

17 June 2018

Honorable Mrs. Sushma Swaraj
Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India
South Block, Cabinet Secretariat
Raisina Hill, New Delhi, 110 011
INDIA
Via email: eam@mea.gov.in

SUBJECT: Association for Asian Studies-in-Asia Conference, 5-8 July 2018

Dear Minister Swaraj,

As a sister society of the Association for Asian Studies, with considerable intersection of interests and membership, we respectfully request that the Ministry of External Affairs reconsider its decision to exclude Pakistani scholars, including scholars of Pakistani ancestry residing outside of Pakistan, from being granted visas to attend the Association for Asian Studies-in-Asia (AAS-in-Asia) conference that is to be held in Delhi from 5-8 July 2018.

The conference is being co-hosted by Ashoka University and the Association for Asian Studies, the largest international academic body of scholars of Asian Studies, with a membership of about 8,000 worldwide. The goal of the conference is to foster intellectual exchange among scholars based in different parts of Asia, and between scholars based in Asia and those from other parts of the world.

In bringing the AAS-in-Asia conference to South Asia for the first time (previous conferences in this series have been held in Singapore [2014], Taipei [2015], Kyoto [2016], and Seoul [2017], India was selected in large part because of India's vibrant intellectual life and open, democratic traditions. It was with great dismay that we learned about some of our Association members and other anthropological scholars being excluded from taking part in the conference, simply because of their nationality or ancestry. Our Association stands with the Association for Asian Studies and scholarly societies everywhere in our steadfast commitment to responsible academic freedom.

We understand that India has the right to deny a visa to individuals from any country at any time. We also understand that there is a long history of strained relations between India and Pakistan. However, we also understand that the pathway to reduction of conflict includes free, open, and full intellectual and cultural exchange. We urge you to allow Asian Studies scholars from Pakistan to attend the conference.

Thank you for your consideration,



Edward Liebow
Executive Director



Alex W. Barker
President



Akhil Gupta
President-Elect

Cc: Michael Paschal, Executive Director, Association for Asian Studies
US Ambassador to India, Kenneth Juster