

Report on violence in Delhi 23/2 – 27/2/2020

Background and context

Citizenship Amendment Act or CAA, proposed to use, for the very first time in India, religion as an eligibility criterion for citizenship. On 13th December, the CAA became law. On 15th December, protesting students of Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI) in Delhi were brutally assaulted by police. The same night, a few women decided to occupy a major road near the university. These sit-in protests became famous as “Shaheen Bagh protests” and became the face of the resistance to CAA.

The state of Delhi elected its legislative assembly on 8th February. The days preceding the vote were marked by highly inflammatory speech by members of BJP, including a call to “**shoot traitors**”. The anti-CAA protestors were cast as anti-national and therefore traitors. Several incidences of shooting took place [1]. BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party: current ruling party at the center) lost the elections badly (only 8 out of 70 seats). Immediately afterwards a winning member of the legislative assembly from the winning party was shot and one of his aids killed [2].

On 23rd February, two new sit-in protests started... “two sit-in demonstrations against the citizenship law at Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh near Maujpur Chowk. The protesters had occupied roads since Saturday evening; nearly two months after a similar protest began in South Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh. While the Jaffrabad protest blocked the Maujpur Road, Kardampuri’s protesters sat by a bridge running parallel to the road. Both areas have large Muslim populations.” [3] In this tense atmosphere, **BJP politician Kapil Mishra gave speech calling for “clearing of protesters”** [3, 4]. After 70 days of peaceful protests, the seeds of violence were sown.

Chronology of violence:

23 -24/2 Violence begins at midnight: Shortly after the speech by the BJP politician, a group of CAA supporters clashed with the protesters. Zones occupied by CAA-protesters and those occupied by CAA-supporters became demarcated [4].

Monday 24/2: After a tense but relatively calm night, “violence broke out again on Monday, spilling over into nearby neighbourhoods. In Bhajanpura, a petrol pump was set afire. In the evening, a market in Gokulpuri was set on fire as well. Throughout the day, there was stone-pelting, and shops and homes were vandalised and torched in Maujpur and Jaffrabad. There were also reports of violence from the adjoining Karawal Nagar and Chand Bagh.” [3]. Reports of gun fires came in. Police imposed section 144 which forbids assembly of more than 4 people at one spot. However, large mobs of mostly young men chanting Hindu slogans started confronting the gathered protesters and subsequently stones were thrown from both sides. The mob also vandalized shops and homes. The Hindu mob – identifiable as such because of Hindu symbols and flags as well as its slogans kept growing. People were called in from other areas. They made provocative speeches, claiming themselves as victims and the Muslims as aggressors. Police did little to stop them – on the contrary, some policemen were seen to assist this crowd – throwing teargas shells in the same direction as the crowd pelted stones – that is to say towards the largely Muslim protesters [3,5,6,7]. Later that evening the crowd started “checking” passing cars and auto-rickshaws, “marking” those who they “recognized” as Hindus. **At the end of the day, four people were dead**, including one police officer, and many injured including another police officer and a few journalists.

Tuesday 25/2: Violence continued overnight and the press reported seeing broken and burnt vehicles, burnt shops and vehicles still on fire [8]. The targeting was obvious from visuals coming in – including the incidence where a mosque was desecrated and a Hindu flag was planted [9]. It emerged that mosques were also attacked and burnt in Mustafabad where huts of poor working Muslim families were destroyed by masked thugs shouting “Jai Shri Ram” – a Hindu slogan. Hindu neighbours later testified that they were also intimidated [10].

Reports of police harassing victims [11,*]. **End of the day reported 13 dead.**

Ground report from “The Wire”

Arson Continues in Khajuri Khas, Biryani Shop Targeted: At a chowk underneath the highway in North East Delhi’s Khajuri Khas, a mob shouting ‘Jai Shri Ram’ set buildings on fire on Tuesday afternoon, including a biryani shop. There was fire on either side of the highway. Large groups of

men wielding sticks were patrolling the streets, repeating the 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan again and again. Right next to them were large groups of Delhi policemen – not stopping the violent mob, but offering them water to drink. While *The Wire*'s reporters were able to shoot videos of the buildings being set on fire, they were threatened, their phones snatched and the footage and photographs deleted. “*Tum toh humaare Hindu bhai ho, yeh sab kyun kar rahe ho?* (You are our Hindu brother, why are you doing all this?)” one of the men told a reporter while deleting footage from his phone.

