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## **Indian flight ban another chaotic and impulsive decision from the Federal Government**

The Federal Government has implemented a travel ban for Australians attempting to return to Australia from India this week. Australians attempting to return could face severe fines of up to \$66,000 and five years in prison.

Neha Madhok, Co-Director of Democracy in Colour says that this move is another instance of chaos and inconsistent leadership from the Federal Government throughout the pandemic.

"The decision to ban citizens in India from returning to Australia is unconscionable. Never in its history has an Australian government denied its citizens the ability to return home at the risk of jail time or severe fines. We've seen time and time again, you cannot police a pandemic.

"The Government has shown its blatant disregard for Australians with Indian backgrounds as it has not even bothered to share the health advice that formed their rationale for abandoning its citizens. We're more than a year into this pandemic and Scott Morrison still continues to operate in chaos.

"When the pandemic first hit Australia, the Government banned international travelers from China and the Middle East but weeks later, there were no such restrictions for people coming from the United States or Europe. Today, the Federal Government has gone even further and threatened Indian Australians with criminal charges if they attempt to come home.

"Throughout the pandemic, Scott Morrison has put communities of colour last on his list of priorities. He denies essential workers like delivery riders, hospitality workers, farm workers and warehouse workers on temporary visas access to JobSeeker and JobKeeper. He did nothing to address the rise of corona-racism towards people from Asian backgrounds, and now he's blatantly criminalising Australians with Indian ethnicity for trying to come home.

"The Government has said that the ban is only temporary for a few weeks while India addresses the second wave, but realistically this will take months. It's another example of Scott Morrison failing to be honest, transparent, and clear with us.

"The Government continues to operate in a cloud of secrecy as they fail to share the evidence or the health advice that led to this drastic decision.

"This Government has shown that we have one rule for people of colour and another for everyone else. We need consistent, evidence-based policy that ensures all Australians are able to return home safely, no matter what their background," says Neha Madhok.

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