

# WAQF CLAIMS SKYROCKET AS AMENDMENT BILL 2024 GOES FOR THE JUGULAR



SUSHIL KUTTY

Over 9 lakh acres of India is Waqf owned and “once Waqf, always Waqf” is the unwritten code, brought to India straight from Heaven. Hence, AIUDF Chief Badruddin Ajmal cannot be blamed for claiming land on which India’s new Parliament building stands as Waqf. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘Sengol’ can take a break! Now, if all the Waqf land all over India was a single unbroken landmass, a separate Waqf country could have been declared.

Maybe it will, one day, and then there wouldn't be a need to build a Parliament building for Waqf country. The problem is Waqf properties are scattered across the length and breadth of India. This includes rivers, lakes, ponds, waterfalls, hot-water springs, mountains, hills, hairpin bends, cities, towns and villages. Also 'kabristans' and acres and acres of mosques. A Waqf country, from top to bottom, will have to wait.

Till then, not only Badruddin Ajmal but also AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi, and the Samajwadi Party's Abu Azmi, will accuse the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government of attempting to grab Waqf properties, deprive Muslims the right to live off Allah's bounty, with the Bill to amend the Waqf Board Act.

The question is asked, why the Waqf Board Amendment Bill 2024? Is it to polarize the electorate for electoral benefits? The Modi government brought in the Triple Talaq Act to build a vote-bank of Muslim women. It didn't succeed, fully. The Waqf Board Amendment Bill 2024 is to differentiate and divide Muslims into those who benefit from the current status of the Waqf Board Act and those Muslims who do not.

It is another attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to create a Muslim vote-bank for the BJP. He is an obstinate politician, stubborn and fixed on ideas. Modi is like the hardworking ant in the Longfellow poem, keep trying... Modi wants the left-out sects of Islam to get the benefits of Waqf and one day choose to vote for the BJP.

He won't succeed. But Waqf is also beyond poll considerations alone, it is about the gradual appropriation of India; it is a work in progress, the ramifications of which will be known only certain set goals are accomplished.

After Partition, some Muslims didn't take the train to Pakistan. Those who fled left their homes and lands in India vacant. Partition was on religious lines. But while the homes and lands of Hindus/Sikhs, who fled the newly-formed Pakistan, were given to Muslims fleeing India, the same was principle was not applied here in India.

There were also the “secular Muslims” left in India to take care of. The Waqf Board got almost all the evacuee properties. Badruddin Ajmal and Asaduddin



Owaisi are today claiming 60% of Delhi, including IGIA and Parliament House. Samajwadi Party's Abu Azmi wants MPs to pay rent. Shadab Chouhan of the 'Peace Party' says, "Don't worry we'll waive off the rent!"

No wonder Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is dismissive about India. Trudeau has only contempt for the rulers of India. Canada's foreign minister, a lady with the surname 'Joly', says Indian diplomats who haven't been expelled should know "they're on notice."

Fact is, no other nation's land, rivers, mountains, cities, towns, villages, historical monuments, modern skyscrapers, airports and billionaires' residences, are claimed by a private body of a particular religious denomination. Search the United Nations compound in New York and there wouldn't be a single flag flying of a 'Waqf country.'

Not even Pakistan is Waqf territory. A similar situation and Pakistanis would revolt. There would be blood in the street. But Pakistan is Islamic. So, there is no need for "land jihad". An attempt to claim the Taj Mahal as Waqf was thwarted. Wait till the Lal Qila is claimed as Waqf and the Prime Minister is charged a fee for occupying the ramparts of the Red Fort for

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unfurling the Tricolour!

The Waqf is not about charity alone, it is a necessity to get on the top of the situation. Waqf land has been continuously increasing and widening its ambit, quietly and silently, with certain governments of the day, driven by vote-bank appeasement, helping with amenable amendments to the Waqf Board Act.

Which other religious denomination has the equivalent of the Waqf Board? M/s Badruddin Ajmal and Asaduddin Owaisi can claim Delhi for Waqf, and a 1500-year-old temple in Tamil Nadu, a village in Bihar and Golf Links and Mangolpuri in Delhi.

Can a Hindu Assamese cannot ask Badruddin Ajmal about 'Miya-Muslims' trespassing on the native Assamese's land.

There are Muslims in Delhi who have been clamouring for the “return of Malviya Nagar and Press Enclave” for decades.

“There are voices and a list of Waqf properties across the world is out - the Parliament building, surrounding areas, and areas around Vasant Vihar...People also say that the airport is on Waqf property,” Badruddin Ajmal said. “It is bad to use the Waqf land without permission. They (NDA) will lose their Ministry (government) very soon over this Waqf

Board issue.” Opposition parties agree. Muslims may have little presence in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, but the land under the feet of the MPs, every inch of it, is Waqf.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has received complaints of gross violations of JPC rules. Waqf JPC chairperson Jagdambika Pal is up to his neck in complaints.

The question is, can a secular country allow itself to slip into the hands of a single religious denomination because there is something called ‘Waqf’ and there are assertions like ‘Once Waqf, always Waqf’, and the equally dubious ‘Waqf by user’?

A word that has been trending of late is ‘indigenous’. The second Monday of October is ‘Indigenous People’s Day’. Going by Waqf, the ‘indigenous people of India’ have the first right on India’s land mass, on her mountains, rivers, gorges, valleys, waterfalls, springs, forests, farmland, villages, towns, cities, et al – from the tip of Kanyakumari to the topmost peak in Kashmir.

‘Indigenous’ means “of, relating to, or descended from the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized.” The word comes from the Latin ‘indigenia’, meaning “native.”