'We Burnt the Mazar Down': Hindutva Men Talk About the Violence They Unleashed The Wire's Srishti Srivastava met with a pro-government Hindutva mob and spoke to them about the violence and their modus operandi. They agreed to talk “if the camera is not focused on our (their) face”. When asked who set fire to a mausoleum on Monday, an activist said, “We can even give you the names of those who did; we know them very well. Okay, we will not tell you. We have burnt it (the mausoleum); we all have burnt it. Keep the camera down. Not one person has burnt (it); we all have.”

Mosque Set on Fire, Hanuman Flag Placed on Top A mosque in was set on fire late on Tuesday afternoon, reports Naomi Barton. A mob shouting “Jai Shri Ram” and “Hinduon ka Hindustan” paraded around the burning mosque, and a Hanuman flag was placed on top of the structure. Shops within and around the masjid's compound, including a footwear shop, were being looted. Locals said that the looters are not residents of the area, which is predominantly Hindu but has few Muslim families. Though there were a few firefighters present at the site, police could not be seen.

14-Year-Old Boy Shot at in Kardam Puri, No Ambulance 'Allowed to Reach' Spot Six hours after a 14-year-old Muslim boy was allegedly shot at by pro-government Hindutva activists in the Kardam Puri locality of Shahdara, no ambulance had reached him, report Naomi Barton and Avichal Dubey. The Wire's reporters found him slumped on his stomach, with locals attempting to offer relief with preliminary care. The boy, identified as Faizan, had not been a part of protests or clashes but had been in the area to drop off some items to an acquaintance.

Stone-Pelting, Arson Continues in Ghonda, Police Stand By Across the Ghoda area which is close to Maujpur, The Wire's Kabir Agarwal saw broken and burnt vehicles, burnt shops and

vehicles still on fire. There were some policemen standing at the edge of the Hindu-majority area, but they did not intervene when vehicles were burning. Eyewitnesses said Monday's violence had continued overnight, and several shops were broken. "There was stone pelting in the area early this morning also," said a resident.

Wednesday 26/2: Violence continued throughout the night, death-toll increasing by the hour. ambulances denied access to injured, journalists attacked and challenged to prove they are hindus, children attacked, From The Wire: "At the Mustafabad-Brijpuri crossing, a mosque, named locally as Farooquiya masjid, which also functioned as a madrasa for orphans, had been set ablaze by a mob that rampaged through the colony on Tuesday evening. They claimed that many children were injured in the arson, while the maulana died of a bullet injury. Another imam of the masjid has been critically injured and is currently admitted at a government hospital." Court intervenes to allow passage of ambulances in midnight appeal [12]. Delhi effected area under curfew but tolls rise – unofficial death toll very high but officially 20, press under attack in Delhi [13]. While most victims have died of gun-shot wounds or due to severe beating, 85-year-old Akbari suffocates to death in a burning house, Cops assaulted ICLU lawyers, peace partially restored. **Death toll 27 at the end of the day.**

Thursday 27/2: Despite assurances of safety from the authorities, reports of attack on Muslims by the violent mob continue to emerge in social media. According to mainstream news, peace seems to have been restored but death toll continues to rise. Police beginning to file first information reports (FIRs) but many instances of targeting victims and Muslims in general [14]. **Deaths reported: 36 at the end of the day. No new confirmed report of violence.**

Friday 28/2, Saturday 29/2: Death toll continues to rise. **The count as of Saturday stands at 42,** bringing the total number of dead in CAA/NRC related violence and repression to 69 [15].

