

December 18, 2019

## Statements Against CAA/NRC & Police Violence

**By: Student & Citizen Groups**

Many student & other groups have made statements condemning the Citizenship Amendment Act/National Register of Citizens, & the police brutalities at Jamia Millia Islamia & Aligarh Muslim University. Here is the full text of statements & all the signatories:

No sooner had Parliament given its approval to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill than students across the country erupted in protest against what they saw as a violation of the Constitution. A number of student groups and other bodies issued statements against what is now the Citizenship Amendment Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens, and against the crackdown on the students of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University.?

### **?1. IIM Ahmedabad Initiative (2000+ signatories, December 15)**

#### **Open letter of protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019**

As citizens and members of the academic community, we write to register our protest at the recent enactment of the [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act, 2019](#).

The Act is discriminatory and violative of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution. It is inconsistent with the cherished values of equality under law and secularism. It institutionalises preferential treatment based on religion which is in direct conflict with the inclusive spirit on which our nation was formed. Additionally, the Act is inconsistent with India's international obligations under the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) as well as the international law principle of [non-refoulement](#) of refugees, irrespective of caste, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or political ideology.

The Act, in its current form, is also likely to harm the interests of the indigenous people of India's Northeast. India, as a signatory to the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), has a responsibility to protect the land, cultural and linguistic rights of the indigenous people.

We advocate a comprehensive asylum law while protecting the legitimate interests of the indigenous people.

(List of signatories can be found [here](#))

### **2. Gujarat National Law University Students and Alumni (600+ signatories, December 17)**

We, the students and alumni of Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence and use of force against our fellow citizens - students and otherwise - exercising their fundamental right to protest across India.

Over the last week, we have witnessed several protests and demonstrations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 across the nation, particularly Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Aligarh and Delhi. We have also seen, with worry, the excessive use of force by the government in dealing with such protests. The use of police force against citizens exercising their fundamental right to protest is a direct attack on the constitutional foundations of our country. We condemn and express our horror at the violent police and state action.

We are particularly alarmed at the violence unleashed on students in Jamia Millia Islamia (New Delhi), Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh), Delhi University (New Delhi), Cotton University (Assam) and other educational institutions across India. The state violence against protesting students - physical assault, use of tear-gas shells, lathi-charge, and forceful entry into their university premises - is not only brutalisation of students but an attack on the autonomy of universities as non-militarised spaces for freedom of thought and expression. We demand an immediate end to all forms of violence against the protesting students and call for a judicial enquiry to fix accountability for the violence.

As law students and/or graduates, we understand the value of freedom of speech and expression and refuse to remain silent at the violence unleashed on our fellow citizens exercising this right.

We stand in solidarity with the students and others exercising their fundamental right to dissent and protest.



At Osmania University, Hyderabad (December 17) | Danesh Mistry

### 3. Student Bar Association, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru (December 17)

#### Solidarity statement against police brutality at Jamia Millia Islamia University and Aligarh Muslim University

We, the students of the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru vehemently and unequivocally condemn the violence perpetrated against the peaceful protests organised by students of Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, and in other universities across the nation. The brutality of the state is evident in its response to these protests: the police has entered into campuses without authorisation, used tear-gas shells, violently lathi-charged and even fired live bullet rounds on students. These moves, apart from being a clear violation of universally accepted human rights, are also an assault on the rule of law, morality and the democratic ethos and tradition that is fundamental to dignified living. We believe that this move is intended to bring about a chilling effect on

freedom of speech and to curb dissent.

As students of law, we wholly and unequivocally condemn these lawless actions and the disproportionate use of force by the state on vulnerable students across the country. Therefore, we beseech the judiciary to take due cognizance of the same and ensure that the necessary accountability is fixed.

Additionally, we also believe that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 is completely against the foundational values that the Constitution of India is built upon, and which we so cherish. The act is discriminatory, devoid of any reasonable classification, and at its base uses religion as the basis for granting citizenship. In its form and design, it is clear that the law is intended to directly target *inter alia* the Muslim minority community and is a classic example of a brute majoritarian preference aggregation impinging on the secular fabric that is woven into our founding document. We do not support this legislation, and call upon influential members of the legal fraternity, both on the bar and on the bench to join us in rejecting this morally bankrupt law.

We, the students of National Law School of India University, stand together, ‘arm in arm and hand in hand’ with concerned students and citizens during this extremely crucial yet difficult time for our democratic republic in rejecting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Student Bar Association,  
National Law School of India University

#### 4. Academic Community of IIM Bangalore (172 signatories, December 16)

Dear Hon. Prime Minister,

We the undersigned members of IIM Bangalore stand in solidarity with students around the country protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 (CAA). We call upon you to not trample the democratic rights of citizens to peacefully protest an unjust law. Non-violent civil disobedience is at the heart of our republic's founding. We urge you to ensure that students can protest peacefully, and that violence is not incited by anyone including custodians of state in positions of great authority and responsibility.



Another scene in front of Sabarmati Ashram, December 17 | Mitul Kajaria

#### 5. Indian Students in US Universities (400+ students in 19 universities, December 17)

Statement condemning recent police brutality in Indian Universities

We, students, alumni and the wider community, at universities across the United States of America, condemn the brutal police violence unleashed against students at Jamia Millia Islamia University and at Aligarh Muslim University on December 15, 2019 as a gross violation of human rights under the Constitution of India and International Human Rights Law. We express full solidarity with students across universities in India who are peacefully protesting against the recent passing of the unconstitutional and discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act.

The right to protest is a cornerstone of a constitutional democracy and is safeguarded as a fundamental right under Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b) of the Constitution of India. The right of all people to express their ideas and opinions through the medium of protest is also guaranteed through a number of core international human rights provisions, including the right to free expression under Article 19 of the ICCPR, which has been ratified by India.

Reports and accounts by journalists, students, lawyers, and activists (including credible information shared online) reveal horrific and excessive use of force by police and paramilitary against students. Any use of force by law enforcement must be within the strict confines of the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality under International Human Rights Law.

By every account, it appears that police and paramilitary, both at Jamia Milia Islamia University, and at Aligarh Muslim University, have used violence and pursued unlawful and reckless tactics against student protestors in violation of protections under the Constitution of India and International Human Rights law. The entry of police and paramilitary into University premises, indiscriminate attacks within the premises of the University including releasing tear gas in libraries, and brutal use of force against civilians is a blatant violation of the law and can only shock the conscience of any democratic society. Students have narrated that police rampaged through hostels and molested women on these campuses. Students from Jamia Milia Islamia were arbitrarily detained at police stations, and were denied their constitutional right to access legal representation. These incidents of violence indicate complete negation of every norm that guide the functioning of the police in a democratic society governed by the rule of law. Seen further in the light of the fact that most victims of this brutality were Muslim, these incidents stand out as shocking instantiations of targeted violence against a minority group.





Protesting police brutality, Ahmedabad, December 17 | Mitul Kajaria

We also condemn the use of violence against protestors in Assam where [five people have died, including two minor boys who were shot by the police](#). This combined with the unlawful denial of access to the internet in the state, has completely blocked news reports of events on the ground, including the ability of the protestors to represent their demands and report unlawful police action.

We are deeply concerned about the statement of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India [terming](#) these protests as 'riots' and characterising this situation as simply one for the police to handle as a law and order problem, without recognising the violation of the rights of protestors, and especially the degree of violence unleashed on them.

We realize that our condemnation in this form can offer little succour to our fellow students who had to face the violence, and neither does it meaningfully resist the onslaught against constitutional norms. Nevertheless, in deep solidarity with our fellow students;

- We demand cessation of violence by the police and their complete withdrawal from the university premises.
- We demand an immediate, independent, and robust investigation into the abuse of power by the Delhi Police, Uttar Pradesh Police, and the Central Reserve Police Force.

- We demand that student protestors be allowed to continue to protest peacefully in exercise of their fundamental rights under the Indian Constitution without any threat of use of force by the police or other law enforcement agencies.
- We call upon officers of the Indian Police and Administrative Services to fulfill their duty to uphold the Constitution of India, and to resist any political demand to act in abuse of the powers that have been conferred upon them; and, to ensure police forces under their command act strictly in accordance with the constitutional, legal and ethical constraints that bind them.
- We call on the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Amit Shah, to immediately take these necessary steps to curb police brutality, or resign.

