

# Indian government's anti-Muslim agenda opposed by massive protests

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Mass protest in Dharwad, Karnatak, condemns police attacks on Muslim students in Delhi, Dec. 17. Photo: Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist)

Massive protests are erupting throughout India following the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) on Dec. 11. The legislation strips 200 million Indian Muslims, who account for [14 percent of the population](#), of their fundamental rights.

In August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) instituted similar measures against Muslims [in Jammu and Kashmir](#) by revoking their constitutional autonomy. In order to crush all opposition, the government imposed a debilitating curfew, shutting down telecommunications and arresting political leaders. Jammu and Kashmir is a Muslim-majority state that India controls within the disputed Himalayan territory bordering Pakistan.

Modi and the BJP have built their power base through a program of Hindu supremacy against a less privileged Muslim minority with the apparent goal of changing India into a Hindu religious state. From early in Modi's political career, he has striven to destroy India's secular unity by promoting an agenda of communal violence. The BJP has relied on a divisive program to bury issues of a faltering economy and growing concern over violence against women in which the BJP has been implicated.

### **Anti-CAB protests begin in Assam**

The [epicenter of anti-CAB protests](#) is Assam, Tripura and the northeastern states bordering Bangladesh and Myanmar. CAB was initiated in this region, although Modi has expressed intentions to carry out the CAB and [National Register of Citizens \(NRC\)](#) purge in every Indian state.

The CAB is seen as a supplement to a proposed all-India NRC exercise. The first

stage was carried out in Assam during November, leading to more than 1.9 million people being declared as illegal or aliens in India, rendering them stateless. Hundreds were sent to detention camps, termed by many concentration camps. Around 26 people have already died in these detention camps, according to [People's Dispatch of Dec. 13](#).

To date, more than 3.5 million Assam Muslims, many native to the state, have been eliminated from the NRC registry and are threatened with detention or expulsion.

### **Students in Muslim universities lead struggle**

The first protests against CAB were led by students in Guwahati, Assam, with large torch rallies. Tens of thousands of protesters defied a government curfew and a deployment of military troops. It's been reported that within hours of the passage of CAB, the police shot and beat to death six people, while arresting dozens of others.

- In Delhi, students and others protested against the brutal police crackdown at Jamia Millia Islamic University. As news of the police assault spread across the country, universities came out in solidarity with the Jamia Muslim students.
- First off was Aligarh Muslim University, where students at the university gate shouted slogans. The police attacked, injuring more than a hundred students. When ambulances arrived, police blocked them from helping the wounded students.
- A large protest broke out in Hyderabad's Maulana Azad Urdu University. "Shame on the Delhi Police!" was one slogan chanted by the students.
- In Mumbai, students at the Tata Institute led a candlelight march singing the Raj-era Urdu poem "Sarfaroshi ki Tamanna," known by its association with revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh, who fought the British Empire.
- In Bihar, where the ruling BJP coalition supported the CAB, Patna University students clashed with the police.

- In Kolkata, students of Jadavpur University and the Aliah University also mobilized in support.
- And around the rest of the country: in Varanasi, students of the Banaras Hindu University protested, joined by the Pondicherry University students; in Lucknow, students of the Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama and the IIT Bombay also joined in, marching with torches and bearing placards which read, “In solidarity with Jamia.” (From report at [Scroll.In](#))

<https://www.facebook.com/SuciCommunist/videos/2813104292067609/>

Massive protests against the attacks on Muslims rapidly spread from Assam to West Bengal and then across India. Outrage against the violence of Hindu supremacists, the police and Modi’s troops in Assam led to pitched street battles. Furious protests have also broken out in a growing number of cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Varanasi, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Patna and Pondicherry.

Opposition to CAB cut across every ethnic and religious barrier. As one [former BJP worker](#) from the Assam region put it, “They wanted to turn Hindus against Muslims, they’ve turned Hindus against Hindus.”

Opposition state governments in Kerala, Punjab and West Bengal have said that they will not allow the Hindu supremacist agenda to be enforced, calling it unconstitutional. In Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the bill a part of the strategy of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary group aligned with BJP, similar to the ones adopted by the British in India and Hitler in Germany to divide people along the lines of religion.

Modi’s government has responded to the protests with troops, internet shutdowns and military curfews, just as it did when it clamped down on Kashmir.

Across India, left-wing parties, including the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)-Liberation, the All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party are [organizing joint popular protest actions](#) against the CAB-NRC on Dec. 19.

