

Research Analysis on the Activities of the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) and its HRRF Journalism Grant 2025

The **Network for Access to Justice and Multidisciplinary Outreach Foundation**, a Section 8 think tank committed to policy research, human rights advocacy, and national legal awareness, undertook this analysis to assess the objectives, mechanisms, and implications of IAMC's current programs, particularly the **Human Rights & Religious Freedom (HRRF) Journalism Grant 2025**. The purpose of this review is to evaluate whether IAMC's declared activities align with the principles of lawful international cooperation or whether they present potential risks to India's internal stability, communal harmony, and information security.

1. Overview of IAMC and Its Declared Objectives

The **Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)** is a Washington D.C.-based advocacy organization that claims to promote democracy, pluralism, and human rights in India and the United States. While its stated mission emphasizes peace and interfaith harmony, its **operational conduct, funding patterns, and thematic focus warrant close scrutiny**. The organization's sustained involvement in **India-centric political and religious discourse from a foreign jurisdiction** raises serious concerns regarding **sovereignty, national security, and the integrity of India's social fabric**. Its activities reflect a **deliberate propaganda-driven narrative** aimed at **spreading discord and hatred among communities**, thereby seeking to **disrupt India's long-standing tradition of harmony, coexistence, and social unity**.

IAMC publicly identifies its objectives as promoting pluralism, tolerance, and respect for human rights — values that it describes as foundational to both India and the United States. It further seeks to increase interfaith and inter-community understanding among members of the Indian diaspora to “safeguard individuals and societal institutions from infiltration by divisive and hate-filled ideologies.”

2. The HRRF Journalism Grant 2025: Nature, Objectives, and Funding Mechanism

In October 2025, IAMC announced and mailed journalists in India regarding the opening of submissions for its **Human Rights & Religious Freedom (HRRF) Journalism Grant 2025**. The grant aims to fund early and mid-career journalists to produce in-depth stories on issues such as religious freedom, threats to democracy, and challenges facing India's religious minorities **particularly Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Dalits**.

Grants range between USD 500 to 1,400 (approximately ₹40,000 – ₹120,000), with a mandatory requirement that all articles be published in national or international English-language outlets with wide circulation. Applicants are also required to provide a **Letter of Intent** for publication from a recognized editor, ensuring **that all funded content receives broad visibility**.

While this model is presented as a mechanism to encourage independent journalism, it also establishes a **foreign-funded content pipeline** that directs financial incentives towards specific themes concerning India's internal religious and political fabric. Such a funding model raises a **prima facie concern of agenda-driven reportage**, particularly when topics exclusively focus on minority victimization, alleged institutional bias, and governance failures without corresponding balance or factual scrutiny. The involvement above of a U.S.-based entity in selecting, financing, and disseminating narratives in India through journalists and media platforms within the country raises serious legal, ethical, and national security concerns. Such actions not only question the funding they receive and disseminate but also reflect a deliberate attempt to influence internal discourse and destabilize India's social harmony.

Furthermore, this entity has circulated emails to journalists in India inviting participation in purported "awards" and "story grants" designed to promote specific narratives critical of India. This initiative appears to be part of a larger propaganda effort aimed at shaping public perception, discrediting national institutions, and fostering distrust among communities.

India has a long-standing tradition of communal harmony, coexistence, and a deeply interwoven social fabric. Any attempt to create or amplify divisions through foreign-sponsored campaigns constitutes a direct threat to the nation's

unity, integrity, and sovereignty. Such activities warrant immediate scrutiny under relevant laws governing foreign funding, media ethics, and national security.

