

Date: November 25, 2025

To,

Smt. Rashmi Shukla

The Director General of Police, Maharashtra
State Police Headquarters, Mumbai
dgpms.mumbai@mahapolice.gov.in

Vilas Bhonsale

Sr. PI, Malabar Police Station
ps.malabarhill.mum@mahapolice.gov.in

CC:

National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

Government of India, New Delhi
chairman-ncm@nic.in
secy-ncm@nic.in

Subject: Complaint regarding illegal vigilantism, communal profiling, forced Aadhaar checks, and public targeting of Muslim vendors by Raj Saraf at Malabar Hill, Mumbai (November 13, 2025)

Respected Ma'am,

We, at Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), are filing this complaint regarding an alarming and deeply unlawful incident of communal vigilantism, forced identity checks, and targeted harassment of Muslim fruit vendors by Raj Saraf, former General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (South Mumbai), at Malabar Hill, Mumbai, on November 13, 2025.

This incident represents not only a violation of individual rights, but also an escalating national pattern of private citizens assuming State functions, particularly policing functions, to intimidate minority communities, creating a climate of acute insecurity. It reflects a dangerous drift away from constitutional governance towards mob-authorised identity policing — a phenomenon that poses a systemic threat to rule of law in India.

Detailed summary of incident

On November 13, Raj Saraf—accompanied by a small group of supporters—approached fruit vendors operating outside a market area of Malabar Hill. Eyewitnesses and video material confirm that:

1. He singled out Muslim vendors on the basis of appearance and name.
2. He demanded Aadhaar cards, forcing them to produce identity documents under duress, despite having no legal authority to do so.
3. He publicly labelled these Muslim vendors as “anti-national security threats”.
4. He proclaimed that “these people must be checked,” implying they pose inherent danger due to their religious identity.
5. He directed Hindu vendors to place saffron flags on their carts to “distinguish themselves from jihadis.”
6. His instructions resulted in immediate humiliation, fear, and segregation among vendors who rely on daily income.

This is not merely a localised dispute — it is vigilante policing and religious segregation, executed openly in a public space, in one of India’s largest metropolitan cities.

The video of the speech has been downloaded by CJP and is marked and annexed hereto as Annexure A.

Link for the video is: <https://t.me/hindutvawatchin/3261>

Broader constitutional and national context

1. **A disturbing pattern of extra-legal communal vigilantism:** The Malabar Hill incident is part of a growing pattern across India where private individuals, often with political affiliations, undertake self-appointed ‘law-and-order’ functions specifically targeting members of minority communities. These acts — ranging from arbitrary ID checks, harassment of vendors, moral policing, and cow vigilantism to public accusations of “anti-national” activity — reflect a drift away from State-regulated policing to community-sanctioned coercion. When political actors unilaterally assume the authority of the police, they effectively establish parallel systems of enforcement outside constitutional limits. Such actions have been widely documented in several states and signify a dangerous collapse of institutional boundaries.
2. **Erosion of constitutional morality and rule of law:** The Indian Constitution is built upon a framework of constitutional morality, requiring public authorities and citizens alike to act within the bounds of law, equality, and dignity. The Supreme Court in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* and *Sabarimala (Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala)* underlined that democracy survives only when constitutional morality prevails over social prejudice and majoritarian impulses. Conduct such as that of Raj

Saraf undermines this foundational value. It signals to society that religious identity is a legitimate basis for suspicion, and that coercive authority can be wielded by anyone claiming political legitimacy. This represents a profound threat to the rule of law, where power is exercised not by legal mandate but by communal entitlement.

3. **Normalisation of ‘everyday discrimination’ against minorities:** The incident also reflects the steady normalisation of everyday discrimination in public spaces — markets, streets, workplaces, and transport hubs — where Muslim citizens are increasingly subjected to suspicion, humiliation, or coerced identity verification. Nationally, there has been documented growth in calls for economic boycotts, segregation of vendors, and profiling based on religious attire or language. When such profiling is tolerated, it transforms ordinary civic life into a terrain of majoritarian surveillance, where minorities must constantly prove their legitimacy. This contradicts the vision of fraternity and equal citizenship articulated in the Preamble.
4. **Undermining of State authority and constitutional secularism:** Allowing individuals to conduct ID checks or issue instructions that segregate Hindu and Muslim vendors weakens the constitutional fabric by diluting the State’s monopoly over policing powers. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held — including in *Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan v. Union of India* — that hate speech and targeted harassment strike at the core of secularism. The Constitution prohibits any hierarchy among citizens based on religion; yet incidents like this create a de facto system of religious tiering, where Hindu vendors are marked as “safe” and Muslim vendors as “suspects.” This is antithetical to Articles 14, 15, and 25, which mandate equal protection, non-discrimination, and freedom of religious identity.
5. **Threat to India’s democratic cohesion and social peace:** Finally, the broader national environment has seen increased tensions fuelled by rhetoric framing Muslim citizens as “infiltrators,” “jihadis,” or “security threats.” When such language enters everyday interactions — not only through political speeches but through actions taken on the street — it transforms prejudice into actionable discrimination. The Malabar Hill incident thus contributes to an atmosphere where constitutional citizenship is replaced with ethnonational belonging, where fear dictates behaviour, and where social harmony is replaced with suspicion. Left unchecked, this trend risks fracturing India’s pluralistic fabric, corroding democratic cohesion, and provoking cycles of retaliation and insecurity.

