

To
Hon Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi
South Block, Raisina Hill
New Delhi-110011

10 March 2020

Re: Organised Violence Against Muslim Citizens in Delhi and Protests Against the Citizenship Amendment Act

Dear Prime Minister,

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) is a regional women's rights organisation with 248 members in 27 countries in Asia and the Pacific. We are deeply concerned over the escalating violence against Muslims, excessive use of force and abuse of power by the Government of India and Delhi Police, and constant intimidation of the peaceful women protestors of Shaheen Bagh.

The violence in Delhi and other parts of the country, and systematic targeting of Muslim citizens is part of a pattern that has become increasingly clear since Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) won a second term in the 2019 General Elections. [Educational institutions](#) have faced [systematic attacks](#) followed by a complete, unethical and [unconstitutional lockdown of Kashmir](#) dissolving the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The [brutality of the attacks](#) on students, and arresting political leadership in the Kashmir valley by charging them under draconian laws like the Public Safeties Act is a complete disrespect towards democratic principles and the constitution of India.

The peaceful women's movement in Shaheen Bagh, New Delhi, emerging as a response to these systemic violations against Muslims and the passing of [fundamentally discriminatory](#) Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), has been continuously [targeted by the State](#). The demands of the women are clear - a repeal of the discriminatory Citizen Amendment Act that violates their fundamental rights as citizens, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Instead of listening to these voices, the government and the Delhi police are trying to disrupt these protests and inciting extreme Hindu right wing militias to unleash violence provoked by religious fundamentalism.

Shaheen Bagh has been repeatedly brought up in the recent Delhi assembly election campaign by BJP leaders. They have tried to misrepresent the women as [bad mothers](#) who bring their children to protests; while unleashing [goons who opened fire](#) directly targeting the unarmed peaceful women protestors. The women of Shaheen Bagh has inspired many more women across the country to stage similar protests. By some estimates [as many as 291 similar protests](#) are taking place simultaneously. On 23rd February, BJP leader [Kapil Mishra issued an ultimatum](#) to those exercising their constitutional right to peacefully protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act. His [inflammatory speech in presence of the Director General of police](#) threatening to take matters in the hands of his supporters if the sit-in protests were not withdrawn, was the direct cause of the violence that started the day after.

The organised violent attacks have been directed at Muslim citizens's lives and livelihoods. [53 lives](#) have been lost in the violence in North East Delhi, and numerous private properties, businesses along

with mosques have been torched, destroyed and looted. Civil servants and judges trying to hold BJP leaders and police accountable have been hastily [suspended](#) or [transferred](#). Video evidence has emerged showing the [police joining in the violence](#), [breaking CCTV cameras to destroy evidence](#), and being silent bystanders as violent mobs lynched people, ransacked and looted Muslim neighbourhoods. These first hand accounts and video evidence parallels what happened during the Gujarat pogrom of 2002. The numbers of those dead and missing has been rising steadily. Swati Maliwal, the chief of Delhi Commission of Women has described [crimes against women as 'horrific'](#). [Reports](#) from temporary shelters reveal traumatised children, women and men.

However, as the peaceful protests enter 84 days while violent attacks continue to escalate, these Muslim working class women are inspiring similar sit-in protests across the country, redefining [carework as protest](#), and extending the same unpaid carework to the realm of defending the Indian constitution. Muslim women, often seen as passive victims, oppressed and [confined to the domestic realm are posing as the biggest challenge](#) to the State's patriarchal and ultra nationalistic agenda, [challenging patriarchy and overturning hierarchies of power](#).

APWLD stands in solidarity with the women of Shaheen Bagh, and other women-led movements against CAA. We strongly urge the Central Government and the Delhi police to take the following actions and restore the rule of law and citizens' trust in institutional justice mechanisms:

- Ensure the safety of women-led citizens' protests in Shaheen Bagh and elsewhere in the country so citizens can exercise their fundamental democratic rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly without being subjected to violent attacks and intimidation;
- Immediately investigate and hold all political leaders engaging in hate speech and inciting violence to account;
- Ensure access to humanitarian aid and reparation, access to justice and medical and psycho-social therapy for all those who have experienced any form of violence, been displaced, subjected to sexual assault, loss of family members, businesses, and properties;
- Ensure immediate investigation and hold those who committed acts of violence accountable, including looting, torching, or destruction of public and private properties, business and places of worship;
- Issue an order to immediately stop the persecution of Muslims, the use of violence by law enforcement agencies and bring all perpetrators to justice;
- Ensure that immediate and appropriate disciplinary action is taken against law enforcement personnel who abetted the attackers and refused to help the citizens under attack;
- Immediately repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act and its adjuvanants National Register of Citizens and National Population Register.

Regards,



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