



Dear St Paul City Council Members and Mayor Carter,

The Alliance of Progressive South Asians [APSA] Twin Cities is writing this letter to support the City of St. Paul Resolution 20-712 rejecting India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register for Citizens (NRC). Our group includes people of many spiritual paths and religious traditions (including secularism, atheism, and agnosticism) with familial roots in the South Asian region who have made a home in the Twin Cities.

As the resolution notes, the CAA intends to protect minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, but specifically excludes Islam from the list of faiths that those minorities can belong to. Separately, the NRC, when implemented, threatens to subject hundreds of millions of people to a citizenship test. Anyone without proper documentation would likely be subject to significant bureaucratic harassment at the very least and the potential loss of citizenship rights and shuttling into detention camps with threats of deportation to other countries. The pool of people subject to the citizenship test would include people of all faiths (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and other belief traditions) but would likely disproportionately include communities experiencing systematic intergenerational exclusion, exploitation, displacement, and dispossession.

While this scenario is mind-boggling on its own, our understanding based on media reports, scholarly and NGO analyses, and communication with friends and family in India suggests that for all intents and purposes, the goal here seems to be to specifically target Muslims and make them second-class citizens: the CAA will allow everyone but Muslims to avoid the loss of citizenship rights by declaring themselves as refugees from neighboring Muslim countries.

This analysis of the targeted impact of NRC-CAA on Muslims, based on but not limited to the speeches of the Indian Home Minister, has been widely covered in the Indian media. It has terrorized Muslims, driving them and a large number of concerned non-Muslim citizens to come out in large numbers in large-scale protests, rallies, and peaceful sit-ins all across India since December 2019. This vocal opposition to the NRC-CAA, in turn, has led to targeted--and

increasingly, violent--harassment of Muslims (students, organizers, and other ordinary citizens) in disproportionate numbers.

In light of this understanding, we believe that the CAA-NRC exercise violates the democratic and secular constitutional foundations and ethics of the Indian republic. We stand in solidarity with our fellow South Asians, South Asian Americans here in the Twin Cities, and members of the South Asian diaspora across the world who reject hate and exclusion.

We also stand in solidarity with the many Muslim leaders who focus their opposition on the threat to the secular and constitutional fabric of India. By doing so, they make the potent observation that while Muslims are the primary target now, in reality, the NRC-CAA opens the door for the targeted persecution of many other communities in the future: Christians, Dalits, Adivasis, LGBTQ folks, materially impoverished groups, and others.

We strongly believe that the resolution can be strengthened by sharpening its language to focus on these constitutional erosions and their effect on the basic human rights of minorities and already marginalized communities in India. We urge the City Council to pass the Resolution 20-712 brought forward by Council Member Jane Prince and we look forward to continued dialogue between the City Council and the South Asian communities in the Twin Cities who are gravely concerned about the political developments in India.

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on behalf of APSA