

To,
Shri Narendra Modi,
7, Race Course Road
New Delhi - 110011

Shri Rahul Gandhi,
10, Janpath
New Delhi - 110001



9th May 2024

Subject: Invitation to a public debate on Lok Sabha Election 2024

Dear Shri Narendra Modi & Shri Rahul Gandhi,

We write to you as citizens of India, who have performed our duty to the country in various capacities. We approach you with a proposal that we believe is non partisan and in the larger interest of every citizen.

The General Election for the 18th Lok Sabha has already reached its midpoint. During rallies and public addresses, members of both the BJP, the party in power, and the INC, the principal opposition party, have asked important questions relating to the core of our constitutional democracy. The Prime Minister has publicly challenged the Congress on reservations, Article 370 and wealth redistribution. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has questioned the Prime Minister on possible mutilation of the Constitution, Electoral Bond scheme and the government's response to China, and also challenged him to a public debate. Both sides have asked each other questions about their respective Manifestos, as well as their stand on the constitutionally protected scheme of social justice.

As members of the public, we are concerned that we have heard only allegations and challenges from either side, and not heard any meaningful responses. As we are aware, today's digital world carries with it a propensity for misinformation, misrepresentation, and manipulation. In these circumstances, it is fundamentally important to ensure that the public is well educated about all aspects of the debate, so that they can make an informed choice at the ballots - this is central to the effective exercise of our electoral franchise.

To this end, we believe that citizens would hugely benefit by hearing directly from our political leaders through a public debate on a non partisan and non commercial platform. It would be ideal if the public heard not just the questions of each side, but also the responses. We are of the view that this would help to strengthen our democratic process immensely. This bears more relevance as we are the world's largest democracy, and the entire world is watching our elections keenly. A public debate such as this would, therefore, set a great precedent, not just by educating the public, but also in projecting the true image of a healthy and vibrant democracy.

Accordingly, we respectfully request the two of you, as leading voices from the two sides that seek the peoples' mandate, to a public debate with each other on the key issues of this election. The venue, duration, moderators, and format of the debate could be on the terms agreeable to both sides. We trust you will consider our request positively. We also suggest, and only if either of you is unavailable to address this debate, you may nominate a representative to the debate.

Kindly address your reply to [REDACTED] New Delhi- 110049

Yours sincerely,

Madan Lokur

Justice (Rtd.) Madan B. Lokur, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India

Justice (Rtd.) Ajit P. Shah, Former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court

Mr. N. Ram, Senior Journalist & former Editor in Chief of The Hindu