

## **Petition to the President of India**

To  
Hon'ble Shri Ram Nath Kovind  
President of India  
Rashtrapati Bhavan,  
New Delhi 110004

Date: January 8, 2019

Subject: On the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam  
& the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016

Respected Rashtrapatiiji,

We the undersigned citizens of India hereby seek your urgent intervention on two inter-related matters, which affect the lives of over one million people, perhaps more, in the state of Assam.

### *On the NRC*

We express our deep anguish at the prospect of a very large number of people in Assam being deprived of citizenship and turned into an incarcerated population, as a result of the NRC process initiated at the direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. It has been reported that out of the 40.07 lakh people excluded from the Final Draft of the NRC, only around 31 lakh people were able to file claims by the deadline of December 31, 2018. Thus, the fate of almost 9 lakh persons has practically been sealed as they are on the verge of losing their citizenship status. Many more may find themselves in a similar situation after the completion of the entire process.

In its judgment that initiated the NRC process, the Supreme Court had directed the central government to frame an adequate deportation mechanism in dialogue with the government of Bangladesh. The Indian government has not raised the deportation issue with its counterpart and has reportedly told the Bangladeshi officials that NRC is an internal Indian matter. In any case, deportation of one million people from Assam to Bangladesh does not appear to be within the bounds of possibility.

Rendering such a huge mass of people stateless would be an unprecedented catastrophe. The looming possibility of one million people – including children and women from poor refugee families – being held in detention centres would be no less inhuman and irrational. Even the possibility of this has pushed a significant number of people in Assam towards suicide. Apart from the human cost, the scale of these detention centres is bound to be an excruciating liability on the public exchequer. The option of turning the excluded persons into non-citizens in perpetuity without any right to participate in the democratic process, is equally inappropriate and counterproductive. This would create a separate category of

second class citizenship, vulnerable to myriad kinds of harassment, victimisation and exploitation.

We earnestly urge upon you and the Hon'ble Supreme Court to reconsider the justification behind the NRC process in the light of the visibly calamitous outcomes, and ensure a humane and just result. We believe that granting citizenship to all the NRC excluded persons can provide such a solution.

### *On the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016*

We also note with grave concern that the central government and the ruling party appear to be adamant on passing the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 in the Parliament. By making non-Muslim “illegal migrants” from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh eligible for Indian citizenship, the amendment explicitly discriminates on the ground of religion and violates the constitutional principle of equality.

The government is disingenuous in justifying this amendment as a means of assisting persecuted minorities in India’s neighbourhood. Had it been sincere, it would have included all persecuted groups, based on any religious belief, race, language or ethnicity and extended its scope beyond only those neighbouring countries with a Muslim-majority population.

The only conceivable purpose that the passage of such a defective Citizenship Amendment Bill can serve at this stage is to enable the ruling party to play sectarian politics in Assam on the eve of the general elections and divide the NRC excluded people on religious lines. We urge upon you as the custodian of the Indian Constitution to advise the central government to withdraw the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 and abandon such divisive political strategies.

We are hopeful that you will intervene at this crucial juncture to uphold human rights and ensure justice for one million people.

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