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*The following statement, written by Ambedkar King Study Circle, California, is released with the support of all the members of the Savera coalition.*

For Immediate Release

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## Joint Statement on United States Federal Court Order Delivering **Major Blow to Hindu Supremacists** Over Caste Discrimination Claims

In the summer of 2020, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD), formerly known as the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), sued Cisco Systems for alleged caste-based discrimination. In September 2022, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) filed a lawsuit against the CRD, claiming that the case violated the religious freedom of Hindus by linking caste to Hinduism. Observers have noted that such arguments bear a striking resemblance to other far-right efforts to attack civil rights institutions, including their chosen narrative that advancing civil rights constitutes some form of “reverse victimhood.”

In August 2023, a federal court rejected HAF’s argument as “highly speculative and implausible.” The court opined that CRD’s lawsuit would not lead Hindu Americans to seek religious accommodations allowing caste-based discrimination, nor would employers likely approve such requests. The court also noted that HAF could not claim to represent the entire Hindu community in the U.S., but allowed HAF to amend its complaint.

In September 2023, HAF filed an amended complaint, adding 12 individual plaintiffs, including three who remained anonymous, claiming that CRD’s lawsuit against Cisco would infringe on their religious freedom. CRD challenged the anonymity of these plaintiffs.

On August 12, 2024, the court ruled in favor of CRD, rejecting the anonymity of the plaintiffs on the grounds that their claims were “vague and conclusory,” and did not meet legal standards or precedents from other cases. In a revealing critique of the claims of upper-caste victimhood, the court also noted that “personal discomfort with the Department’s Cisco Action” did not constitute “a plausible likelihood of threats or harm.” The court gave HAF another opportunity to amend their complaint, requiring them to either identify the anonymous plaintiffs by name or remove them from the case.

As advocates against caste discrimination, we challenge Hindu supremacist claims that legal actions against caste discrimination infringe on religious freedom. In India, where Hindus are the majority, there are laws to protect those oppressed by caste; no such laws exist in the U.S. If Hindu supremacists continue to dominate the narrative in the U.S., they may exploit the most vulnerable within their community, the caste-oppressed, under the guise of religious freedom. No minority group should be allowed to violate the rights of minorities within.



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