

## Open Letter

July 2017

From

Veterans of The Indian Armed Forces

To

The Prime Minister of India

The Chief Ministers of the States of the Union of India

Lieutenant-Governors of the Union Territories of the Union of India

We are a group of Veterans of the Indian Armed Forces who have spent our careers working for the security of our country. Collectively, our group holds no affiliation with any single political party, our only common commitment being to the Constitution of India.

It saddens us to make this appeal, but current events in India have compelled us to register our dismay at the divisiveness that is gripping our country. We also support the 'Not in My Name' campaign that mobilised thousands of citizens across the country to protest against the current climate of fear, intimidation, hate and suspicion.

The Armed Forces stand for "Unity in Diversity". Differences in religion, language, caste, culture or any other marker of belonging have not mattered to the cohesion of the Armed Forces, and servicemen of different backgrounds have fought shoulder to shoulder in the defence of our nation, as they continue to do today. Throughout our service, a sense of openness, justice and fair play guided our actions. We are one family. Our heritage is like the multi-coloured quilt that is India, and we cherish this vibrant diversity.

However, what is happening in our country today strikes at all that the Armed Forces, and indeed our Constitution, stand for. We are witness to unprecedented attacks on society at large by the relentless vigilantism of self-appointed protectors of Hinduism. We condemn the targeting of Muslims and Dalits. We condemn the clampdowns on free speech by attacks on media outlets, civil society groups, universities, journalists and scholars, through a campaign of branding them anti-national and unleashing violence against them while the State looks away.

We can no longer look away. We would be doing a disservice to our country if we do not stand up and speak for the liberal and secular values that our Constitution espouses. Our diversity is our greatest strength. Dissent is not treason; in fact, it is the essence of democracy.

We urge the powers that be at the Centre and in the States to take note of our concerns and urgently act to uphold our Constitution, both in letter and in spirit.

### **Signatories (in alphabetical order of last name)**

Major General Shyamal Ghosh

Captain S. Prabhala I.N.

Admiral L. Ramdas

Vice Admiral I.C. Rao

Brigadier Amardeep Singh

Major General S.G. Vombatkere