3. Analysis of Journalistic Outputs and Associated Concerns

- The **HRRF Journalism Grant** has supported several Indian journalists from platforms such as **Scroll.in, The Wire, Newslandry, The Caravan, Al Jazeera, Maktoob, Reporters' Collective, and The Quint**.
- Grant recipients include **Rokibuz Zaman, Hannan Zaffar, Shaheen Abdullah, Akanksha Kumar, Shahid Tantray, Ismat Ara, Meer Faisal, Aakash Hassan, Astha Savyasachi, and Fatima Khan**.¹
- Their published works consistently focus on themes of **religious discrimination, institutional bias, minority victimization, communal polarization, and conversion-related issues**.
- Examples include stories such as²:
 - *"No Country for Religious Converts"* (The Wire)³
 - *"Dirty Design: Is India Trying to Create a Shia-Sunni Divide in Kashmir?"* (The Caravan)
 - *"'Bulldozer Politics': Modi's Demolition Drive Fuels Muslims' Fears in Kashmir"* (Maktoob)
 - *"Centre Hands Over 62% of New Sainik Schools to Sangh Parivar, BJP Politicians and Allies"* (Reporters' Collective)
- A **recurring concentration of narratives** portrays India as a site of systemic intolerance and repression, indicating a **pattern of agenda-based journalism** rather than balanced reporting.
- **Email communications** to journalists reportedly included **specific instructions** encouraging coverage of such themes, reflecting a **deliberate attempt to shape discourse** within India's socio-religious and political landscape.
- While journalism is protected under **Article 19(1)(a)**, foreign-funded reporting on **sensitive internal matters** must be examined under **Article 19(2)** concerning **public order, integrity, and sovereignty**.

¹ <https://hrrfawards.com/winners-2022/>

² <https://hrrfawards.com/winners-2023/>

³ <https://thewire.in/communalism/islam-christianity-conversion-hindutva-violence>

⁴ <https://hrrfawards.com/winners-2024/>

A review of the HRRF-supported publications reveals a **recurring thematic bias** that amplifies narratives of oppression and institutional hostility, while **excluding balanced or alternative perspectives**. When combined with **foreign funding and coordinated editorial influence**, such reporting goes beyond legitimate journalism and operates as a **tool for ideological dissemination and perception manipulation**. These narratives appear **deliberately structured to create a distorted bubble of information**, capable of **fueling communal distrust, disturbing social balance, and inciting divisions among communities**, thereby posing a **serious threat to India's internal peace, stability, and democratic integrity**.

4. Funding in Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC).

Among IAMC's reported donors is the **National Philanthropic Trust (NPT)**⁵, a U.S.-based donor-advised fund known for **concealing the identities of wealthy contributors**, enabling opaque transnational funding flows. The NPT has been **accused of financing "election disinformation" networks** and maintaining **"shadowy transatlantic relationships"** described by experts as *toxic to democracy* and indicative of **foreign influence operations**. Reports such as *Democracy for Sale* note that the NPT has donated **over £1.5 million** to influential Conservative think tanks — including **£900,000 to the American arm of Policy Exchange** and **£400,000 to the U.S. wing of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)**. Its association with IAMC's funding ecosystem raises serious concerns regarding **the ideological motives and geopolitical interests** influencing India-centric advocacy and journalism, necessitating closer **scrutiny**.

This funding ecosystem raises serious concerns regarding the ideological motives and geopolitical interests influencing India-centric advocacy and journalism, **reflecting a deliberate effort to create social disharmony by selectively targeting Indian Muslims; particularly Dalit and other backward Muslim communities with the intent to isolate them, fragment internal cohesion, and push them into siloed victimhood narratives.**

5. Legal and Policy Implications under the FCRA, 2010 .

Under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)**, any individual, association, or organization in India receiving foreign contributions

⁵ <https://democracyforsale.substack.com/p/toxic-trump-linked-donors-millions-tufton-street>

for political, journalistic, or related purposes is mandatorily required to obtain **registration or prior permission under Section 11** of the Act. Furthermore, **Section 3** expressly prohibits correspondents, columnists, editors, and publishers of registered newspapers or media entities from accepting any foreign contribution unless specifically permitted by the Central Government. As per section 3 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA),-

“Section 3- Prohibition to accept foreign contribution.—*(1) No foreign contribution shall be accepted by any—*

- (a) candidate for election;*
- (b) correspondent, columnist, cartoonist, editor, owner, printer or publisher of a registered newspaper;*
- [(c) public servant, Judge, Government servant or employee of any corporation or any other body controlled or owned by the Government;]*
- (d) member of any Legislature;*
- (e) political party or office-bearer thereof;*
- (f) organisation of a political nature as may be specified under sub-section (1) of section 5 by the Central Government;*
- (g) association or company engaged in the production or broadcast of audio news or audio visual news or current affairs programmes through any electronic mode, or any other electronic form as defined in clause (r) of sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000) or any other mode of mass communication;*
- (h) correspondent or columnist, cartoonist, editor, owner of the association or company referred to in clause (g).”*

Thus, the **Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)**, being incorporated in the United States and not registered under the FCRA, is therefore not authorized to provide financial assistance or grants to any individual or organization within India for journalistic or advocacy activities. Any direct or indirect transfer of funds or facilitation of grants by IAMC to Indian journalists or media platforms under the **HRRF Journalism Grant** would, prima facie, constitute a violation of **Sections 3, 4, and 11** of the Act.