The group of students and alumni in support of this statement are from the following Universities:

Harvard University  
Columbia University  
Yale University  
New York University  
Stanford University  
University of Michigan  
University of Chicago  
Brown University  
Georgetown University  
University of Pennsylvania  
Tufts University  
Johns Hopkins University  
Cornell University  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
University of California, Berkeley  
Purdue University  
Carnegie Mellon University  
University of Southern California  
University of Illinois

(For an updated list of students and alumni who have signed the statement, please access [here](#))



Student solidarity on display, also outside Sabarmati, December 17 | Mitul Kajaria

## 6. Members of Academia and Civil Society in India and Across the World (10,200+ signatories, December 17)

### Solidarity statement against police brutality at Jamia Millia Islamia? University and Aligarh Muslim University

We, the undersigned, condemn in the strongest possible terms the police brutality in Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, and the ongoing illegal siege and curfew imposed on Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. On 15th December 2019 Delhi police in riot-gear illegally entered the Jamia Millia campus and attacked students who are peacefully protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act. The Act bars Muslims from India's neighboring countries from the acquisition of Indian citizenship. It contravenes the right to equality and secular citizenship enshrined in the Indian constitution.

On the 15th at JMIU, police fired tear gas shells, entered hostels and attacked students studying in the library and praying in the mosque. Over 200 students have been severely injured, many who are in critical condition. Because of the blanket curfew and internet blockage imposed at AMU, we fear a similar situation of violence is unfolding, without any recourse to the press or public. The peaceful demonstration and gathering of citizens does not constitute criminal conduct. The police action in the Jamia Millia Islamia and AMU campuses is blatantly illegal under the constitution of India.

We stand in unconditional solidarity with the students, faculty and staff of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University, and express our horror at this violent police and state action.

With them, we affirm the right of citizens to peaceful protest and the autonomy of the university as a non-militarized space for freedom of thought and expression. The brutalisation of students and the attack on universities is against the fundamental norms of a democratic society. As teachers, students, scholars and members of civil society across the world, we are watching with extreme concern the situation unfolding at Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University. We refuse to remain silent at the violence unleashed on our colleagues (students, staff, and faculty) peacefully protesting the imposition of a discriminatory and unjust law.

Romila Thapar, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Noam Chomsky, University of Arizona

Tanika Sarkar, Retired Professor of History, JNU

Judith Butler, University of California, Berkeley

Zoya Hasan, Professor Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Uma Chakravarti, Miranda House, Delhi University (retd)

Partha Chatterjee, Columbia University, New York

Veena Das, Johns Hopkins University

Rajmohan Gandhi, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Nivedita Menon, JNU

Sheldon Pollock, Columbia University

Homi K. Bhabha, Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University

Akeel Bilgrami, Columbia University

and others from: Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Statistical Institute, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Panjab University, Calcutta University, Shiv Nadar University, Ashoka University, Presidency University, Jadavpur University, Ambedkar University Delhi, TISS, Tripura University, Harvard University, Princeton University, London School of Economics, University of California Berkeley, Heidelberg University, Australian National University, Max Planck Institute, Science Po, Yale University, University of Tokyo, Cambridge University, Oxford University, SOAS, and elsewhere in India and the world.

(The full list of signatories can be found [here](#))





A cry for peace and love, Sabarmati, December 17 | Mitul Kajaria

## 7. Student Bar Councils of National Law Universities (December 16)

Joint Statement by the student bodies of NLS, NUALS, NALSAR, MNLU Mumbai, MNLU Nagpur, HNLU, NLUO, NUSRL against the violent Police Action at Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia



The students of these NLUs strongly condemn the violence and use of brute force against the protests organized by students of Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia. Over the past few days of the protest there has been use of tear-gas shells and lathi charge against the protesting students, along with the forceful entry in their university premises, cutting off internet services and physical assault of students thereafter. This is clearly an example of excessive use of force by the state against mere expression of dissent.

As students of law who are taught the importance of following due procedure, the actions of the law enforcement authorities authorized by the state are completely out of line and unwarranted and disproportionate. The resulting damage of life and property at the site of these universities has forced them to leave their premises and stop academic activities. In a healthy democratic and political environment, dissent is a necessary component. As students of law we are aware of how valuable such expression and the constitutional protections bestowed upon us for the same.

These actions against the protesting students have violated their constitutional protections endangering their lives and brought shame to our democratic values that we cherish and strive to uphold. We stand with these students who suffered such brutality from the state over their peaceful protests and extend our support to them unconditionally.



