months have been a rude shock to me. A shock of immense proportions. I'm not only disappointed in the way things are being conducted but alarmed at where they are heading.

I'm alarmed at the murder of democracy and strangulation of fundamental rights and the precedence it is setting for times to come. I'm also alarmed at how the system, media and the agencies are being used to suit a pre-meditated end result set by none other than our own governments, governments that have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution of India, and a Constitution that allows me the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate any religion I follow. Let's not be gullible enough to assume that there isn't a deeper agenda behind this vicious campaign. This is not just an attack on me, it's an attack against Indian Muslims. And it's an attack against peace, democracy and justice.

From what I understand, IRF and I have been set up for a ban. Never mind the fact that the legal agencies have found no wrongdoing - financial or otherwise. Never mind the lack of evidence (although I am not guilty of any wrong-doing, much less any offence whatsoever). At least this is what is evident from the media stories being 'planted' since the past several weeks. The message is clear: it's not a question of whether I've committed a crime or not. It's a question of using desperate measures to kill peace and harmony. And a ban is now imminent. It may happen in days or weeks but the writing is clear on the wall. IRF and I have been set up for a ban. Unless of course, better sense prevails and the ban machinery set in motion is stopped.



'THOSE TO WHOM THE PEOPLE SAID: SURELY MEN  
HAVE GATHERED AGAINST YOU, THEREFORE FEAR  
THEM, BUT THIS INCREASED THEIR FAITH, AND  
THEY SAID: ALLAH IS SUFFICIENT FOR US AND MOST  
EXCELLENT IS THE PROTECTOR.'

AL-QUR'AN 3:173

And if that happens, if IRF and I are banned, it will be the biggest jolt to the country's democracy of recent times. I do not say this just for me but because this ban will set a precedence of unspeakable injustices against the 20 crore Muslims of India. This action will embolden and encourage every fringe element in the country to do as they please. If you thought intolerance increased in the country recently, this action of the government will take it to an all-time high. The Muslim population is already feeling threatened and insecure and I can't even imagine how they will feel after this action. Muslims are bound to think that today it is Zakir Naik, tomorrow it could be any one of them.

But I still can't stop asking myself - why am I being targeted? Then I realized some time back that if you've decided to target a community, you've to first target the biggest name and the most popular figure of the community. If you can bring down and demonize this figure of the community, the rest becomes a cakewalk. That, I think, is what is happening. It may sound like a conspiracy theory, but I honestly cannot find any other plausible reason.

Right from the beginning of July, I tried staying away from the current controversy. This was not the first time I was being targeted. For years, there have been groups who have opposed me. Instead of retaliating or reacting to them, I've felt it best to continue with my work and not pay attention to these detractors. That is

what I tried doing even this time. But I soon realized that this time it was different. There was much greater media involvement, and a much deeper government's involvement. I'm not privy to internal details so I do not know which came first – my opposition groups, the media or the government. But from what it looks like, this is the best concerted effort used against me so far.

I tried answering all the questions and allegations thrown at me. But soon a lot of my own questions started piling up in my mind. Two months into it, they've built up and I'm left with no choice but to pose these questions to you, to my fellow citizens. As my legal advisors evaluate things at their end, I write to all of you to tell you what I've been feeling for last two months. Let us keep the legalities aside. Though the witch hunt continues, and I know I've not done anything wrong, either in my talks or in my finances, and till date the agencies have not found any wrong doing. But that is for the legal teams to sort out at both the ends. But here is what bothers me. Try asking these questions yourself and see if you can come up with coherent and logical answers to them –



'...THEY STRIVE IN THE WAY OF ALLAH AND DO NOT FEAR THE BLAME OF THE BLAMERS. THAT IS THE FAVOR OF ALLAH, HE BESTOWS IT UPON WHOM HE WILLS.'

AL-QUR'AN 5:54

### **[A] Why now?**

I've been preaching for 25 years. Not just in India but across the world. What exactly did I do now to earn the tags of 'terror preacher', 'Dr. Terror' and 'hate monger'? Of 150 countries where I'm respected and my talks are welcomed, I'm being called a terrorist influencer in my own country. What an irony. Why now, when I've been doing the same thing for over 25 years?

### **[B] Why repeat investigations?**

Despite exhaustive investigations, not a single conclusive evidence of wrong doing was reported by any governmental agency. But now investigations are being asked to be repeated and continued. Why? Wasn't the first investigation exhaustive enough? Did not they cover every aspect of my talks, every topic, every reply? Or is it because they could not find any wrongdoing? Is this a hunt to get something to indict me?

### **[C] Why renew, then cancel?**

Why would the government renew IRF's FCRA registration and then cancel it? It seems illogical. Is it because the renewal was against the laid down agenda of the government? Why would you suspend FCRA officials? Is it because they did things by the books and acted honestly without any bias or prejudice when they renewed IRF's registration? Is it because they were not influenced by the political agenda of the MHA?