Further, upon a detailed examination of Section 11 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010-



“Section 11. Registration of certain persons with Central Government.—

(1) Save as otherwise provided in this Act, no person having a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme shall accept foreign contribution unless such person obtains a certificate of registration from the Central Government:

Provided that any association registered with the Central Government under section 6 or granted prior permission under that section of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 (49 of 1976), as it stood immediately before the commencement of this Act, shall be deemed to have been registered or granted prior permission, as the case may be, under this Act and such registration shall be valid for a period of five years from the date on which this section comes into force.

(2) Every person referred to in sub-section (1) may, if it is not registered with the Central Government under that sub-section, accept any foreign contribution only after obtaining the prior permission of the Central Government and such prior permission shall be valid for the specific purpose for which it is obtained and from the specific source:

[Provided that the Central Government, on the basis of any information or report, and after holding a summary inquiry, has reason to believe that a person who has been granted prior permission has contravened any of the provisions of this Act, it may, pending any further inquiry, direct that such person shall not utilise the unutilised foreign contribution or receive the remaining portion of foreign contribution which has not been received or, as the case may be, any additional foreign contribution, without prior approval of the Central Government:

Provided further that if the person referred to in sub-section (1) or in this sub-section has been found guilty] of violation of any of the provisions of this Act or the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 (49 of 1976), the unutilised or unreceived amount of foreign contribution shall not be utilised or received, as the case may be, without the prior approval of the Central Government.

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify—

(i) the person or class of persons who shall obtain its prior permission before accepting the foreign contribution; or

(ii) the area or areas in which the foreign contribution shall be accepted and utilised with the prior permission of the Central Government; or

(iii) the purpose or purposes for which the foreign contribution shall be utilised with the prior permission of the Central Government; or

(iv) the source or sources from which the foreign contribution shall be accepted with the prior permission of the Central Government.”

As per **Sections 3 and 11 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)**, it is evident that **registration with the Central Government is a mandatory prerequisite** for any individual or organization seeking to receive **foreign contributions in India**. **Section 3 explicitly prohibits the acceptance of foreign contributions** by specified persons, including **journalists and media entities**, while **Section 11 mandates prior registration or approval** before accepting any such funds.

However, upon examination of the **HRRF Journalism Grant process**, it is observed that the **application framework neither seeks disclosure of FCRA registration details** from applicants **nor includes any disclaimer or compliance requirement** regarding FCRA eligibility. The **absence of such mandatory verification or declaration** renders the process **non-compliant with statutory provisions**, as it enables the **disbursal of foreign funds to unregistered individuals or entities**, thereby **constituting a prima facie violation of the Act**.

6. Observations and Recommendations

1. **Regulatory Oversight and Compliance:-** There is an **urgent need for a thorough investigation** into the **funding operations and financial affiliations of the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)** under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)** and other relevant national security frameworks. The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** should immediately look into the issue and raise concern with the concerned relevant Ministries and Departments regarding the **funding operations, donor networks, and financial affiliations** of the *Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)* under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)** and relevant national security statutes. **Swift action is imperative** to enable **timely legal and regulatory intervention** and scrutiny is essential to address potential **unauthorized foreign contributions, non-compliance, and external influence** impacting India's social fabric, harmony and public discourse at large.
2. **Transparency in Disclosures:** It is observed that the **HRRF Journalism Grant** application framework neither seeks **FCRA registration details** from applicants nor includes any **disclaimer or declaration regarding statutory compliance**. The absence of such mandatory verification enables the disbursal of foreign funds to unregistered individuals or entities, constituting a **prima facie violation** of Sections **3 and 11** of the

FCRA, 2010. The **funding process must therefore be investigated** in its entirety, ensuring that all beneficiaries, intermediaries, and associated media platforms are identified and examined for compliance.

