CIHS Centre for Integrated and Holistic Studies

Why India's FCRA Amendment Is Financial Oversight, Not Religious Persecution

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Explainer

Why India’s FCRA Amendment Is Financial Oversight, Not Religious Persecution

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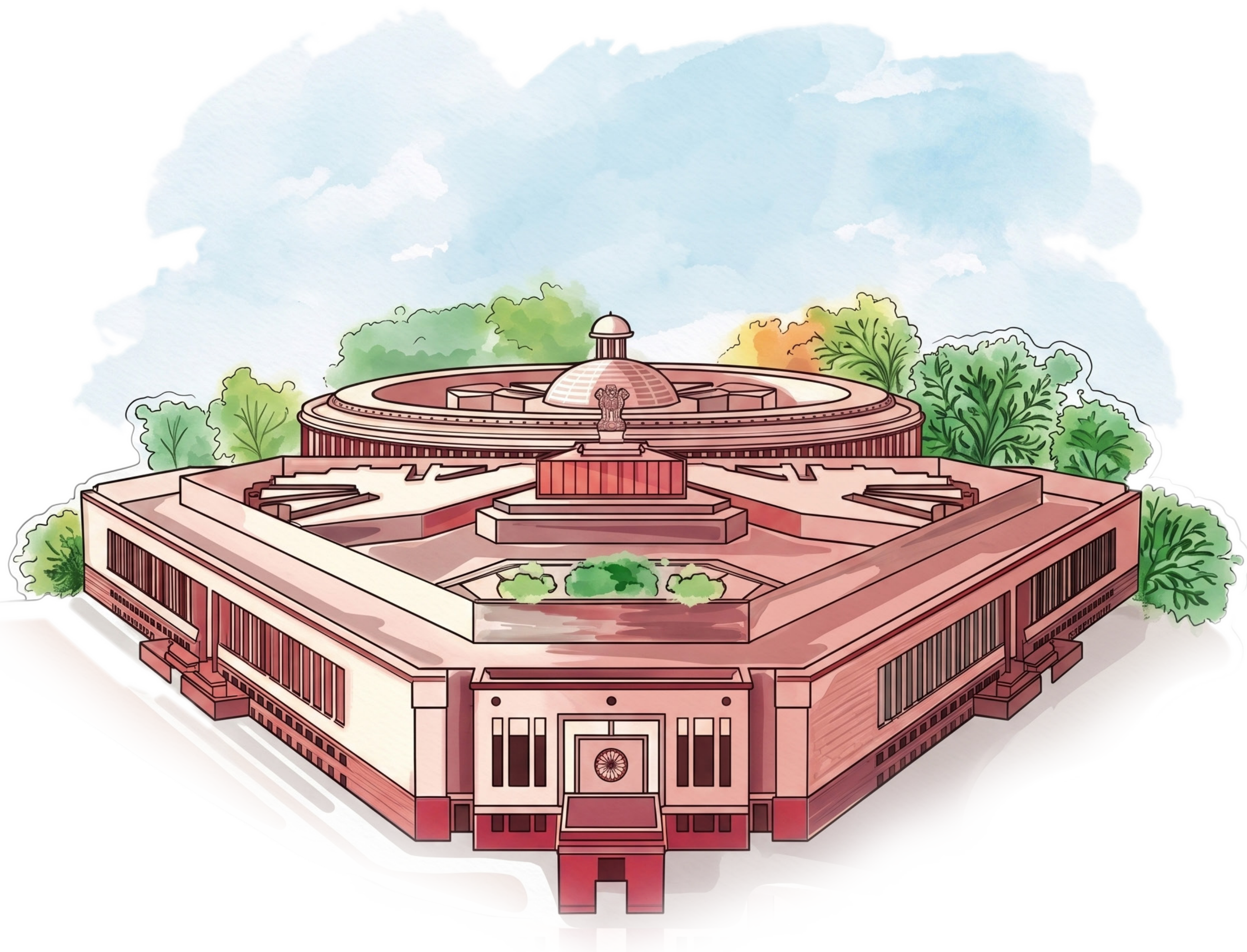
Executive Summary

On 4 August 2026, US Congressman Riley Moore attacked India's proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 as a takeover of churches and a clear attack on Christians and warned it could damage the India-US relationship. The claim is false and the alarm rests on it. This document examines the Bill, the record of foreign-funding enforcement in India, the settled law of the Indian Supreme Court and the comparable laws of the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union. Read together, they show that India's measure is a narrow, religion-neutral instrument of financial oversight, milder than what its own critics enforce at home and that the true intrusion on sovereignty is the foreign political pressure now being applied to it.

The core findings are these:

- **The Bill does not seize churches.** It does not permit the takeover of any functioning place of worship or alter the religious character of any. It provides only for the management of foreign-funded assets after an organization has already lost its FCRA registration and such orders remain open to review and reversal.
- **The law is religion-neutral in text and in practice.** FCRA names no faith and applies to every recipient of foreign money. Its enforcement has reached American evangelical networks, a Vatican-linked Catholic congregation, a leading Islamic foundation, British and European advocacy bodies and a secular US-backed philanthropy alike. The presence of the Islamic Research Foundation on the list of violators alone defeats the claim that Christians are being singled out.
- **The violations are real and documented.** The record shows recurring misconduct: diversion of funds to unregistered entities, misreporting of foreign contributions, routing money to circumvent the law, spending charitable or educational grants on religious activity and financing agitation against development projects. In the gravest case, Gospel for Asia, the misuse was established by an American federal settlement and a US financial watchdog before India acted.
- **India's right is judicially settled.** In Noel Harper v. Union of India (2022), the Supreme Court held that no one has a right to receive foreign contribution, that its inflow can distort the nation's polity, and that a sovereign democracy may regulate or bar it outright.
- **India regulates more liberally than its critics.** The United States bans foreign money in its elections absolutely and jails those who route it, including a senator sentenced to eleven years. Britain bans foreign party donations and criminalizes unregistered foreign-power arrangements. France has closed roughly two dozen mosques and dissolved Muslim organizations over foreign funding and Austria has banned foreign funding of mosques outright. The European Union is building a bloc-wide register of foreign-funded actors and the "foreign funded" label itself was pioneered by a member state, Hungary. India, alone among them, still permits the funding it could lawfully forbid and closes no house of worship.
- **The pressure, not the law, is the real intrusion.** From the 107 lawmakers who wrote for Compassion International in 2017, to the House of Lords over the Missionaries of Charity in 2022, to Congressman Moore in 2026, foreign politicians have repeatedly intervened to shield foreign-funded organizations from Indian law.
- **The messenger is an interested party.** Moore is not a neutral monitor of religious liberty but a self-described champion of the institutional Catholic Church, whose dioceses and charities are among the foreign-funded bodies the Bill regulates.

