

## **Oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens**

**A United Front Coalition of grass roots organisations in the UK, have condemned the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, and calls on the Indian government for its repeal.**

A range of grass roots organizations across the West Midlands and the UK, condemns the passage of a new Citizenship Amendment Bill by India's Parliament which introduces a discriminatory regime of citizenship based on religion, disproportionately impacting the country's Muslim minority.

The changes introduced by the Citizenship Amendment Bill are in violation of both the secular framework of India's Constitution, as well as human rights law. Religious minorities across South Asia face serious persecution and the selective and discriminatory nature of this Bill sets a dangerous precedent.

Passed on 11 December 2019, the Citizenship Amendment Bill made a number of changes to the Citizenship Act, 1955, including availing "illegal migrants" a path to Indian citizenship through naturalisation. Ostensibly framed as an effort to protect persecuted minorities, application of this new provision is restricted to "any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014".

Critically, the amendment makes no mention of neighboring countries where minorities have recently faced serious human rights violations, such as Sri Lanka, or Myanmar. The bill excludes Jews, Atheist, Ahmadiyyas and Shias and minority Muslim refugees from the designated countries for no clear reason other than their belief.

By legally sanctioning discrimination on the basis of belief and religion, this move sends a clear message of exclusion especially to India's Muslims. If the authorities in India are truly interested in protecting minorities, then they should demonstrate this by ensuring India's own longstanding Muslim minority community lives peacefully and enjoy their full rights, including citizenship.

In August 2019, the widely criticized National Register of Citizens (NRC) process was completed in the Northeastern state of Assam, declaring 1.9 million people statelessness. It has been followed by a proposal to make a countrywide National Register of Citizens. By dividing populations on the basis of religion, and availing expedited citizenship to non-Muslims, the amendments to the Citizenship Act further exacerbate the divisive dynamics of the potential disenfranchisement of Muslims in India.

Considered alongside recent developments in Assam and the proposal to spread NRC process across the country, this has instilled a sense of fear amongst the Indian population particularly the poor, landless, Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes who are unlikely to be able provide documentary proof that they are descendants of Indian generation.

We also strongly condemn the violence against students and faculty staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, on 5 January. International condemnation of the brutal violent assaults has highlighted the many attacks taking place on academic freedom in India.

Not only did the Delhi police allow the gangs of armed and masked attackers into the campus unhindered, but they also blocked the roads, facilitating the continuation of the attacks, and later shamefully allowed the armed thugs to leave under their protection.

These events have come in the wake of brutal police violence against students in other universities in India, where peaceful protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens were taking place. This apparent targeting of dissenting student voices is occurring against an extremely disturbing background of sweeping repression accompanied by widespread attacks on minority communities.

We the undersigned organisations strongly believe that the Citizen Amendment Act is:

- **Against the Constitution of India.**
- **Against secularism.**
- **Will provide citizenship of India on the basis of religion / belief, which is against article 14 of the Constitution.**
- **We believe this Act will divide the country, and it is against fundamental rights.**
- **Demand the repeal of this Act.**
- **We believe the violent attacks at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi were an attack on academic freedom in India, and we strongly condemn the assaults on students and staff.**

Signed by:

**Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance**  
**Asian Rationalist Society Britain**  
**Dalit Federation UK**  
**Indian Workers Association, Great Britain**