# FTC CHAIR LINA KHAN IS THE MOST HATED OFFICIAL BY WALL STREET HONCHOS

C.J. ATKINS

When you're on the enemies list of some of America's biggest right-wing tech and media billionaires, you must be doing something right. That's exactly where Federal Trade Commission chair Lina Khan finds herself these days.

Venture capitalist and pharma kingpin Mark Cuban, Fox broadcasting founder Barry Diller, LinkedIn chief Reid Hoffman, and others on Wall Street all agree: Khan has got to go.

If Donald Trump retakes the White House on Nov. 5, they'll probably get their wish. Though Trump running mate J.D. Vance has mused about how it might be good if Khan breaks up the tech monopolies that stifle his beneficiaries in the start-up capital space like Peter Thiel, mainstream GOP opinion is that Khan is the enemy and should be canned as quickly as possible.

Cuban alleges that Khan puts American capitalism's competitiveness at "risk" and jeopardizes the country's chances for "global dominance." Diller, whose company is reportedly facing multiple FTC investigations, told business network CNBC that Khan is "a dope." Hoffman calls her "a person that is not helping America" and said she's "waging a war on American business."

Their accusations are all reminiscent of the language Trump has used to describe women who've politically opposed him—Hillary Clinton, AOC, Ilhan Omar, Harris, and the list goes on.

But here's the kicker: Cuban, Diller, and

Hoffman are all major Democratic donors. Cuban is the big power behind "Business Leaders for Harris" and appears on television regularly on the vice president's behalf.

Hoffman, a notable among the Silicon Valley crowd, has given at least \$10 million to the various arms of the Democratic machine this election cycle. Diller, meanwhile, has ponied up hundreds of thousands of dollars and appeared on countless news programs to bolster the Democratic campaign.

All three have chastised their ruling class buddies for backing Trump, but they worry that if Kamala Harris wins, she might keep Khan in the top spot at the FTC. That's why they're going all out to lobby the Democratic nominee to dump Khan, launching a media onslaught aimed at undermining the public's view of her and raising questions about her fitness for the job.

They hope their status as "liberal billionaires" gives them leverage to bend the Harris campaign to their will. It's a classic case of pay-to-play that seeks to leave those of us without deep pockets standing on the outside with no influence.

But what is it about Khan that has the leading lights of the capitalist class so agitated? For years, the agency she heads, the FTC, has rarely raised much controversy. Charged with enforcing consumer protection and antitrust laws, it mostly kept its head down after being nearly dismantled in 1980 for waging war on the big tobacco companies and the sugary food industry.

All that changed when President Joe Biden appointed Khan to helm the agency in 2021. Under her leadership, the FTC has once more become an anti-monopoly juggernaut, taking on some of the biggest names in Corporate America.

Progressive economists took notice of Khan after she wrote a prize-winning article as a Yale law student in 2017 titled "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox." It set off a bomb in U.S. business and legal circles with its argument that U.S. anti-monopoly law was too narrowly focused on simply keeping consumer prices down.

The criterion for triggering antitrust enforcement has long been price-gouging, but Khan argued that the harm of monopoly was far bigger. Using Amazon as her example, she wrote that platform-based business models allow and encourage the kind of anti-competitive practices that end up giving major corporations a stranglehold on the market and set the stage for consumer and worker abuse.

As FTC chair, she has revolutionized the regulatory front in the struggle against monopoly capitalism. All these measures have made Khan unpopular to the Wall Street big honchos.

Companies are jittery that FTC under Khan is trying to close the door on revenue stream with super profits.

The public, however, loves the new rule. According to recent polling carried out by Data for Progress, 83% of Americans—including 80% of Republicans—endorse click-to-cancel. Similar margins back FTC

efforts like banning junk fees such as "convenience" charges, stopping corporations from monetizing children's social media data, and cracking down on AI companies that knowingly allow their platforms to be used to harm consumers.

These actions are the real reason why capitalists like Cuban, Hoffman, and Diller are reaching for their media megaphones to try to discredit Khan and sway Harris to follow their diktats.

"When Big Tech and Big Business billionaires attack Lina Khan and the FTC, they are attacking common-sense consumer protections," Emily Peterson-Cassin, director of the corporate power portfolio at Demand Progress Education Fund, said in a statement sent to People's World.

Referring to the click-to-cancel rule as an example, Peterson-Cassin said, "On one side, you have Lina Khan and the FTC taking action to stop companies from harassing and confusing consumers into paying for subscriptions they don't want. On the other side, you have billionaire CEOs trying to stop the FTC's work to empower consumers."

Together with the Revolving Door Project, the group recently launched an educational website, "Billionaires Against Khan," aimed at exposing the anti-worker, anti-consumer, and anti-job efforts of some of the country's richest individuals.

So far, Vice President Harris has been silent when it comes to whether she'd keep Khan in place should she win the White House. But progressive leaders in Congress

are stating boldly what they think a Harris administration should do.

"Let me make this clear, since billionaires have been trying to play footsie with the ticket: Anyone goes near Lina Khan and there will be an out and out brawl," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., vowed in a post to X (Twitter). "And that is a promise. She proves this admin fights for working people. It would be terrible leadership to remove her."

Independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders declared that Khan is "the best FTC chair in modern history." He said that "by taking on corporate greed and illegal monopolies," Khan "is doing an exceptional job preventing large corporations from ripping-off consumers and exploiting workers."

Protecting the anti-monopoly FTC from being cut off at the knees requires first of all blocking a MAGA takeover of the White House and the Senate.

Only by preserving Democratic control of both the executive branch and the upper house of Congress do workers and consumers have a chance of keeping someone like Khan in place.

But even with a Harris victory, there will still be a fight to stop the billionaires who use their dollars to try to control the Democratic Party from imposing their will and putting Khan on the chopping block.

Mobilization is key, both now and after November .5—because the class struggle carries on long after the ballots are counted on Election Day.