



Hindu Forum Britain

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Hindu Forum of Britain Statement: Withdrawal of Support for Edinburgh Interfaith Association and call for the resignation of its co-chair Professor Hugh Goddard

It is with deep regret that the Hindu Forum of Britain (HFB) feels compelled to publicly withdraw our support for Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) and call for the resignation of its co-chair, Professor Hugh Goddard and we call on our members to do the same, due to its recent treatment of Mr. Puneet Dwivedi (Vice President HFB Scottish Chapter).

On 6 August 2020, Puneet was unfairly, unjustly and improperly dismissed from the board of directors of EIFA (the EIFA Board). It was alleged by the EIFA Board that Puneet had breached the EIFA Code of Conduct and had acted contrary to EIFA's mission statement. EIFA alleged that some of Puneet's social media posts and his invitation to Dr. Subramanian Swamy to speak in Edinburgh conflicted with EIFA's objective to "*promote understanding, trust, and positive action*" in Edinburgh. Puneet strongly denies any and all allegations and, despite repeated requests to EIFA to provide evidence of such wrongdoing, EIFA have failed to provide any such evidence.

This matter was primarily handled by EIFA's co-chair, Professor Hugh Goddard, and has involved a clearly flawed procedure including EIFA pulling out of a mediation with no reason provided and an improperly called (and so invalid) board meeting to discuss this matter with no notice given to Puneet and consequently the denial of his rights to hear any allegations and to address them in front of the board.

In acting in such a manner, EIFA has failed to act in accordance with its own governance requirements, it has failed to maintain its own objective to "*promote understanding, trust, and positive action*" in Edinburgh and it has failed to treat Puneet with a basic level of respect and dignity which he deserves. HFB stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Puneet and offers him our full and unreserved support in this matter.

Whilst HFB will continue to support all other interfaith associations both locally, regionally and nationally, it is with deep regret that we withdraw our support for EIFA until such time as a full independent enquiry is conducted into EIFA's handling of this matter and appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that nothing similar can occur again. We also call on Professor Hugh Goddard to resign as co-chair given the serious failings arising from this matter.

When those matters occur, HFB will look forward to re-engaging with EIFA in the same positive community spirit that it does with all other interfaith associations.

We have today reported this matter to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

We take this opportunity to publicly state our support for Puneet and ask our members to do the same by withdrawing their support for EIFA and calling for the resignation of Professor Hugh Goddard as its co-chair until such time as this matter has been resolved.

Trustee of the Hindu Forum of Britain Charity & President of the Hindu Forum of Britain
Mrs Trupti Patel FCIHT, MSc. H & T, BEng CE, Visharad Bharatnatyam, Yog Teacher, MISTD

The Hindu Forum of Britain is the largest umbrella body with a broad-based membership of over 300 Hindu organisations from different regions and cultural backgrounds in Britain. At the core of the Forum's activities is a strong belief in the richness and diversity of the Hindu culture, its value system that encompasses respect for all beings and faiths, and a cultural heritage that facilitates community cohesion and coexistence.