

Appeal for India

We, Italian citizens for Human Rights, are in solidarity with the students of India. We condemn the recent violence and police agitation against students and citizens of India protesting and exercising their rights to dissent against the recent passed Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

The Indian Parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on 11 December, 2019. This amendment seeks to confer citizenship on people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who are Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian who might have faced persecution in their native countries.

The people of India have mobilized in protest against this legislation. Inevitably, the government has cracked down on these protesters. In the northeastern province of Assam, 4 people have died from police firing, curfew has been imposed, internet access has been cut off and military and paramilitary forces have been deployed. The police has also resorted to extreme violence against protesting students at the Jamia Millia Islamia, a university in Delhi, firing live ammunition, deploying baton charges, barging into student residence halls and even firing tear gas shells inside the university library. Police violence has also been reported amid an internet blackout in the Aligarh Muslim University, 140 kms from Delhi.

We oppose this legislation on the following grounds:

- It links citizenship of the Republic of India with religion, thereby violating the secular foundations of the Indian Constitution.
- Many Muslim communities face persecution on religious and/or cultural grounds in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as well as in other countries neighbouring India. The exclusion of Muslims from the purview of this legislation reveals the religious bigotry in this ostensibly progressive legislation.
- The current government has promised to extend the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to the entire country – an exercise where citizens are required to prove their legal status to the government. Read in conjunction with the NRC, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 is a barefaced attempt to exclude Muslims, disenfranchise them and possibly render them stateless.

We condemn in the strongest terms the violent behavior and high handedness of the police against peaceful protesters. We must also draw attention to the continuing internet blackout in Kashmir, which has now continued for over 4 months and is the longest blackout ever in a democratic country. Beyond blocked internet connections, the detention of political leaders, and revocation of statehood and autonomy, a civil society team that visited Kashmir has reported arrests of minors.

Human Rights Film Festival of Naples (Italy)

Il Festival del Cinema dei Diritti Umani di Napoli