Taken as a whole, the case against Moore's framing is not a matter of opinion but of record. Every serious democracy asserts the right to know who funds activity within its borders, to keep foreign money out of its politics and to withdraw that privilege from those who abuse it, and most enforce that right with criminal penalties India does not impose. The demand that India abandon the Amendment is, in substance, a demand that it governs foreign money more loosely than the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union govern it at home and that it does so at the very moment those powers are tightening their own controls. A sovereign nation is under no obligation to accept such a demand, least of all when it is dressed as the defense of a faith the law does not touch.



1. Context

On 4 August 2026, US Congressman Riley Moore, a first-term Republican representing West Virginia's 2nd District and a member of the House Appropriations Committee, published a post on X objecting to India's proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026. The post has since become the most prominent American objection to the legislation. Because the Indian position rests on the accuracy of the underlying facts, it is necessary to first set out Moore's claims as he made them, and then to state what the Bill actually provides.

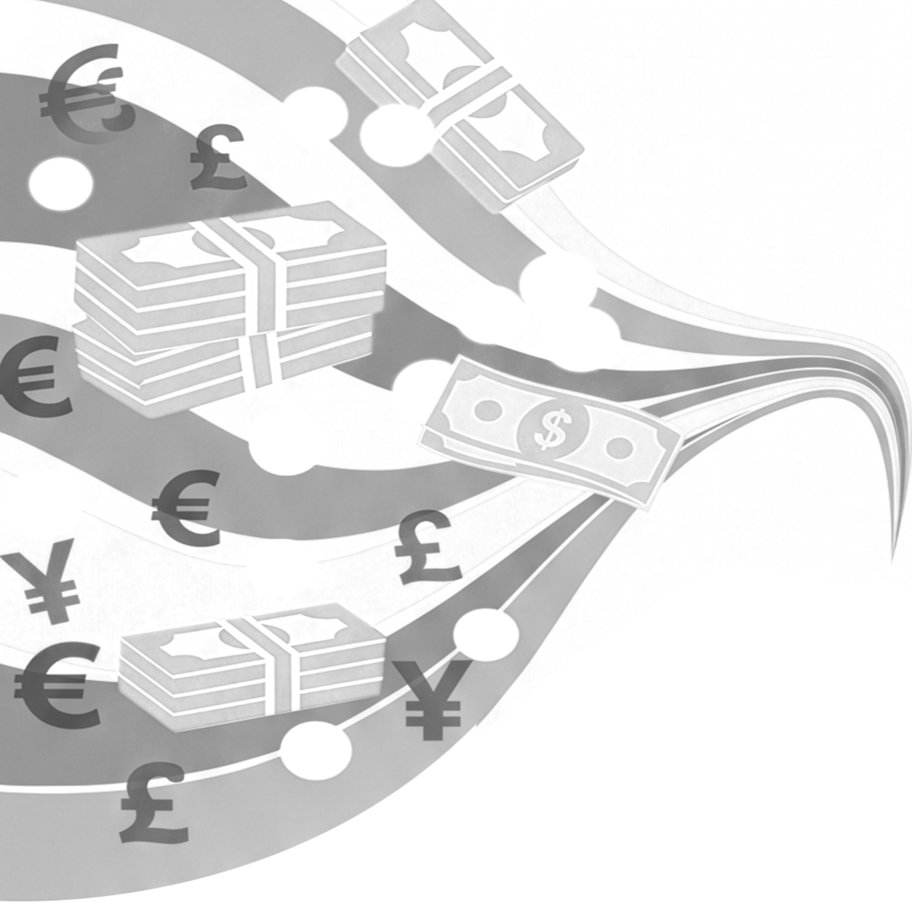
Moore's post advanced three distinct claims. The first was historical: that Christians have been present in India since St. Thomas the Apostle reached the Malabar Coast in the first century. The second concerned the content of the Bill: that India's Parliament is amending FCRA rules "to permit government takeovers of churches and religious charities." The third was diplomatic: that the Bill constitutes "a clear attack against Christians" and, if enacted, would become "a point of major concern in our bilateral relationship with India."

Taken together, these claims form a single line of reasoning. If the Amendment permits the seizure of churches, and if such seizure targets Christians specifically, then the legislation amounts to state-sponsored religious persecution warranting a diplomatic response. The validity of this reasoning depends entirely on its first premise, namely the assertion that the Bill authorizes the takeover of churches. That premise does not survive examination of the text.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026. It does not empower the government to seize an operational church or to alter the religious character of any place of worship. Its provisions are directed at a narrow and specific situation: the treatment of foreign-funded assets after an organization's FCRA registration has already ceased to exist, whether through cancellation, surrender, non-renewal, or refusal of renewal. In those circumstances, a government-appointed "Designated Authority" assumes responsibility for the management of the foreign contributions and the assets created from them, so that such assets are not diverted, abandoned, or left in legal limbo. The mechanism is one of asset custody following a prior regulatory event, not one of religious confiscation. The Union government had, before Moore's intervention, publicly stated that places of worship retain their religious character even if the Bill becomes law.