Asserting citizenship: at Sabarmati Ashram, December 17 | Mitul Kajaria

## 8. Statement by Scientists and Scholars ahead of Parliament Enactment (1800+ signatories, Dec. 9)

## Statement on the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill

We are a group of Indian scientists and scholars.

We are issuing this statement in our personal capacity as concerned citizens to express our dismay at the reported plans to table the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019 in the parliament. We do not have access to the exact text of the current version of the Bill. Our statement is based on media reports and the text of the previous version of the Bill that was passed by the Lok Sabha in January 2019. Nevertheless, we feel compelled to issue this statement already at this point of time in view of the reports that the Bill may be tabled in parliament early next week and may be taken up for voting in both houses soon after.

We understand that the Bill seeks to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The stated intent of the Bill is to provide refuge to persecuted minorities from neighbouring countries. While we support this laudable objective, we find it deeply troubling that the Bill uses religion as a legal criterion for determining Indian citizenship.

The idea of India that emerged from the independence movement, and as enshrined in our constitution, is that of a country that aspires to treat people of all faiths equally. The use of religion as a criterion for citizenship in the proposed bill would mark a radical break with this history and would be inconsistent with the basic structure of the constitution. We fear, in particular, that the careful exclusion of Muslims from the ambit of the Bill will greatly strain the pluralistic fabric of the country.

We note that article 14 of the Indian constitution prohibits the State from denying “to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.” While it is the job of legal experts to determine whether this draft bill violates the letter of the constitution, it seems certain to us that it violates its spirit.

For the reasons mentioned above, we call for the immediate withdrawal of this bill and as its replacement request for appropriate legislation that will address the concerns of refugees and minorities in a non-discriminatory manner.

(The full list of signatories can be found [here](#))



Osmania University, December 17 | Danesh Mistry

## 9. IIM Bangalore Community Ahead of Parliament Enactment (69 signatories, December 8)

Dear Hon. Members of Parliament,

We the undersigned students, staff, and faculty of the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore write to you with a sense of urgency. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) has been cleared by the union cabinet and is slated to be introduced in the parliament soon. The CAB goes against the fundamental founding principle of our republic – equality before law without regard to religious beliefs.

The CAB, along with the promise of an expanded nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC) has spread fear in the minds of more than two-hundred million of our fellow Muslim citizens. India's great strength lies in its diversity. Stripping two-hundred million fellow Indians of their basic dignity will not make India great or strong. Instead, it will lay the foundations of a country in perpetual strife.

The CAB will foment ethnic and communal discontent across the vast swathe of India from Tamil Nadu to Assam, even while it is highly unlikely to benefit even the intended beneficiaries. We urge you to oppose the CAB in the parliament. Generations to come will salute the stand that you took in 2019 to safeguard the founding principles of our republic.

### Updates

## 10. Academic Community of IIM Calcutta (250+ signatories, December 19)

As members of the academic community in India, we the undersigned, stand in solidarity with students across the country protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens of India (NRC). Fundamentally discriminatory and unjust, CAA-NRC contradict the founding principles of the Indian Constitution and undermine international human rights conventions such as the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Declaration

of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Act institutionalizes discrimination based on religion, besides threatening the interests of indigenous people of the North-Eastern states.

We strongly condemn the violent repression of student protests in educational institutions across India. Targeted police action against Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University and the killing of youth in Assam, contributes to deepening divisive forces in the country. The intrusion of state machinery into educational institutions destroys safe spaces for debate and discussion. Students, like any Indian citizen, have the fundamental right to peacefully protest. Such suppression of dissent undermines the very ethos of an educational institution and the secular functioning of our democracy.

We are shocked by the continued detention of peaceful protestors across the country and the imposition of Section 144. We demand that the police forces be held accountable for their brutalities and excesses. We express our solidarity with student protests across campuses and stand with all those fighting to end the injustice of the CAA and NRC.

A group of Faculty, Ex-faculty, Students and Alumni  
Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

(The full list of signatories can be found [here](#))

### **11. Statement against police brutality and CAA from teachers and researchers of law (130 signatoires)**

We, the undersigned teachers and researchers of law, strongly condemn the police brutality on the peaceful protest by the students at Jamia Milia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University and other universities.