Legal Violations

Raj Saraf’s actions constitute several grave offences under the following laws:

Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

Section 196 – Promoting enmity between different groups: Calling Muslim vendors “anti-national security threats” and “jihadis” is a direct incitement to enmity between Hindus and Muslims.

Section 356 – Outraging religious feelings: Segregating vendors by instructing Hindu vendors to use saffron flags humiliates Muslim citizens and violates their dignity as a group.

Section 297 – Statements conducive to public mischief: The act of publicly declaring Muslim traders as threats and directing others to mark their carts with religious symbolism is capable of causing panic, retaliation, and violence.

Section 351 – Criminal intimidation: Compelling Muslim vendors to surrender Aadhaar cards under threat of being labelled as “anti-national” constitutes intimidation in law.

Section 124 – Impersonation of a public servant: Demanding identity documents is a function reserved for police and statutory authorities. His behaviour amounts to assuming the authority of the State.

Section 335 – Wrongful restraint and coercion: Stopping business operations to forcibly verify identity is an actionable wrong under BNS.

Constitutional Violations

This incident violates basic constitutional guarantees:

Article 14 — Equality before law: Muslim vendors were subjected to a different and harsher standard of right to livelihood solely on account of religion.

Article 15(1) — Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion: The entire exercise was explicitly religiously targeted.

Article 19(1)(g) — Right to practice any trade or business: Vendors were unlawfully prevented from conducting their trade.

Article 21 — Right to life with dignity: Forced Aadhaar checks, public humiliation, and communal segregation directly assault human dignity.

Article 25 — Freedom of religion and identity: The use of saffron flags to identify “safe” carts violates the spirit of equal religious citizenship.

Preamble — Secularism, fraternity, and justice: The targeting of a religious minority destroys the sense of fraternity and threatens social peace.

Impact on public order and social harmony

The Malabar Hill incident has a highly destabilising effect on public order because it signals to citizens that religious profiling and identity policing are acceptable practices in everyday civic life. When fruit vendors—among the most economically vulnerable groups—are publicly humiliated and forced to prove their citizenship, it creates fear among minority communities and emboldens others to imitate such conduct. This has the potential to create a climate of distrust between communities and fuel spontaneous confrontations in public spaces, endangering routine commercial activity and community relations.

Furthermore, instructing Hindu vendors to mark their carts with saffron flags introduces an element of visible communal segregation into an ordinary marketplace. Such symbolic tagging of businesses has historically been associated with apartheid-like practices in many societies and creates a dangerous precedent for communal identification in public spaces. This not only stigmatises Muslim vendors but also pressures Hindu vendors into compliance, creating a tense environment where social relations are defined by religious boundaries rather than shared economic and civic life.

The public branding of Muslims as “anti-national” and “security threats” also inflames volatile sentiments, especially in urban environments like Mumbai where diverse populations interact in dense neighbourhoods. In a city with a history of communal tensions—including the 1992–93 riots—provocative acts of this kind can trigger panic, rumour-mongering, retaliatory behaviour, or even targeted violence. If such vigilantism is not checked, it can escalate rapidly, overwhelming local police capacities and undermining the fragile equilibrium of public peace.

Finally, unchecked incidents of this nature create long-term mistrust between communities and reduce confidence in the neutrality of law enforcement. When citizens see private actors assuming policing functions without consequence, they may either emulate such behaviour or withdraw cooperation with the police, thereby weakening the governance ecosystem. The cumulative effect is a fragmented social order where certain communities feel unsafe, excluded, or surveilled, while others feel empowered to police public spaces based on prejudice. This is profoundly damaging to the civic identity of the city and to the constitutional commitment to fraternity and equality.

Reliefs Sought

Before the Maharashtra Police (DGP):

1. Immediate registration of an FIR against Raj Saraf under BNS Sections 196, 297, 351, 356, 124, 335, among others.
2. Verification of all video footage of the incident.
3. Identification of all persons assisting the vigilante checks.
4. Directions to local police to prevent any future vigilantism at Malabar Hill and surrounding markets.
5. Assurance of protection for Muslim vendors who were intimidated.

Before the National Commission for Minorities:

1. Initiation of an independent inquiry into targeted harassment of Muslim vendors.
2. Summoning of Raj Saraf for explanation.
3. Issuing notice to Mumbai Police for an immediate status report.
4. Recommendations to ensure safety protocols for minority street vendors.

5. Public advisory against communal profiling and vigilante identity policing in markets nationwide.

This incident is a stark warning about the creeping normalisation of communal vigilantism in everyday life. When individuals assume policing powers, selectively target minorities, and attempt to reorganise public space through religious segregation, they do not merely commit offences — they strike at the heart of the Indian Constitution.

We urge urgent, uncompromising action from the Maharashtra Police and the National Commission for Minorities.

Yours sincerely,

Nandan Maluste

President, Citizens for Justice and Peace

Teesta Setalvad

Secretary, Citizens for Justice and Peace

Annexure

Annexure A: Video clip of Raj Saraf downloaded by CJP.