This distinction is decisive because it exposes a category error at the heart of the objection. FCRA is a foreign-funding statute, not a religious one. It makes no reference to Christianity or to any other faith, and it applies identically to a Hindu trust, a Muslim charitable body, other non-governmental organization or an academic institution that receives money from abroad. An entity loses standing under FCRA on the basis of its handling of foreign funds and its compliance with the registration regime, not on the basis of the religion it professes. Characterizing a religion-neutral funding law as "a clear attack against Christians" therefore assumes the very conclusion it purports to establish.

What remains, once the factual premise is set aside, is the diplomatic warning, and it is here that the more significant issue lies. Moore, a legislator of a foreign state, has framed the internal lawmaking of a democratic ally as a potential source of harm to bilateral relations unless that legislation is altered to meet his objection. The claim is not merely that the Bill is misguided, but that a sovereign parliament's regulation of foreign money within its own borders is a proper subject of external pressure. India's response, developed in the sections that follow, is that the regulation of foreign funding of domestic actors is a recognized and widely exercised sovereign function, practiced by the United States and other established democracies in forms often more restrictive than India's own.



The weight to be given to Moore's objection depends in part on the interest from which it proceeds. His public record indicates that he speaks not as a neutral observer of religious liberty, but as a consistent advocate for the institutional Catholic Church.

Moore is identified as a Roman Catholic in his own congressional office's materials and he has repeatedly incorporated that identity into his official work. The clearest example is his sponsorship of House Resolution 412 in May 2025, which congratulated Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, elected as Pope Leo XIV, on his "historic election as the 267th pontiff of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and the first American pontiff." Moore led the resolution alongside roughly twenty House colleagues and issued official statements expressing national pride at an American assuming leadership of the Catholic Church. He has similarly directed his congressional activity toward the defense of clergy and churches abroad.

This record is relevant to the assessment of his position on FCRA. The Amendment tightens oversight of foreign funds flowing to Indian organizations, a category that includes Catholic dioceses and charities dependent on overseas support. Moore's objection is therefore consistent with a documented pattern of advocacy on behalf of the institutional Church, rather than an isolated concern for religious freedom in the abstract. India is entitled to weigh the objection with that interest in view, and to observe that a legislator so closely associated with the Church's global activities is a predictable source of opposition to measures subjecting those activities to greater financial scrutiny.

2. FCRA in Plain Terms

To assess whether India's proposed amendment is legitimate, one must first understand what the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act is, why it exists, and what interest it protects. Stripped of the language of controversy, FCRA is a financial oversight statute. It governs the receipt and use of foreign contributions by individuals, associations, and organizations operating within India. It does not prohibit foreign funding. It conditions it, requiring that entities wishing to receive money from abroad register with the government, route those funds through a designated bank account, use them only for the declared purpose, and account for them transparently. In substance, it is a transparency and national-security regime applied to a specific category of money: funds that originate outside the country and are directed toward actors inside it.

The law's origins are instructive. FCRA was first enacted in 1976, during a period in which the Indian state had grown concerned that foreign powers were attempting to influence domestic politics, institutions, and public opinion through financial channels. The premise then, as now, was that money entering a country's civic and political life from outside its borders is not a neutral act of charity but a potential instrument of influence. The statute was comprehensively re-enacted as the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, and further tightened in 2020, when Parliament restricted the sub-granting of foreign funds, required that such funds be received through a single designated branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi, and capped the proportion that could be spent on administrative overhead. Each revision has moved in the same direction, toward greater traceability and tighter control. The 2026 Amendment is a continuation of that trajectory, not a departure from it.

The scale of the activity the law governs explains why the state treats it seriously. As of mid-2026, roughly 14,449 FCRA registrations remained valid, while more than 22,000 had been revoked over time and a further 15,000 had lapsed. Between 2019 and 2022 alone, foreign contributions flowing into FCRA-registered bodies amounted to tens of thousands of crores of rupees. These are not trivial sums moving to a handful of actors. They represent a substantial and continuous inflow of foreign money into thousands of organizations operating across the country's social, religious, educational, and political spheres. A state that did not monitor flows of this magnitude would be an outlier among functioning governments, not a model of them.

This is where the sovereign principle enters, and it is the foundation of India's entire position. The authority to determine who may fund whom within a nation's borders, and on what conditions, is a core attribute of sovereignty. A state is responsible for the integrity of its own political and civic order. It is entitled to ensure that its elections are not shaped by foreign money, that its public movements are not directed by foreign donors, and that organizations operating on its soil answer, in the first instance, to its own laws rather than to the strategic or ideological priorities of their overseas funders. This is not a peculiarly Indian anxiety. It is a settled feature of statehood, recognized across the democratic world, and it will be shown in a later section that India's principal critics enforce the same principle at home, frequently with greater severity.

The specific concern the FCRA addresses is the gap between foreign money and domestic accountability. When an organization within India is financed substantially from abroad, its incentives may cease to align with the population it claims to serve and instead track the objectives of its donors. The state's interest is not in silencing such organizations but in ensuring that the arrangement is visible, lawful, and subject to oversight. The registration requirement makes the funding traceable. The purpose restriction ensures the money is used as declared. The compliance regime allows the government to withdraw the privilege of foreign funding from entities that abuse it. None of this touches the beliefs, worship, or expression of anyone in India. It touches only the movement of foreign money, which no state is obliged to treat as beyond regulation.

Understood in these terms, the 2026 Amendment addresses a specific and previously unresolved weakness in the regime. Until now, when an organization lost its FCRA registration, the assets it had accumulated using foreign funds, whether land, buildings, or institutions, were left in an uncertain legal position. The entity was no longer authorized to receive foreign contributions, yet the foreign-funded assets remained in place, and enforcement of the cancellation could stall for years. The Amendment closes that gap by providing for a Designated Authority to take custody of and manage those specific assets once registration has ended. The measure gives practical effect to a decision the state is already empowered to make. It ensures that the withdrawal of a foreign-funding privilege carries real consequences rather than remaining a paper order.

The objection that this constitutes an attack on any religion mistakes the object of the law. **The FCRA regulates a financial relationship, not a faith.** Its subject is foreign money and the conditions under which it may enter the country, and its purpose is the protection of the population against the unaccountable external influence that such money can carry. That is a purpose every sovereign state is entitled to pursue.