On 15 December 2019 police entered the Jamia Milia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University, and assaulted and detained the students. Students were dragged out of campus, and were paraded outside with hands raised. We believe that the action of the police is an attempt to suppress dissent and is an attack on the autonomy of the universities. The police action violates, inter alia, the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under the Constitution of India and international law instruments to which India is a state party. We emphasize that academic institutions are an arena of discussion, debate and dissent, and the peremptory and ultimate objective of universities is to speak truth to power. By using force against the students, the government has struck at the heart of the culture of protests.

Through measures like CAA and NRC, democracy is being forced to give way to majoritarianism. We believe that CAA and NRC violate every value the Constitution of India seeks to preserve. Besides, the said policies do not satisfy the touchstone of any civilized community. We also believe that the restoration of constitutional standards necessitates meaningful engagement with the dissenting voices against the CAA and NRC.

We also realize that not speaking up against the police action and CAA amounts to complicity in the subversion of the constitutional values by the government. Attack on the academic institutions and the consistent effort to undermine dissent by the state institutions presents the imperative need to save the Indian democracy, pluralism and social inclusiveness. Therefore, we appeal to everyone to stand in solidarity to resist the ongoing erosion of the rule of law, constitutionalism and religious harmony.

We further reiterate that peaceful protest is a democratic right protected by the fundamental law of the country and India's international law obligations, and the same should be recognised and respected. We stand in solidarity with the protesting students and citizens against CAA and NRC.

In solidarity

The full list of signatories can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/wmpg6tk>

### **12. In Solidarity with Indian Democracy: Tech Against Fascism (December 20)**

We — engineers, researchers, analysts, and designers — of the technology industry, unflinchingly condemn the fascist Indian government and the brutality it enacts on citizens. The teargassing, sexual and physical abuse, and unlawful arrests by the police all over the country are a gross violation of universal human rights. The right to protest is fundamental to India's constitution and history. Ahimsa was India's weapon of resistance against the British and showed the path to independence — by demonizing and attempting to suppress nonviolent action that questions its actions, the Indian state is forgetting the values and tactics that India so deeply cherishes.



Ahimsa further inspired many world leaders, like Martin Luther King, who said, “we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension [...] We bring it out in the open where it can be seen and dealt with.” The state-sponsored brutality against protestors must stop immediately.

The multi-cultural soul and democratic ethos of the beautiful country of India is now being mutilated through divisive and fascist schemes by the national government. Militarization, suppression, surveillance, illegal detention, sexual abuse, and religious polarization by the current government are unrecognizably splintering the democratic nation. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 combined with the National Register for Citizens (NRC), is a deeply anti-Muslim scheme that will create greater statelessness and global disparity for Muslims, growing worse with India’s economic decline and climate change. The Act is political and electoral towards building a ‘Hindu Rashtra’, while excluding persecuted Tamil Muslims from Sri Lanka, Ahmadiyya and Hazara Muslims from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar. The state of Kashmir is under siege, with leaders, activists and journalists gagged and placed under house arrest. The state of Assam is under lock down and unrest, rendering 1.9 million people as stateless and ‘illegal’ after the imposition of NRC. Religion has never served as a prerequisite for Indian citizenship. Such actions are unconstitutional and act against the very citizens of the country that the government is under oath to serve.

The Internet — the open ecosystem that we, tech workers, worked so hard to build, and our entire humanity benefits from — is banned in Assam, Delhi, elsewhere, as well as in Kashmir for the fifth month in a row (the world’s longest Internet ban). While portraying India as marching towards ‘Digital India’ and courting tech company business investment, the regressive government views the Internet as a political tool for suppression of citizen dissent, while utilizing the same networks to organize and spread fake content.

We refuse to silently witness the violence unleashed on Indians. We also call upon technology leaders like Sundar Pichai (Alphabet), Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), Dara Khosrowshahi (Uber), Mukesh Ambani (Jio), Gopal Vittal (Bharti Airtel), Kalyan Krishnamurthy (Flipkart), and Shantanu Narayen (Adobe) to take a stance and publicly denounce the fascist acts by the Indian government. We call upon the leaders to use technology as a force for good, to refuse to share user details with the government, refuse to shut off the Internet at the government’s whim, provide tools for citizen mobilization, and ensure that content moderation is not skewing pro-government.