7. Conclusion-

Given that the funded content predominantly targets **sensitive themes** such as alleged state repression, minority victimization, and religious conversion, IAMC's activities raise **serious concerns regarding public order, communal harmony, and national integrity**.

The **Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)**, under the guise of promoting pluralism and democracy, has consistently engaged in initiatives that intersect with **India's internal political, religious, and security domains**. The **HRRF Journalism Grant**, in particular, reveals a **structured attempt to influence create narratives** through foreign-funded channels, reflecting **bias and external interference**.

Such operations appear designed to **distort public perception, foment communal discord, and weaken India's social fabric**. Accordingly, IAMC's funding mechanisms and affiliated journalism projects must be placed under **immediate and comprehensive governmental review** to ensure **compliance with statutory provisions and national security safeguards**.

Ensuring transparency, accountability, and lawful conduct in such foreign-funded initiatives is essential to protect India's sovereignty, democratic integrity, and societal harmony from covert influence and divisive propaganda.

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM JOURNALISM AWARDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Human Rights & Religious Freedom Journalism Grant 2025 Now Open for Submissions

Washington, D.C. (October 17, 2025) – The Human Rights & Religious Freedom (HRRF) Journalism Awards is pleased to announce that submissions are now open for the 2025 HRRF Journalism Grant Program. The program offers grants to independent journalists pursuing in-depth stories that highlight urgent human rights and religious freedom issues in India and across its global diaspora.

The HRRF Journalism Awards and Grant Program is a project of the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization dedicated to defending democracy and pluralism in India and the US.

The HRRF Journalism Grant supports early and mid-career journalists undertaking reporting projects that focus on threats to democracy and press freedom, the challenges confronting religious minorities, especially Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Dalits in India, and the issues affecting the Indian diaspora in the United States. Proposed topics must be timely, original, and of clear significance to Indian or Indian diaspora audiences. Past grantees have published groundbreaking investigations on religious persecution and the resilience of marginalized communities.

Both freelance and full-time reporters are eligible to apply. Reports must be published in reputable national or international print, online, or broadcast outlets with wide circulation, and all stories must be written in English. Journalists can apply for grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,400 (₹40,000 – ₹120,000 INR) to cover reporting expenses.

Applicants are required to provide a letter of intent for publication from an editor, either on official letterhead or as a PDF/email confirmation. Proposals from journalists belonging to minority and marginalized communities are strongly encouraged.

Timeline

- Application deadline: October 28, 2025
- Grant decisions announced: Within 3-4 weeks of submission

How to Apply

- Program details: <https://hrrfawards.com/journalism-grant/>
- Submission form: <https://hrrfawards.com/submission-form/>
- Inquiries: contact@hrrfawards.com

The Human Rights & Religious Freedom Journalism Awards is a project of the Indian American Muslim Council, the largest advocacy organization of Indian American Muslims that is based in Washington, DC with chapters across the United States.



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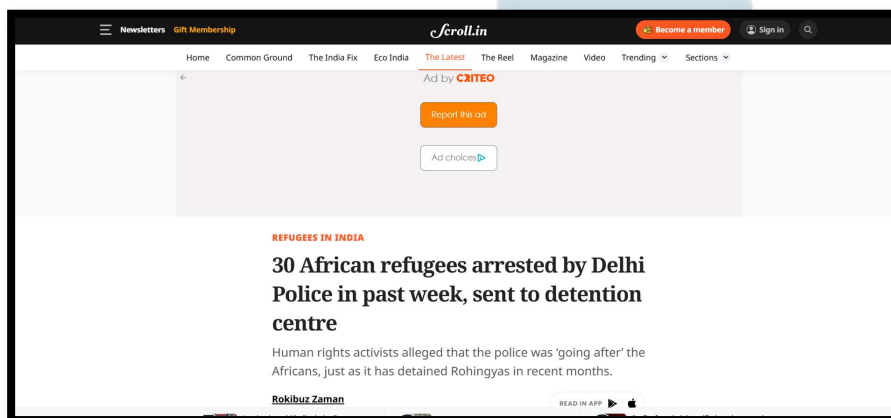
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Human Rights Religious Freedom Journalism **Awards – 2024**