3. Select Case Studies in the Misuse of Foreign Funds in India

The claim that FCRA is directed against any single faith cannot survive contact with the record of how foreign money has actually been used in India. That record does not rest on assertion. It rests on the Ministry of Home Affairs' documented findings, on FIRs registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation, on Income Tax and Enforcement Directorate investigations, on the observations of India's own Supreme Court, and in the gravest case, on a settlement reached in an American federal court. The cases below tell the story of each organization, and then set out the specific violations, the action taken, and the foreign pressure that followed.

The governing law was settled by the Supreme Court of India. On 8 April 2022, in Noel Harper v. Union of India, a bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheshwari, and C.T. Ravikumar upheld the 2020 FCRA amendments in full. The Court held that citizens have no right to receive foreign contribution, and that permitting it at all is a matter of State policy. It observed that foreign contribution can have a material impact on the socioeconomic structure and polity of the country, and that its inflow ought to be kept to a minimum, if not eschewed altogether. Recording that the misuse of funds by certain NGOs had already caused the cancellation of thousands of registrations, the Court urged that charity be more inward-looking and that national sovereignty be protected from the adverse influence of foreign contributions. This is the settled law against which every case below is measured.

3.1 Compassion International (United States)

For decades, Compassion International was the largest single source of foreign money entering India, moving roughly forty-five million dollars a year through a monthly child-sponsorship model. The government's concern was not the charity but where the money went. Its India-linked partner, Caruna Bal Vikas, was found to be passing foreign contributions to institutions not registered under the FCRA, and a CBI complaint recorded the partner's own stated aim of turning poor children into "fulfilled Christian adults." Compassion never conceded the point, insisting to the end that it funded no conversion. But it did not contest the finding in court so much as withdraw, closing operations after nearly fifty years once it was placed under prior-permission control. The episode also produced the first mass foreign intervention on behalf of a regulated NGO, a template Moore now follows.

- **Foreign donor / link:** India's single largest foreign donor, transferring roughly forty-five million dollars a year through a "sponsor a child" program routed via church-affiliated service centers.
- **Violations and charges cited:** Diverting foreign contributions to institutions not registered under the FCRA via its India-linked partner Caruna Bal Vikas; targeting economically disadvantaged children for religious conversion. CBI FIR RC2202020E003, dated 20 February 2020, registered against Caruna Bal Vikas and Adhane Management Consultants under Section 7 of the FCRA.
- **Action taken:** Placed in the "prior permission" category in 2017; wound down operations after nearly five decades.
- **Foreign pressure:** 107 US lawmakers, led by the chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, wrote to India's Home Minister seeking a reprieve; the State Department said it would raise the matter. India replied that the process had been fully transparent.

3.2 Gospel for Asia and Believers Eastern Church (United States)

Gospel for Asia is the case where the misuse was proven abroad before India ever acted. Run by K.P. Yohannan from Wills Point, Texas, the ministry solicited donations for "urgent" overseas work, and its own donors sued when they discovered the money sitting in foreign accounts. In 2019 the organization agreed to refund thirty-seven million dollars to some 200,000 donors, a settlement it accepted while admitting no wrongdoing, four years after a US Christian financial watchdog had already expelled it for breaking five of its standards. In India the pattern repeated exactly: foreign funds raised for charity were diverted to religious ends, and when the FCRA account was cancelled, the affiliated Believers Eastern Church tried to keep the money flowing through other trusts. Tax authorities then raided dozens of premises and seized a 2,000-acre estate in a money-laundering probe. An American court, an American watchdog, and Indian regulators reached the same verdict independently.

Indian missionary caught in fund scandal in Canada, US

HT SPECIAL

Anirudh Bhattacharyya

letters@hindustantimes.com

TORONTO: A lavishly funded missionary organisation that focuses on India, particularly Kerala, faces accusations in Canada of misusing millions of dollars in charitable donations while a class-action lawsuit, with a similar premise, has been filed against it in the US.

Gospel for Asia (GFA), with its headquarters in Wills Point, Texas, was founded by Kerala-born Yohannan Kadippiaril Punnose in 1978. Since then, it has burgeoned with branches in countries like the US, Canada, Australia, South Korea, Finland and others.

Complaints against the evangelical group's functioning have multiplied in North America. Among the complainants is Bruce Morrison, pastor of the Christian Fellowship Church of New Glasgow in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

Morrison has prepared a 21-page financial analysis alleging that $128 million in global donations received by GFA during 2007-14 had gone "missing", The Hamilton Spectator newspaper reported. The report alleged GFA was "using donations to build a massive for-profit corporate empire".

GFA's filings with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) show $93.5 million was transferred to India in 2007-14, but "Indian government documents show that no money from Canada was received by the charity's Indian affiliates during the same period", the report said.

Morrison, who has filed complaints with the CRA and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), told HT, "They received money for one purpose and spent it for another. I wrote letters to them (GFA), but never really got good answers."

Another complaint has gone to CRA's Charities Directorate from Garry Cluley, a former board member of GFA Canada, who stated in a letter it was his belief that "a full investigation into financial and other practices by GFA is needed".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Yohannan Kadippiaril Punnose

Yohannan settles US lawsuit for ₹261cr

Disney.Tom@timesgroup.com

Kochi: Gospel for Asia (GFA) – founded by KP Yohannan – has settled a lawsuit over alleged misuse of donations in the US by agreeing to set aside $37-million (Rs 261 crore) in a ettlement fund for its donors.

limit and total extent of defendants' monetary obligations under this agreement and the settlement," the order reads.

As per the settlement, the complainant Murphy and GFA will also work together to designate a replacement for K P Yohannan's wife who will go away

The statement further states that as stipulated by the agreement as much as 200,000 GFA donors will be eligible to receive a portion of the agreed upon settlement payment. "GFA is essentially refunding donations, the ministry hopes that those who receive

- **Foreign donor / link:** Led by K.P. Yohannan, headquartered in Texas, funding the affiliated Believers Eastern Church in India.