With record high unemployment levels, plummeting economy, and rising farmer suicides, such ultra-nationalist and diversionary tactics are attempts by the Indian government to mask over its incompetence over the biggest socio-economic crises in the country. The violent actions and fascist ideology deeply breach the spirit of India envisioned by founding leaders like Bhagat Singh, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Kanaklata Barua, Ashfaqulla Khan, Mahatma Gandhi, Subramaniya Bharathi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sarojini Naidu.tech company implementation of NRC. We refuse to silently witness the violence unleashed on Indians. We will fight fascism back.

**\*\*\*In the face of recent retaliation from tech companies against protesting employees, and from the Indian government on family and loved ones, some of us withhold our names, but every signature here is authentic.\*\*\***

*Disclaimer: Our opinions are our OWN and do not reflect those of our employers.*

*This petition and statement was originally published on [Medium](#) where it originated and the original statement and full list of signatories can be found [here](#).*

### **13. Statement from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Affiliates (140+ signatories)**

We, the undersigned students, faculty, staff, alumni, and affiliates, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) stand in solidarity with the peaceful and historic student protests across nearly 100 campuses in India against the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA). We strongly condemn the increasingly violent suppression of these citizens’ protests at the Aligarh Muslim University, the Jamia Millia Islamia University, Jama Masjid, Delhi, Mangaluru, and across several cities in Uttar Pradesh that have left several dead. We praise the courage, dignity, humor, resolve, and dynamism with which the students and ordinary citizens continue their protest in the face of lathi (baton) charges, tear gas, police detentions, the suspension of the internet, the closing down of public transportation, and the imposition of section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedures, a colonial-era law used by the state to prevent public gathering of more than four people.

The Citizenship Amendment Act accelerates the path to citizenship for Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, Parsi and Christian migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who entered India before 2014. Ostensibly introduced to protect these religious communities from “persecution”, the Act does not in fact mention “persecuted religious minorities”, identifying, instead, migrants belonging to the six religions, conspicuously excluding Muslims from its purview. By introducing religion as a marker for communities which will receive such state protection, the Act directly violates Article 14 of the Indian constitution that explicitly guarantees equality to all persons, both citizens and foreigners, within the territory of India. Second, the Act, in effect, redefines Indian citizenship on the basis of religion, breaking, completely, with the secular and inclusive foundation of the nation since it gained independence in 1947. The exclusion of Muslims from this new definition of Indian citizenship is reinforced by the identification of only Muslim-majority countries in South Asia, despite the presence of other persecuted communities within them, and many such refugees from other nations, such as Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The Act also includes an arbitrary cut-off date, 2014, for those who can apply for this fast-tracked citizenship. These places of origin and dates are suggestive of a continuous, 80-year-long history of persecution that stopped six years ago, neither of which claim has been substantiated or, indeed, is historically accurate.

The scope and scale of the CAA must be understood in conjunction with the National Register of Citizenship (NRC), an administrative undertaking to create a registry of all existing Indian citizens to enable the government to “weed out”, in its own words, “infiltrators” and “termites”, that is to say undocumented migrants. This show of citizenship would require a series of unspecified documents relating to birth, parentage, and grandparents. If implemented, the NRC could make stateless those who are unable to produce these papers. While Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Christians from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh would be protected by being granted citizenship under the CAA, an overwhelming number of Muslims, who have lived within the territory of India for generations as well as more recent migrants, could be rendered stateless.

The preamble of the constitution declares India to be a secular, democratic republic. It is the enormity of the CAA and NRC combined that would irrevocably redefine Indian citizenship and nationhood by turning away from the plurality and diversity - the guiding principles of the constitution and the state that have been celebrated and kept in balance for nearly 70 years - that has mobilized students to call for the withdrawal of the CAA and the NRC. The sheer diversity of students and citizens who have taken to the streets from liberal arts, engineering, law, public, and private colleges across India, from Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Kochi, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Kanpur, Aligarh, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Pune, Shillong, Itanagar, and Silchar, to name a few, is a testament to the democratic and secular foundation of the country that constitutes the fabric of India and which is under imminent threat. We, the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and affiliates at MIT, many of whom are associated with India professionally and personally, stand in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of students and citizens protesting in India and join their demand for the withdrawal of the CAA and NRC.

The names of signatories can be found [here](#)