Best Text Reporting on Human Rights & Religious Freedom (Joint Winner)

Astha Savyasachi (Reporters Collective)

Centre hands over 62% of new Sainik Schools to Sangh Parivar, BJP politicians and allies

Vijayta Lalwani (Article 14)

How The Modi Govt Is Trying To Silence Critics In The Diaspora By Banning Them From India

Best Video Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom (Winner)

Akanksha Saxena, Irfan Mehraj, Khalid Khan & Saraskanth TK (Deutsche Welle)

On drugs – Kashmir's heroin epidemic

HRRF Young Journalist of the Year Award 2024 (Winner)

Fatima Khan (The Quint)

'QR Code Shows He's Muslim' — Online Platforms Leave Vendors, Workers Vulnerable

Uttarakhand: The Making Of A 'Hindu-Only' Devbhoomi

10 Years Since Muzaffarnagar Riots: Missing Bodies & The Right To Be Declared Dead

Elections 2024: In This Uttar Pradesh Town, Eid Is A 'Black Day' For Many Muslims

Not Just Muzaffarnagar: Muslim Students Across India Recall Teachers' Hate

Human Rights Religious Freedom Journalism **Awards – 2025**

Best Text Reporting on Human Rights & Religious Freedom (English)

Finalists

Nolina Sarah Minj

Scroll.in

Akanksha Kumar

Newslandry / Article 14

Parth Meena Nikhil

Rest of World

Winner

Akanksha Kumar

Newslandry / Article 14

(Series on fake police encounters and criminalization of Muslims in Haryana state)

Inside UP 'clean chit to STF encounter death No. 25: An autopsy 'cover-up', other loopholes

In Prayagraj, a mother's battle against UP cops for man's death after 'staged encounter'

A Year After A Haryana Riot: Muslims Branded As Terrorists, Incarcerated Despite Flimsy Evidence, Contradictory Witness Accounts

Cut, copy, charge: Inside Haryana police's flawed case on Nuh violence

Best Reporting on Human Rights & Religious Freedom (Hindi)



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Human Rights Religious Freedom Journalism **Awards – 2022**

Best Text Reporting on Human Rights & Religious Freedom category (Winner)

Best Video Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom (Joint Winner)

Best Photo Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom (Winner)

HRRF Young Journalist of the Year Award (Joint Winner)

Best Media Organisation Covering Human Rights and Religious Freedom Journalism (Joint Winner)



Human Rights Religious Freedom Journalism *Awards – 2023*

Best Text Reporting on Human Rights & Religious Freedom (Joint Winner)

Shaheen Abdulla (The Wire)

No Country for Religious Converts »

Sneha Richhariya (India Spend)

'Can I have blue eyes?': An Acid Attack Survivor's Journey To Regain Vision »

Scare of the Scars: Acid Attacks and Skin Scarring »

How India's Health System Fails Acid Violence Victims »

Best Photo Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom (Winner)

Meer Faisal (Al Jazeera/Maktoob)

India town mourns burning of historic library at Muslim school »

110-year-old madrasa and library set ablaze by Hindutva mob during Ram Navami rally in Bihar »

Photos: Burnt by Hindutva mob and bulldozed by BJP govt; Muslim lives in Khargone »

Photos: Thousands of Muslim women pray during protests against eviction in Uttarakhand »

Best Video Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom (Joint Winner)

BBC Hindi

दिल्ली दंगों के पाँच साल: बरी होते लोग, पुलिस की जाँच पर उठते सवाल

दिल्ली दंगों के पाँच साल: कुछ हिंसा के आरोप से बरी हुए वो कुछ बिना सुनवाई अब भी जेल में

Best Story on Human Solidarity

Best Video Story on Human Rights and Religious Freedom

HRRF Young Journalist of the Year Award 2025

Finalists

Aliza Noor

The Quint

Tarushi Aswani

Independent Journalist

Rokibuz Zaman

Scroll.in

Winner

Rokibuz Zaman

Scroll.in

Human Rights and Religious Freedom Journalism Award (Special Mention)

Aditya Menon, Aliza Noor, Syed Faheem Ahmed, Ashutosh Singh, Naman Shah and Zijah Sherwani

The Quint

Uncovering Hate: The Quint's Tracker