- **US findings:** In 2015 the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability terminated its membership for violating five of the council's standards. In 2019 it settled a racketeering-and-fraud class action by refunding thirty-seven million dollars to roughly 200,000 donors, plus over twelve million in plaintiff's fees.

- **Violations cited in India:** Diversion of charitable foreign funds to religious purposes, and continued receipt through other trusts after cancellation. November 2020 Income Tax searches of dozens of premises, recovery of large unexplained cash, and seizure of a 2,000-acre estate in a money-laundering probe; Yohannan summoned over foreign-exchange violations and failed to appear.

- **Action taken:** FCRA account of Believers Eastern Church cancelled by the Home Ministry.

- **Admission:** Settled the US suit but admitted no wrongdoing; the settlement required the founder's wife to leave the board for three years.

3.3 World Vision India (United States and global)

World Vision is one of the largest Christian humanitarian networks on earth, and for years it sustained programs across thousands of Indian communities on foreign money. When its registration came up for review, the government suspended it in 2022 and cancelled it in January 2024. The organization did not deny the outcome or leave the country; it said plainly that the loss of foreign funding forced it to shut projects and cut staff. There was no dramatic raid or court battle here, only the ordinary operation of a licensing regime that eventually reached even the biggest recipients.

- **Foreign donor / link:** A major global Christian humanitarian network operating across thousands of Indian communities on foreign funding.
- **Action taken:** FCRA license suspended in 2022 and cancelled in January 2024, following the audit-and-renewal process.
- **Outcome:** Remained in India but acknowledged closing projects and reducing staff.
- **Context:** Part of the same decade-long compliance review reaching others and religious bodies alike.

3.4 Church of North India and the April 2024 Cancellations

The Church of North India, one of the country's oldest Protestant denominations, lost its FCRA registration in 2023 amid a property scandal in which its own pastors accused fellow clergy of selling church land worth over ten thousand crore rupees using forged documents. A year later, the government revoked five more registrations in a single stroke, naming misuse of foreign grants among the reasons. These were not obscure outfits; they included the Evangelical Fellowship of India, an apex body linking hundreds of member organizations, and the Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, a relief agency woven into Western church-aid networks. When institutions of that standing are held to the same test as everyone else, it is the standard that is uniform, not the target that is selective.

- **Church of North India (2023):** Registration revoked citing alleged violations, against the backdrop of a 2019 land scam involving properties worth over ten thousand crore rupees and forged-document land sales.
- **April 2024 action:** Five licenses revoked for misuse of foreign grants among other reasons: the CNI Synodical Board of Social Service, the Voluntary Health Association of India, the Indo-Global Social Service Society, the Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, and the Evangelical Fellowship of India.
- **Significance:** Apex institutions sustained largely by American and British church-aid networks, showing the law reaches the funding relationship, not the denomination.

3.5 Missionaries of Charity (Vatican-linked, Catholic)

The one case that ended in reversal is also the one that best answers the charge of seizure. On Christmas Day 2021, the Home Ministry declined to renew the FCRA registration of Mother Teresa's congregation, citing adverse inputs and unmet eligibility conditions. The move set off a global outcry, and the government clarified that it had frozen nothing, the congregation had itself asked its bank to hold the accounts. Within thirteen days, once the necessary documents were filed, the registration was restored. Nothing was confiscated, and the organization continued its work. What the episode does show is how readily Western legislatures treat India's internal funding decisions as their business: the matter reached the floor of the House of Lords before it was even resolved.


THE HINDU

HOME / NEWS / INDIA

Home Ministry refused FCRA renewal application of Missionaries of Charity

The Missionaries of Charity's registration under the FCRA was valid up to October 31, 2021.

Published - December 27, 2021 06:31 pm IST - New Delhi

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- **Foreign link:** The Catholic congregation founded by Mother Teresa, substantially foreign-funded.
- **Action taken:** On 25 December 2021 the Home Ministry declined renewal, citing adverse inputs and failure to meet eligibility conditions under FCRA 2010 and its rules. It stated it had frozen no accounts, and that the State Bank of India reported the congregation itself requested the freeze.
- **Outcome:** Registration restored on 7 January 2022 after the necessary documents were submitted.
- **Foreign pressure:** The matter was debated in the UK Parliament, with the House of Lords pressing whether Britain had raised it with India.
- **Significance:** Proves FCRA determinations are reviewable rather than permanent seizures.

3.6 Greenpeace India (European environmental network)

Greenpeace India shows the concern in its purely economic form, with no religious dimension at all. When the government cancelled its registration, it laid out a specific accounting: foreign money moved into undesignated accounts, figures under-reported, funds spent on litigation and bail, and the salary of a foreign activist quietly concealed. The organization rejected the charges and fought the cancellation, and it is entitled to that dispute. But the grounds were precise and financial, and they mapped directly onto the pattern a 2014 intelligence assessment had already flagged: foreign funds underwriting agitation against Indian development projects.

- **Foreign link:** Indian arm of the international Greenpeace network.
- **Violations cited:** Transfer of foreign funds to non-designated accounts, including roughly 3.88 crore rupees to unauthorized accounts; repeated reporting of incorrect and under-stated foreign-contribution figures; use of foreign money for legal costs and bail petitions; willful suppression of a Greenpeace International activist's salary.
- **Finding:** The Ministry concluded the organization's receipt of foreign contributions had prejudicially affected the public and economic interest of the country.
- **Context:** Tracks the 2014 Intelligence Bureau assessment estimating a two-to-three-percent drag on annual GDP growth from such activity.

3.7 Oxfam India and (United Kingdom and Europe)

The Western advocacy giants faced the same law and, tellingly, the same accusation of engineering ways around it. Oxfam India's registration lapsed at the end of 2021, and when investigators looked closer, they said they found emails discussing how to keep foreign money flowing by routing it through friendly organizations or a for-profit consultancy, including sums passed to a leading think tank through commission. The Ministry recommended a CBI probe and described Oxfam as a "probable instrument of foreign policy" of its funders. Amnesty International, for its part, halted its India operations altogether in 2020 after its accounts were frozen in an enforcement investigation. Neither is a church, which is precisely the point: the regime treats other Western-funded advocacy exactly as it treats faith-based charity.


