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HRW Report Criticized for Religious Bias in India's Immigration Policy

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Human Rights Watch has accused India of expelling Muslims to Bangladesh unlawfully, prompting criticism that the organization is misrepresenting a legal and security-driven immigration policy through a communal lens. India maintains it has the sovereign right to deport illegal foreign nationals, regardless of religion or origin, provided due legal process is followed.

In a statement published by Human Rights Watch (HRW), a New York-based international non-governmental organization focused on human rights advocacy, the group alleged that Indian authorities have expelled hundreds of Muslims, some of whom they claim may be Indian citizens, to Bangladesh without due process. HRW suggested that these actions were part of a broader pattern of discrimination against Muslim communities, particularly in states governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

However, legal experts and immigration observers have challenged HRW's assertions, noting that the enforcement of immigration law must not be confused with discrimination. India has consistently held that it will act within the boundaries of national and international law to manage illegal immigration, particularly in states with long-standing demographic and border security challenges. The Supreme Court of India, in a ruling delivered in May, reaffirmed the state's authority to deport Rohingyas found to be undocumented foreigners, further supporting India's legal position on such matters.

Critics of the HRW report argue that it frames India's lawful immigration enforcement in religious terms without substantiated evidence of bias in policy implementation. They also point out that India has long demonstrated humanitarian concern by hosting large numbers of refugees, including from Bangladesh, Tibet, and Afghanistan, without regard to religion. The focus on Bengali Muslims in this context, they argue, distorts the national interest behind border management and undermines the country's efforts to maintain internal security and social cohesion.

There have been no official figures released by the Indian government, but HRW cited data from Border Guard Bangladesh indicating that over 1,500 individuals, including women, children, and Rohingya refugees, were deported between May 7 and June 15. The organization further alleged that detainees were sometimes forced across the border without verifying their citizenship status.

Despite these claims, India's Ministry of Home Affairs has not issued a public response. The absence of formal engagement has not deterred commentators from questioning HRW's methodology and the timing of its report, which some believe aligns with politically charged narratives rather than presenting a balanced account of facts on the ground.

As the debate continues, one principle remains clear: India, like any sovereign nation, has the right to protect its borders and enforce its immigration laws. Ensuring that this process

remains transparent and legal is essential, but so is guarding against attempts to politicize or communalize matters of national security.