### **[D] Is there design to leaking confidential information of the government, solicitor general and the MHA?**

Is there a design to leaking selective government documents to the media? The manner in which stories are being 'planted' in the media clearly suggests so. The one and only investigation report submitted till now remains inconclusive, but the solicitor general's 'judgment' of banning IRF and I was duly leaked to the media. Why? Is there a ring fencing happening? Is this how IRF will be banned? By creating an atmosphere of ban? Rather than rely on proofs and evidences?

## [E] Forced conversions? Really?

Isn't it a well-known fact that in these modern days and times, average men and women cannot be forced to convert? But while chasing IRF for allegations of forced conversions, why are the agencies ignoring the most basic proof of forced conversions? Where is the converted person and where is his or her statement about how he or she was forcibly converted? Isn't this person the most basic proof of forced conversion? If yes, why is the entire law enforcement machinery working on hearsay? Why is there no effort to gather the most basic proof that comes from the converted? It would be naïve to presume that the agencies mustn't have tried. The fact is they tried and they couldn't get proof of any forced conversion. The fact is, there never was forced conversions.

There are many more questions I have been seeking answers to but can't find them. I know someone has the answers, but rather than dwelling upon it, I have an appeal to make, an appeal to my fellow countrymen, to all sane and sensible people of this great country. If you find any wrongdoing on my part, punish me by all means. Give me the harshest of punishments if I've wronged anyone. I've made this offer earlier too and I will repeat it again. I'm open to any investigation. Have always been and will always be.

Not only do I take my freedom seriously, I take my responsibilities even more seriously. The country's democratic fabric is under attack. People are being arrested and put in jail for 7-10 years before being proven innocent by courts. But guilty or not guilty, their lives are ruined, their families are ruined, they remain unemployed, their daughters unmarried. This is what's happening, and this is what needs to change. People's lives cannot be played with. If the government can misuse its authority on a popular figure like me, average Muslims don't stand a chance. And we're talking about 20 crores of them.



'THEY WANT TO EXTINGUISH THE LIGHT OF ALLAH WITH THEIR MOUTHS, BUT ALLAH REFUSES EXCEPT TO PERFECT HIS LIGHT, ALTHOUGH THE DISBELIEVERS DISLIKE IT.'

AL-QUR'AN 9:32

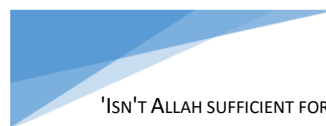
I still have faith in the judiciary and I know that truth will ultimately prevail. But it may come at a huge price if the current actions are not checked now. To all, my appeal is, do not allow subversion of the constitution. My appeal to the government – be fair in your investigation. Be fair in what you allege. Be truthful with facts. To my fellow citizens - Let no one and nothing dissuade you from speaking the truth. Whatever position you occupy, in authority or in media, or as a citizen of this great country, be truthful and fair. Nothing less, nothing more.

Perhaps if I am driven out of India, Allah will open up doors for me better than I could have ever imagined. Many countries would welcome this humble servant of God with red carpet treatment. But this isn't only about me. It's about us. It's about the morals and values of a great country. What will become of India if we let bigotry and injustice seep into the very fabric of our nation? What will be the fate of our country if it falls into the stranglehold of such vices? The answer is frightening, and one we all wish to avoid. It's time we do something about it.

In these times, my heart bursts with gratitude to those of you who have stood up for justice and harmony, irrespective of religion or creed. Because I know that like me, you care for this country. You care for core values like justice and tolerance. And that shall make a big difference.

To my Muslim brothers and sisters, I have this to say: *Do not let trials such as these weaken your resolve, and know that the promise of Allah is true. Remember the faith that resonated among the earlier people, of whom Allah said, "Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them, but this increased their faith, and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the*

*Protector.' (Al-Qur'an 3:173) Didn't He give victory to His Messenger (SAAWS) when the polytheists deployed every tactic and exhausted every strategy, trying in vain to suppress the Truth? Aren't the pages of history overflowing with examples such as these? Allah says, "They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His light, although the disbelievers may dislike it.' (Al-Qur'an 9:32)*



'ISN'T ALLAH SUFFICIENT FOR HIS SERVANT? YET  
THEY SEEK TO FRIGHTEN YOU WITH THOSE BESIDES  
HIM...'

AL-QUR'AN 39:36

My humble efforts to spread the truth are but a drop in the ocean, and these trials are but a speck of dust compared to what was endured by the people of old. I pray that Allah accepts our efforts and makes us of those about whom He said, '*...they strive in the way of Allah and do not fear the blame of the blamers. That is the favor of Allah, He bestows it upon whom He wills.*' (Al-Qur'an 5:54)

Whatever the outcome, I am assured that the best efforts to squash our work will only help it rise higher and stronger. For Allah says, 'They plot and plan, and Allah too plans. And the best of planners is Allah.' (Al-Qur'an 3:54) *Beshaq*. Without doubt.

Sincerely yours

Dr. Zakir Naik

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