CBI files case against Oxfam India, holds office search

Oxfam India got foreign contribution amounting to ₹1.50 crore from 2013-14 to 2015-16 in its account, instead of receiving them in the FCRA-designated bank account

Updated - April 20, 2023 05:05 pm IST - New Delhi

THE HINDU BUREAU

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- **Oxfam India:** Registration lapsed at the end of December 2021 when renewal was not approved. The Ministry later recommended a CBI probe, finding continued transfer of foreign contributions to other entities after registration, in breach of the FCRA prohibition; an Income Tax investigation cited emails showing a plan to circumvent the FCRA by routing funds through similar organizations or a for-profit consultancy, including funds routed to the Centre for Policy Research via commission, and described the body as a "probable instrument of foreign policy."


Amnesty FCRA 'violations' | CBI files supplementary charge sheet

Amnesty International India had alleged in 2019 that a pattern of "harassment" has emerged every time it speaks out against "human rights violations" in India.

Published - December 20, 2023 01:21 pm IST - New Delhi

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- **Amnesty International:** Wound down India operations in 2020 after account freezes amid Enforcement Directorate investigations.
- **Significance:** Neither is a religious body, confirming the regime governs foreign-funded advocacy as readily as faith-based charity.

3.8 Public Health Foundation of India (United States philanthropy)

The last case closes off the argument entirely, because it involves no religion of any kind. The Public Health Foundation of India, a body drawing nearly half its money from abroad, counted the Gates Foundation, the UN, and the WHO among its funders. In 2017 the government cancelled its foreign-funding registration after questioning how it spent that money on HIV and tobacco-control work. A prestigious health institution backed by one of the most admired philanthropies in the world was treated by the identical standard applied to any evangelical mission, which is not how a law aimed at Christians would behave.

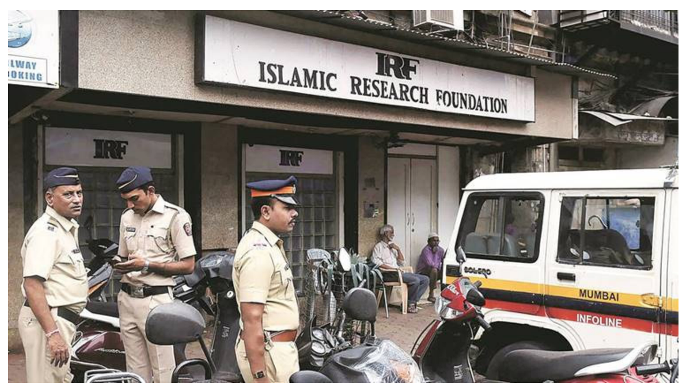
- **Foreign donor / link:** Drew roughly forty-five percent of its funding from overseas, including from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the UN, and the WHO.
- **Action taken:** Foreign-funding registration cancelled in 2017 after the Home Ministry questioned its spending on HIV/AIDS and anti-tobacco programs.
- **Significance:** A other institution held to the same standard as any religious one, which a religiously targeted law would not produce.

3.9 Islamic Research Foundation (foreign and Gulf funding)

The single most effective rebuttal to the “anti-Christian” framing is that the FCRA fell just as hard on Islamic organizations. The Islamic Research Foundation, run by the televangelist Zakir Naik, drew large sums from abroad, and when the Ministry of Home Affairs examined its books it found the classic FCRA violation: foreign money registered for one purpose spent on another. The Foundation was registered for educational and social work, but investigators found its foreign funds being used for religious activity, and a substantial portion of its receipts left undeclared. The government placed it under prior-permission control in September 2016 and moved to cancel its foreign-funding licence, later banning the organization outright under separate anti-terror law while the Enforcement Directorate pursued a money-laundering case. Naik fled the country. The pattern is identical to the Christian cases, and that is precisely the point: the law tracks the misuse of foreign money, not the religion of those who hold it.

- **Foreign donor / link:** Large foreign donations to the Foundation and its media arm, Harmony Media, with the Enforcement Directorate flagging remittances of roughly 200 crore Indian rupees or 2,10,00,480.00 United States Dollars.
- **Violations cited:** Failure to declare nearly 4.6 crore rupees out of total receipts of 12.65 crore between 2009-10 and 2014-15, and use of foreign funds registered for educational and social purposes for religious work; irregularities in the account books and undisclosed donations.
- **Action taken:** Placed under the “prior permission” category in September 2016, requiring RBI-routed government vetting of all foreign funds; cancellation of the foreign-funding licence initiated in November 2016; the Foundation was also banned for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, with a parallel ED money-laundering investigation.
- **Admission:** Naik fled the country and did not return to India.
- **Significance:** A prominent Islamic organization sanctioned for the very same misuse of foreign funds as the Christian bodies, which is the decisive evidence that FCRA is religion-neutral in operation, not a tool aimed at any one faith.

Observation



Placed side by side, these cases dismantle the persecution narrative and put India’s position on documented ground. The concern is old, specific and judicially endorsed: the Supreme Court has ruled that there is no right to receive foreign money, that its inflow can distort the nation’s polity and that a sovereign democracy may regulate or bar it outright. The violations recur across the record, diversion to unregistered entities, misreporting of foreign contributions, routing funds to circumvent the law, spending money raised for education or charity on religious work, and financing litigation and agitation against development.

They were committed by American evangelical networks, British and European advocacy confederations, a Vatican-linked Catholic congregation, a leading Islamic foundation, and other American philanthropies without distinction. That range is decisive. A law invoked against a Christian children’s charity, a Catholic order, an environmental campaign, a British aid confederation, and a Muslim televangelist’s foundation alike is not a weapon aimed at any one faith; it is a neutral rule about foreign money, applied to whoever misuses it. The “attack on Christians” framing cannot survive the presence of the Islamic Research Foundation on the same list of violators.

In the gravest instance, Gospel for Asia, the misuse was confirmed by an American federal settlement and a US watchdog before India acted. And at every stage, from the 107 lawmakers who wrote for Compassion International in 2017, to the House of Lords over the Missionaries of Charity in 2022, to Congressman Moore in 2026, foreign politicians have intervened to shield foreign-funded organizations from Indian law. That intervention, not the law it opposes, is the true intrusion on a sovereign nation’s right to govern the money crossing its borders.

4. Foreign-Funding and Foreign-Influence Laws in Select Jurisdictions

The FCRA is often portrayed as an exotic instrument of repression with no counterpart in the free world. The opposite is true. Every core function of the FCRA is mirrored in the law of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union and its member states. The difference is one of degree, and it runs against Moore. Where India regulates and permits, his own country and its allies frequently prohibit outright, and where India's ultimate sanction against an errant NGO is the loss of its license to receive foreign money, the Western regimes reach for criminal prosecution, the dissolution of organizations, the closure of houses of worship, and imprisonment. The first table maps the FCRA's core areas onto the comparable Western laws. The second sets out how each has actually been enforced, organized by the same core areas.

FCRA core area	United States	United Kingdom	European Union / member states
Prior registration or permission to receive foreign money or act for foreign interests	FARA (1938): registration of agents of foreign principals; willful breach up to 5 years and a $250,000 fine. Section 951: undisclosed foreign-government agents, up to 10 years.	FIRS (in force July 2025): registration of foreign-power arrangements; breach up to 2 years (political tier) or 5 years (enhanced tier).	2023 Defence of Democracy Directive: mandatory third-country interest-representation registers across all 27 states.
Barring foreign money from politics and elections	FECA (52 U.S.C. § 30121): total ban on foreign-national money in federal, state, and local elections; knowing violations of $25,000+ up to 5 years; upheld in Bluman v. FEC.	Foreign party donations banned; parties may accept only from UK-based permissible donors under PPERA 2000.	France and other member states bar donations from foreign states and foreign legal persons to parties and campaigns.
Restricting foreign funding of religious activity and institutions	FARA reaches religious bodies acting at the direction of a foreign principal.	Foreign-power-directed religious arrangements fall within FIRS.	France's Anti-Separatism Law (2021): tight controls on foreign funding of mosques and dissolution of non-compliant groups; Austria's Islam Law (2015): outright ban on foreign funding of mosques and imams.
Registering or labelling foreign-funded NGOs	FARA captures NGOs, think-tanks, and advocacy bodies acting for a foreign principal.	FIRS captures NGO arrangements directed by a foreign power.	Hungary's Lex NGO (2017, re-enacted 2021): NGOs receiving foreign funds above a threshold must register and label themselves "foreign funded."
Disclosure of foreign donors and channelling of funds	FARA requires public disclosure of receipts and disbursements; FEC rules govern political money.	FIRS and the Electoral Commission require disclosure of arrangements and donations.	The Directive requires a public register disclosing the sources and amounts of third-country funding.
Sanctions and asset consequences for breach	Criminal penalties plus civil forfeiture and asset seizure.	Criminal penalties plus asset freezing and forfeiture under the National Security Act 2023 and Proceeds of Crime Act.	National authorities empowered to investigate and sanction; member-state audit bodies inspect NGO finances.

Enforcement in Practice

These are not dormant statutes. Enforcement in each core area has been heavier than anything India has directed at an NGO.

Core area	Enforcement in practice
Registration of foreign-influence actors	American enforcement of FARA and its sister statutes reaches the highest levels of public life and ends in prison. Paul Manafort, chairman of a presidential campaign, was convicted over undisclosed work as an agent of the Ukrainian government and its Party of Regions and received a five-year sentence on the conspiracy that included the foreign-agent charge; his deputy Rick Gates and the lobbyist Sam Patten were convicted over the same Ukrainian ties. The Russian national Maria Butina pleaded guilty to conspiring to act as an unregistered foreign agent, was sentenced in 2019 to 18 months, and was deported. Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, became the first public official ever convicted of acting as a foreign agent while in office, found guilty in July 2024 of acting for Egypt and sentenced in January 2025 to eleven years; his wife received 54 months and was ordered to forfeit over $920,000. Britain's registration regime, live since July 2025, is administered by a Home Office unit that refers breaches for criminal prosecution.
Foreign money in elections	The ban is enforced against donors and recipients alike. The Nigerian billionaire Gilbert Chagoury funneled $30,000 through intermediaries into a US congressional campaign and agreed to pay a $1.8 million fine, and the congressman involved was prosecuted over his statements about the funds. A separate federal indictment accused a businessman advising the UAE crown prince of routing more than $3.5 million in illegal contributions into the 2016 election through a conduit. In Britain, the Electoral Commission may require forfeiture of any impermissible foreign donation a party accepts.
Foreign funding of religion	European democracies restrict foreign religious funding more heavily than India and enforce it against houses of worship directly. France's Anti-Separatism Law of 2021 lets the government dissolve religious organizations deemed contrary to republican values and imposes tight controls on foreign funding of mosques, requiring any religious association that receives more than about ten thousand euros from abroad to publish its accounts for state oversight. By 2022 the French government had closed roughly two dozen mosques, dissolved several Muslim organizations by decree, and deported imams, and it moved to end foreign-trained imams and to take control of religious funding. Austria went further: its 2015 Law on Islam banned foreign funding of religious groups outright, and in 2018 the government closed seven mosques, dissolved a body running six of them, and reviewed the residence permits of around forty imams, its foreign minister stating that Austria did not want foreign states exerting political influence through religion. Germany has since shut Islamic institutions, including the Islamic Centre Hamburg, on national-security grounds. India's Bill closes no church and alters the religious character of no place of worship, and manages foreign-funded assets only after a registration has already lapsed.
Registering and labeling foreign-funded NGOs	Hungary required NGOs receiving foreign grants above a threshold to enter a public register and label themselves "foreign funded" from 2017; after the Court of Justice found the law incompatible with EU law in 2020, Hungary re-enacted a successor in 2021 empowering the State Audit Office to inspect foreign-funded NGOs, and added a Sovereignty Protection Office in 2023. At Union level, the impetus was enforcement: in the Qatargate scandal, Belgian authorities raided nineteen premises in December 2022, seized more than a million euros in cash, and arrested a sitting Vice-President of the European Parliament in a cash-for-influence scheme involving Qatar and Morocco, and that episode, run partly through Brussels NGOs, produced the EU's move toward a bloc-wide register of foreign-funded actors.
Disclosure and asset consequences	Enforcement in this area routinely strips assets. Beyond the Menendez forfeiture, the Qatargate raids seized cash on the spot, and FARA's disclosure regime exposes the finances of anyone acting for a foreign principal to public and prosecutorial view. India's equivalent consequence, under the 2026 Bill, is administrative custody of foreign-funded assets after a license has already been lost, subject to review and appeal.

