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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON SPEAKS OUT
AGAINST RISING ANTI-HINDUISM

The Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, which includes 11 historic faith traditions, denounces the recent rise in anti-Hinduism both at universities and in the wider community. We call on people of all faiths (and of no particular faith) in the Capital area to respect people of faith in such a way that all people in our region will feel welcomed, respected, and appreciated. This includes respecting authentic faith practices of our Hindu friends and neighbors who, like all Americans, have the right to be secure in their beliefs and to worship freely without fear.

We at the IFC are particularly concerned about the participation of local universities in an upcoming virtual conference entitled "Dismantling Global Hindutva." This conference proposes to discuss matters affecting the Indian diaspora around the world, with a stated aim to "address the threat and power of Hindutva" as expressed in groups like the democratically-elected ruling party of India. While we at the IFC believe in free speech and academic inquiry, we have also witnessed clear consensus from our Hindu members and friends that such a conference is anti-Hindu and will lead to backlash against the Hindu community in the United States. Our Hindu leaders have expressed deep concern that the event as it is currently planned will conflate Hindu nationalism with Hinduism both on campus and in the wider community. Such a conflation could result in anti-Hindu backlash in our region and beyond. The impact on Hindu college students is especially concerning given their proximity to many of the scholar-activists driving this event and student fears of censorship or retaliation.

Any time a faith community in our region feels disrespected by an event, we at the Interfaith Council stand in solidarity with them. We therefore ask that any local universities and organizations participating in the conference withdraw their support.

This conference is occurring in a larger context of rising prejudice against the Hindu community across the United States. The FBI has documented a year-over-year [trend](#) of increasing numbers of hate crimes in the United States against Hindus. A Pew [poll](#) has revealed that Americans continue to have much less warmth for Hinduism than for many other religions. And in 2020, half of Indian-Americans [reported](#) experiencing discrimination in the prior year, even as a woman of Indian descent was being elected vice-president of the United States.

The IFC is a regional organization, and we do not presume to speak to the complex political dynamics of the world's largest democracy. We do, however, take very seriously the welfare of people of all faiths in our region. When a faith community feels attacked and disrespected, we stand together in support and solidarity. We are united in our belief that political differences must not result in antagonisms among neighbors because of their religious and spiritual beliefs. If anyone has questions about any faith tradition we are ready to provide authoritative answers. We therefore condemn anti-Hinduism in any form in our region and encourage all people and institutions in the Capital area to do the same. We also invite everyone in our region to stand in solidarity with our neighbors of all faiths, including the Hindu community, so that the dignity of every individual and the freedom of each house of worship may be respected and celebrated.

Signed,

Rev. Dr. David B. Lindsey

Executive Director, Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington