

H. E. Dr. Acquino Vimal,
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed by the Government of India in 2019 and implemented on 11 March 2024.

For people applying for Indian citizenship, the CAA in its current form favours members of some religions while systematically excluding others, such as Muslim Rohingyas from Myanmar and Ahmadiyya Muslims from Pakistan – both groups suffering persecution in their home countries.

Reports from human rights organizations reveal that when the CAA was passed in 2019, incidents of hostility against Muslims in India rose. Recently, there has been an increase in harassment and violence targeting the Muslim community, including economic boycotts of Muslim businesses and incidents of hate speech, as well as continued discrimination by local authorities, e.g. in the form of anti-conversion laws in states where interreligious marriages have been outlawed. These negative developments serve as strong indicators that the CAA in its current form, will only serve to exacerbate the already vulnerable situation for peaceful Muslims in India.

Your Excellency, before the passing of the CAA, religion was not a criterion when applying for citizenship in India. Not only is the categorical exclusion of Muslims in the CAA inconsequential and unjust, it is in fact unconstitutional, contravening Article 14 in India's Constitution. Citizenship under a plural and secular constitution should not be dependent upon religion, and the CAA constitutes a fundamental departure of the core values of India as a nation state.

Based on this, I humbly request Your Excellency's intervention to:

- Call for a redrafting of the CAA to include people of all religions, including Muslims, such as Rohingyas from Myanmar and Ahmadiyyas from Pakistan;
- Ensure that Article 14 of the Constitution, stating that no one within the territory of India should be denied equal protection by the law, is diligently adhered to by the authorities, including when it comes to immigrants applying for citizenship;
- Ensure that Indian authorities and lawmakers respect, promote and protect every citizen's fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief, as described in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which India is a signatory.

Sincerely,