Four conclusions follow from this record. First, the West criminalizes and imprisons where India delicenses. The organizations examined earlier lost only the privilege of receiving foreign money, a civil consequence that was reviewable and, for the Missionaries of Charity, reversed within a fortnight. The comparable actors in the West are sentenced to years in prison, deported, and stripped of their assets. No Indian NGO in the FCRA cases went to jail for its foreign funding. Senator Menendez received eleven years.

Second, the West bans outright what India permits under conditions. The United States forbids foreign money in its elections absolutely and prosecutes those who route it. Britain bans foreign party donations. France and other member states shut foreign legal persons out of their politics. India still admits foreign contributions to civil society through a permission regime and intervenes only on misuse.

Third, on religion, the power Moore says India is abusing is exercised in Europe more severely than in India. France has closed roughly two dozen mosques and dissolved Muslim organizations over foreign funding and influence, and Austria has banned foreign funding of mosques outright and expelled foreign-funded imams. India's Bill closes no church. If tightening foreign-religious-funding rules were an attack on a faith, the charge would lie more heavily against Paris and Vienna than against New Delhi, and no bilateral rupture followed in either case.

Fourth, the "foreign funded" label used against India was first enacted inside the European Union, by Hungary, and the EU is now building a Union-wide register of foreign-funded actors across all twenty-seven states. When the US Supreme Court upheld the ban on foreign election money and the Indian Supreme Court upheld the FCRA amendments, both held that no foreigner has a right to fund a nation's political life and that sovereignty may guard it. Moore's objection asks India to police foreign money more loosely than the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union police it at home, at a time when those powers are tightening their own controls.

5. Observations

The controversy Congressman Moore has raised rests on a single factual error, and once that error is corrected, the structure built upon it falls. The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 does not permit the seizure of churches, does not alter the religious character of any place of worship, and does not name Christianity or any other faith. It provides for the management of foreign-funded assets after an organization has already lost its registration. To call that a clear attack on Christians is not a reading of the Bill; it is a claim the Bill does not support. The preceding sections have set out, on documented ground, why the objection cannot stand and why India's position is not only defensible but stronger than that of the countries now pressing it.**The factual premise is false.** The Bill authorizes no takeover of functioning churches. Its Designated Authority takes custody of foreign-funded assets only after registration has been cancelled, surrendered, or not renewed, and such orders remain open to review and reversal, as the restoration of the Missionaries of Charity's license within thirteen days showed.

- **The law is neutral in text and in operation.** FCRA names no faith and applies to every recipient of foreign money. Its enforcement has fallen on American evangelical networks, a Vatican-linked Catholic congregation, a leading Islamic foundation, British and European advocacy confederations, and secular American philanthropies alike. A rule that reaches Compassion International, the Missionaries of Charity, the Islamic Research Foundation, Greenpeace, and a Gates Foundation grantee without distinction is not aimed at any one community. The presence of the Islamic Research Foundation on the same list of violators is by itself fatal to the claim that Christians are being singled out.
- **The violations are real and recurrent.** Across the record the same conduct appears: diversion of funds to unregistered entities, misreporting of foreign contributions, routing money to circumvent the law, spending charitable or educational grants on religious activity, and financing litigation and agitation against development. In the gravest case, Gospel for Asia, the misuse was established by an American federal settlement and a US financial watchdog before India acted at all.
- **India's sovereign right is judicially settled.** In Noel Harper v. Union of India, the Supreme Court held that no one has a right to receive foreign contribution, that its inflow can distort the nation's polity, and that a sovereign democracy may regulate or bar it outright. That is the law of India, delivered by its highest court.
- **India regulates more liberally than its critics.** The United States bans foreign money in its elections absolutely and imprisons those who route it, including a sitting senator sentenced to eleven years. The United Kingdom bans foreign party donations and criminalizes unregistered foreign-power arrangements. France has closed roughly two dozen mosques and dissolved Muslim organizations over foreign funding, and Austria has banned foreign funding of mosques outright. The European Union is building a Union-wide register of foreign-funded actors, and a member state pioneered the "foreign funded" label India is accused of inventing. India, alone among them, still permits the funding it would be entitled to forbid, and closes no house of worship.
- **The real intrusion runs the other way.** From the 107 lawmakers who wrote for Compassion International in 2017, to the House of Lords over the Missionaries of Charity in 2022, to Congressman Moore in 2026, foreign politicians have repeatedly intervened to shield foreign-funded organizations from Indian law. It is that intervention, not the law it opposes, that trespasses on a sovereign nation's authority over money crossing its borders.
- **The messenger is an interested party.** Moore is not a neutral monitor of religious liberty but a self-described champion of the institutional Catholic Church, whose dioceses and charities are among the foreign-funded bodies the Bill regulates. His objection is consistent with that record, and India is entitled to weigh it accordingly.

What remains, when the religious framing is set aside, is an ordinary exercise of statehood. Every serious democracy asserts the right to know who is funding activity within its borders, to keep foreign money out of its politics and to withdraw that privilege from those who abuse it. India asserts nothing more and considerably less than most. The demand that it abandons the Amendment is, in substance, a demand that India govern foreign money more loosely than the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union govern it at home, and that it does so at the very moment those powers are tightening their own controls. A sovereign nation is under no obligation to accept such a demand, least of all when it is presented as the defense of a faith the law does not touch.

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