GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

India's Discriminatory New Citizenship Law

By Stephen Lendman
Global Research, December 24, 2019

Region: Asia
Theme: History

India's 2019 Citizenship Act expedites the process for persecuted minorities of Pakistani, Afghan and Bangladesh nationality who resided in India since 2014.

It applies only for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, and Parsis, Muslims excluded.

According to the UN Human Rights Office, the new law breaches laws, conventions and treaties to which India is a signatory.

> "Fundament(ally) discriminatory in nature, (it) undermine(s) the commitment to equality before the law enshrined in India's constitution and India's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to which Indian is a State party, which prohibit discrimination based on racial, ethnic or religious grounds," said the UN office, adding:
>
> "Although India's broader naturalization laws remain in place, (the new law) will have a discriminatory effect on people's access to nationality."

Promoted by BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the measure got strong lower house (Lok Sabha) support, much less in the upper house (Rajya Sabha), approved by a 125 – 105 margin.

At around 200 million, India has the world's second largest Muslim population, exceeded only by Indonesia.

A 2015 analysis estimated the global Muslim population at around 1.8 billion, second only numerically to Christianity at over two billion.

India's Muslims constitute about 15% of the population, making them a significant minority — numerically large in size.

The new Citizenship Law affords them second-class status on a par to how people of color in America and the West are ill-treated.

Large-scale protests in India continue against the law. Public gatherings were banned and Internet service cut to try stopping them.

Defying New Delhi's orders, they continue, waving Indian flags and shouting anti-government slogans, wanting the law revoked.

Over the weekend, police reported 23 deaths from clashes with protesters, the true number likely higher.

At least 15 deaths occurred in Uttar Pradesh, mostly youths, at least some from live fire, hundreds arrested.

Eyewitnesses accused police of extreme violence, beating peaceful protesters, invading university dorms and accosting students.

Tear gas was fired into a library. Video footage showed journalists assaulted, violence committed by police, not protesters in most cases. Activists called for holding violent cops accountable for their human and civil rights abuses.

Authorities in several states said they won't obey the new law, calling it unconstitutional.

What's going on are the strongest anti-Modi protests since he took office in 2014.

On Friday, India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ordered the nation's electronic media to refrain from reports that could incite further violence — demanding "strict compliance."

In Gauhati, Assam state capital, All Assam Students Union leader Samujjal Bhattacharya said:

> "Our peaceful protests will continue till this illegal and unconstitutional citizenship law amendment is scrapped" — his view largely shared by countless others based on what's going on.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad slammed the new law at a news conference, following conclusion of a Kuala Lumpur Islamic summit, saying:

India is a secular state. "To exclude Muslims from becoming citizens…is unfair."

Modi's government lodged an official protest with Malaysia over his remark, accusing Mohamad of interfering in India's internal affairs.

Prominent Indian historian Ramachandra Guha criticized the new law, saying:

> "This piece of legislation strikes at the heart of the constitution, seeking to make India another country altogether. It is thus that so many people from so many different walks of life have raised their voices against it."

Guha was detained by police for involvement in the protests, then released. When arrested, he said: "I am protesting non-violently, but look they are stopping us."

News channel video footage showed him being dragged into custody by three policemen.

Opposition to the measure continues in much of the country, including by state leaders from regional parties.

Modi's government said it won't be repealed. In an effort to curb protests, two Indian telecom companies cut mobile services to parts of New Delhi on government orders.

Amnesty India executive director Avinash Kumar said the new "bigoted law legitimizes discrimination on the basis of religion. The people of the country have the right to protest against this law peacefully and express their views."

Around 14 Delhi Metro Rail stations were shut. Blocked roads into the city caused large-scale traffic jams. A number of flights from New Delhi airport were cancelled.

In 2018, Modi's government endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.

It commits nations to aid refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants in situations where they're vulnerable to arbitrary detention and mass expulsion.

India's Supreme Court will review the new citizenship law. Perhaps it'll have final say on whether it stands or is struck down as unconstitutional.

Protesters, jurists and human rights activists call for the latter disposition.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Award-winning author Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG)

His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

Featured image is from UK India Business Council

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © Stephen Lendman, Global Research, 2019

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Stephen Lendman

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine:

US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III." http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca