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Protest March to Save the Indian Constitution

January 11, 2019, Brandenburger Tor to the Indian Embassy

Our Statement

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the brave people across India who are protesting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register. We reject the unconstitutional and discriminatory use of religion as a basis for citizenship. Each one of these measures is inhumane and unjust and their horrible effects will be felt disproportionately by the poor and the minorities of India.

Requiring people who face extreme poverty, landlessness and ecological displacement, work as migrant labourers, and live as indigenous or nomadic people, to prove their citizenship with documents based on the faulty criteria of birth, landholding, or education, is an exercise in further disenfranchisement and we reject it totally.

We mourn the people who have been murdered by the police forces of India to suppress dissent, particularly the Muslims of India protesting the denial of their basic human dignity. Violence against Muslims and Dalits has steadily escalated over the last couple of years. Mob lynchings have become a regular feature. The sheer amount of violence that the BJP and the RSS and now the police under their command have unleashed on the people of India is unsurpassed. There is an urgent need for the international community to condemn this brutality.

We absolutely condemn the violent suppression of the anti-CAA-NRC protests all over India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh where Muslims have been targeted by the police and the state machinery for large scale cruel and inhumane treatment. The police along with the political thugs of the party ruling the federal government, have unleashed violence in university campuses. Protestors have lost their lives in Assam and Karnataka, and in Bihar, a teenager carrying the national flag was brutally murdered by RSS workers. There have been flagrant violations of child rights, with multiple reports of children being held in police custody, beaten and tortured, both in Uttar Pradesh and in Delhi. Student victims of this brutal crackdown are regularly admitted to the trauma and emergency wings of hospitals.

The Indian government has also used its power to shut down the internet in various parts of the country to throttle news and to curtail emergency assistance to the victims of police brutality. The longest internet shutdown, in place in Kashmir, is a mark of shame on the so-called democratic ethos of the country.

We condemn the fact that the Indian government has disbursed funds and human resources to build and maintain detention camps in Assam and Karnataka, which are supposed to house

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"illegal immigrants". This is a violent reminder of the historical wound of the Partition of the country and the dark history of concentration camps during the Shoah. We shall not allow the government to cage people like this.

We welcome the steps announced by state governments across India to not cooperate with the implementation of the Citizens Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register.

We call upon the international community to immediately condemn:

1. Police and state brutality in India,
2. Attempts to disenfranchise Muslims, Adivasis and other minorities by forcing them to prove their citizenship,
3. Violation of the constitutional rights of Indians to protest and the shrinking space for dissent in India,
4. Violation of child rights, and
5. All attempts to openly violate India's constitutional mandate for secular government

We call upon the government of India to:

1. Act immediately to put an end to the abuse of police powers that have already led to the deaths of more than 25 people across India,
2. Release political prisoners,
3. Announce an inquiry into the human rights violations in Uttar Pradesh and other parts of India and punish those found guilty of abuse of official power,
4. Announce an inquiry into the attacks on Jamia Milia Islamia University, Aligarh Muslim University, and the Jawaharlal Nehru University and punish those found guilty of abuse of official power,
5. Repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act, and
6. Announce that the National Population Register and the National Register for Citizens will not be implemented.