Important points:

1. **Injured denied medical aide** <https://thewire.in/category/politics/all> & <https://thewire.in/law/delhi-riots-give-injured-muslims-safe-passage-hc-directs-police-in-late-night-order>

2. **Press targeted** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/are-you-hindu-or-muslim-toi-photojournalist-recounts-maujpur-horror/articleshow/74291844.cms>
<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-violence-indian-express-journalist-assaulted-caa-protest-6286843/> & <https://thewire.in/media/north-east-delhi-violence-journalists>
3. **Children, pregnant women and health-care facilities not spared/targeted**
<https://thewire.in/communalism/mustafabad-delhi-riots-ground-report> &
<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/stones-pelted-petrol-bombs-hurled-nursing-home-staff-narrates-how-rioters-vandalised-premises-during-delhi-violence-1650632-2020-02-27> & <https://www.firstpost.com/india/in-delhis-chandbagh-pregnant-woman-narrates-ordeal-says-cops-beat-me-unconscious-was-out-to-pick-up-daughter-from-school-8084901.html>
4. **Police neutrality in doubt, torture alleged** <https://scroll.in/article/954538/two-anti-cao-activists-arrested-by-delhi-police-were-tortured-in-custody-allege-family-members> &
<https://thewire.in/communalism/tahir-hussain-aap-fir-delhi-riot>
5. **Independence of judiciary in doubt:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51644861> <https://thewire.in/law/delhi-high-court-hate-speech>

References:

[1] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51308376> & <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/firing-at-delhis-shaheen-bagh-no-reports-of-injuries-so-far-2173268>

<https://thewire.in/communalism/shaheen-bagh-shooting> &

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/jamia-milia-islamia-gate-5-firing-cao-shaheen-bagh-1642661-2020-02-03>

[2] <https://scroll.in/latest/952872/one-volunteer-dead-after-shots-fired-at-aap-mla-naresh-yadav-says-party>

[3] <https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/02/25/this-is-hindu-awakening-what-exactly-happened-in-north-east-delhi-over-the-past-two-days>

[4] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/world/asia/delhi-riots-kapil-mishra.html>

- [5] <https://www.thequint.com/news/politics/jaffrabad-maujpur-cao-protests-communal-violence-kapil-mishra>
- [6] <https://scroll.in/latest/954139/delhi-fresh-clashes-erupt-between-pro-and-anti-cao-groups-in-maujpur-two-metro-stations-closed>
- [7] <https://thewire.in/communalism/ground-report-war-zone-in-north-east-delhi>
- [8] <https://thewire.in/category/politics/all>
- [9] <https://thewire.in/communalism/delhi-violence-mosque-set-on-fire-in-ashok-vihar-hanuman-flag-placed-on-top>
- [10] <https://thewire.in/communalism/narendra-modi-delhi-riots-mob-violence-bjp> & <https://thewire.in/communalism/in-photos-masjid-set-on-fire-in-mustafabad-during-delhi-riots> & <https://thewire.in/communalism/how-men-shouting-jai-shri-ram-started-fired-in-mustafabads-muslim-jhuggis>
- [11] <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/video-verification-delhi-cops-forcing-men-to-sing-national-anthem> * One of these men would later die of the bullet injuries he had already received at the time of alleged torture: <https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/delhi-violence-man-lying-on-delhi-road-forced-to-sing-national-anthem-on-video-dies-2187591?pfrom=home-bigstory>
- [12] <https://thewire.in/communalism/ground-report-war-zone-in-north-east-delhi>
- [13] <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/are-you-hindu-or-muslim-toi-photojournalist-recounts-maujpur-horror/articleshow/74291844.cms> & <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-violence-indian-express-journalist-assaulted-cao-protest-6286843/>
- [14] <https://thewire.in/communalism/tahir-hussain-aap-fir-delhi-riot> & <https://scroll.in/article/954538/two-anti-cao-activists-arrested-by-delhi-police-were-tortured-in-custody-allege-family-members>

[15] <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/citizenship-amendment-act-69-killed-in-79-days-since-parliament-passed-law/article30945131.ece>