

Representation of Minorities in the
Indian Legislatures on the
14th November 1931

A letter sent by Gandhiji to
the British Prime Minister
Mr. Ramsey MacDonal

RARE SECTION



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Rare section

Servants of India Society,
Sapru House,
Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi-1.

Registered

My dear Kakade:-

31 October 1972.

At the suggestion of Shri Pyare Lal, who was Gandhiji's secretary, I have obtained photostat copies of the documents relating to the letter sent by Gandhiji to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald about the representation of minorities in the Indian Legislatures on the 14th November 1931. Please show them to Shri Ambekar and then give them to Sharangpani or to the Librarian. Please ask the Librarian to keep it with care. If you lose the document, you will not be able to get it again.

Yours affectionately,

Encls: as above

Sd/-(H.N.Kunzru)

Dr.R.G.Kakade,
Servants of India Society,
Poona.

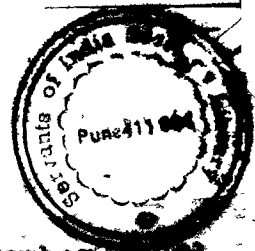
True copy

For Shri
Sharangpani

I also attach a letter from Datta.

Sd/- J.G.Laithwaite, 16.11.31.

Rare section



Prime Minister,

I attach Gandhi's letter of 14th November on the question of your arbitrating the Communal difference.

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You will see that

(a) he is not prepared to compromised about the "minor Minorities", and would agree to arbitration in respect only of Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs;

(b) he is not able to agree to your arbitrating "in your capacity as Prime Minister".

The Moslems have made it quite clear, on the other hand, that they will be willing to agree to arbitration only on the understanding first that it is comprehensive and covers all sections of the problem; secondly that the arbitration is conducted by you in your capacity as Head of the Government.

I am drawing up a list of the members of the Minorities Committee who have expressed their willingness to accept your arbitration, which will show the conditions, if any, which they attach to such acceptance. This will be ready to-morrow.

I also attach a letter from Datta.

Sd/- J.G.Laithwaite, 16.11.31.

88, KNIGHTSBRIDGE,
LONDON W.

Dear Prime Minister,

14th November, 1931.

I know that letters signed by delegates are being sent to you inviting you to settle the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Question. You will notice the absence of my signature in any of those letters. Common friends desirous of seeing a seeing a successful issue to the Round Table Conference, have suggested that it would help you if I sent a letter explaining why I do not sign the letter.

I should have no hesitation in putting my signature to a letter appointing you sole arbitrator in your individual capacity to settle the Communal Question, so far as the Hindu, Muslims and Sikha are concerned, but you will appreciate my Resitation in cosenting to your appointment as Arbitrator in your capacity as Prime Minister, for the simple reason that if I did so, I should feel embarrassed in presenting the Congress claim on the Constitutional issue. But my reluctance does not mean that the Congress will in any way resist your award; in fact Congress cannot do so, for it is bound by a resolution to approve of any solution that is acceptable to the three parties concerned and if those claiming to represent the three communities refer the matter for your decision, the Congress

cannot object to your award.

The position regarding the other Minorities is different. You know the position taken up on behalf of the Congress. As I reiterated at the last meeting of the Minorities Committee, in my opinion they should be satisfied with complete protection of their civic and religious rights and of all their legitimate interests. There are many extra legal ways that can be suggested for ensuring the election of deserving candidates from all the other Minorities through the ordinary electorate, and I feel that this is the only proper and legitimate course.

In any case the Congress will never be reconcil to any further extension of the principle of separate electorate or special statutory reservation.

Yours, &c.,

(Sgd.) M.K. GANDHI.

The Right Honourable
The Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
S.W.1.

Prime Minister,

I attach a list of the Minorities Committee, showing the response to your offer to arbitrate the Communal question.

8 Hindus and 1 Parsee accept without qualification.

No Moslem has responded, nor has Ambedkar, the Anglo-Indians, Europeans and R.C.Indian Christians agree only if the arbitration is comprehensive and binding on all communities; 6 Hindus (including Gandhi, who will not sign a request in writing) attach substantial reservations.

5 Hindus in respect of Hindu-Moslem-Sikh question only, Gandhi will not apply in writing, but has no objection to settlement of Hindu-Moslem-Sikh by you in your personal capacity.

In addition 8 requests have been received from Hindus who are not members of the Minorities Committee, 4 accompanied by Reservations.

Sd/- J.G.Laithwaite,

17.11.31.

I. MONORITIES COMMITTEE

1. Aga Khan
2. Shaukat Ali.
3. Dr. Ambedkar.
4. Mr. Benthall. Yes, with Reservation A.
5. Mr. Birla. Yes, with Reservation B.
6. Sir H. Carr. Yes, with Reservation A.
7. Nawab of Chhitari.
8. Shafi Dmoodi.
9. Dr. S. K. Datta. Yes, with Reservation B.
10. Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq.
11. Mr. Gandhi See note.
12. Mr. Ghuznavi
13. Sir H. Gidney Yes, with Reservation A.
14. Sir P. Ginwala. Yes
15. K. B. Hidayat Husain.
16. Sir M. Iqbal
17. Mr. Joshi Yes
18. Pandit Malaviya Yes, with Reservation B.
19. Sir P. C. Mitter
20. Dr. Moonje Yes, with Reservation B.
21. Mrs. Naidu
22. Raja Narendra Nath. Yes, with Reservation B.
23. Pannir Selvam. Yes, With Reservation A.
24. Sir A. P. Patro. Yes.

25. Ramchandra Rao	Yes
26. Shiva Rao.	Yes.
27. Sir M. Shafi	
28. Sampuran Singh.	
29. Mr. Sastri.	Yes.
30. Sir C. Setalvad	Yes.
31. Sir P. Sethna	Yes.
32. Shafa' at Ahmad Khan	
33. Begum Shah Nawaz	
34. Mr. Srinivasan.	
35. Mrs. Subbarayan.	Yes.
36. Mrs. Vijol Singh	

II. MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE NOT BEING
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

.....

1. Mr. Jayakar	Yes, with Reservation B.
2. Mr. Iyengar	Yes, with Reservation B.
3. Darbhanga	Yes, with Reservation B.
4. Mr. Barooah.	Yes, with Reservation B.
5. Sir C. Jehangir.	Yes,
6. Mr. Mudaliyar	Yes
7. Mr. Jadhav	Yes.
8. Sir T. Sapru	Yes, with Reservation

1. Reservation A: "Provided arbitration embraces all Minorities, and decision is to be accepted by all communities."

2. Reservation B: Arbitration in respect of Hindu-Moslem-Sikh question only.

3. Sir T. Saprut: Arbitration in respect of Hindu-Moslem-Sikh question. If attempts separately being made to settle Depressed Classes and other Minorities fail, no objection to Prime Minister arbitrating on this also.

4. Mr. Gandhi:

(a) Cannot sign an invitation (for reasons given in his letter of 14th November to the Prime Minister) but

(b) No objection to arbitration in respect of Hindu-Moslem-Sikha, so long as

(c) arbitration is by Prime Minister in his personal capacity.

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| 29. Mr. Sastri. | Yes. |
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