

Assault on Media in anti-CAA protests

December, 2019



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Committee Against Assault on Journalists (CAAJ)

¹ A journalist jumps to evade stones during a protest on the newly-amended Citizenship Amendment Act in Mangaluru | Photo Credit: [H.S. Manjunath](#)

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Compilation and Editing
CAAJ Social Media Team

CAAJ Statement condemning attacks on media-persons during anti CAA-NRC protests in India

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New Delhi

As students and young people across India have taken to the streets to peacefully protest the amendment to the Citizenship Act (CAA) and the manner in which the Narendra Modi government intends putting together the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), police personnel have responded violently against media-persons who have been reporting and recording audio-visual evidence of the agitations by the youth across the country. The condemnable high-handed behaviour by the police is a clear attempt at attempt at suppressing and censoring independent reportage.

The actions of those responsible for law and order – but who have been complicit with particular state governments – represent a clear instance of “shooting the messenger.” It is noteworthy that the worst attacks against both the protesters as well as media-persons have taken place in states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party, in particular, Uttar Pradesh where most deaths have taken place. In their insidious attempts to paint peaceful students as violent destroyers of public property, police personnel have registered false cases against many of them, including those belonging to the minority community. This explains the attempts by the police to prevent journalists from performing their professional duties in an unbiased manner. Media-persons working with international news organisations as well as those in news agencies that are usually supportive of the government, have not been spared the heavy hand of the police.

The actions of the police are in keeping with the intolerance displayed by the Modi government over the last four and a half years. Not only has much of the media been reduced to advertising agencies and public relations offices of the ruling regime, the small section of journalists that are still willing to hold truth to power, and the news organisations employing them or supporting them, have been financially squeezed and sought to be bludgeoned into submission. Never since the days of Indira Gandhi’s Emergency that lasted 19 months between June 1975 and January 1977, has the right of the media to uphold the fundamental right to free expression of each and every Indian citizen that has been enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, been sought to be so brutally put down as it is at present. Making matters worse, the social media has been weaponised and converted into a propaganda tool for disinformation, almost invariably favouring the ruling regime.

Every right-thinking person in the country must strongly condemn the police action against media-persons and uphold their rights and responsibilities to report and record the truth as it is unfolding on streets every day across the length and breadth of India. Otherwise, we should stop describing ourselves as a democracy – that too, the world’s largest one – as attempts are made by those in power to ruthlessly stifle dissenting voices in authoritarian, majoritarian and Fascist ways.

Committee Against Assault on Journalists condemns police action upon journalists covering anti CAA-NRC protests in all possible terms and urges the journalist fraternity to come out and defend their Right to Freedom of Expression and Speech as enshrined in the Constitution of India.

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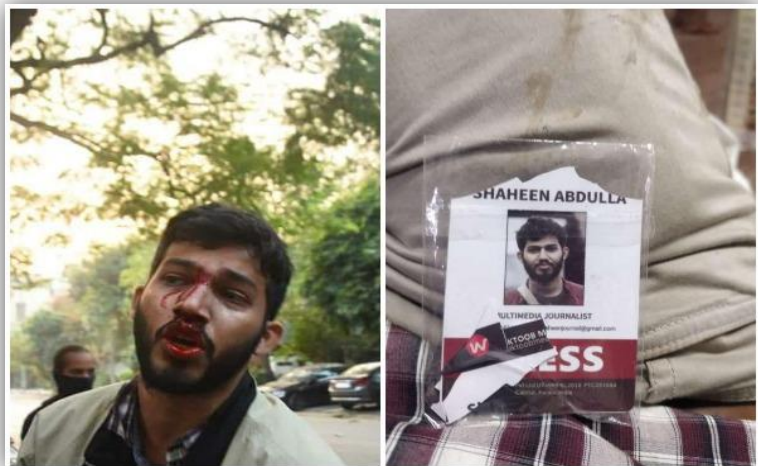
List of cases of assault

Amidst the on-going nationwide protest against CAA-NRC several journalist were attacked, intimidated and harassed by the police when they were doing the ground reporting. Ironically most of them come from the minority Muslim community. It shows the bias against the certain community from the state machinery. Several other photo and video journalists were also harassed in these protests by the mobs and protesters. Continuous Internet shutdown by the government in the major cities of the country is another attack on the journalists from barring them to tell the truth and ground realities.

Here is the current list of the attacked journalists and first-person accounts of them.

- 1. Name: Shaheen Abdulla,**
Media House: Maktoob Media
Place and Date: Delhi, 15th December, 2019

On December 15th, journalist Shaheen Abdulla, Associate Creative Editor of Maktoob, an English digital news platform based in New Delhi, was attacked outside the Jamia Millia Islamia campus by Delhi Police. The cops beat the journalist with lathis as



he was reporting the people's massive protest against India's recent Citizenship Amendment Act. He was mercilessly beaten up by a group of ten cops. Later, Shaheen was taken to Holy Family hospital, New Delhi.

"I was covering it for Maktoob Media, one of the organizations which I work for. I was updating the news from there. And I was with the press delegation. We were all together there. When I saw them trapped (the female students of Jamia Millia Islamia), I rushed towards them. I knew them personally. I tried to help them to move to a safe place. When the cops came running, I showed them my press card and told them that I am a journalist. 'Don't beat me up; I am not here for any kind of violence. I am just trying to help them for medical attention'. But they started tapping me with their lathis on my

legs. While I tried explaining them with the ID in my hand, they kept beating me. Then we went to a safe place, cops came in a group and they were like 'now you come out'. They tried to induce me to follow their instruction. The girls protected me by shielding around. When girls started to come in-front, cops started to come inside. And somehow they (cops) got a hand on me and they pulled me outside," Shaheen said in a special interview with NDTV on December 16.²

2. Name: Bushra Sheikh

Media House: BBC

Place and Date: Delhi, 15th December, 2019

Bushra Sheikh, a journalist with the BBC said as she was covering the students' protest in South Delhi, a male cop pulled her hair, hurled abuses and hit her with a baton. I came here for BBC's coverage. The police took away my phone and broke it. A male cop pulled my hair. They hit me with a baton and when I asked them for my phone, they hurled abuses at me³.



Terming the assault as undemocratic, Indian Women's Press Corp (IWPC) said, "We note with concern and distress that this has now become a pattern to attack journalists particularly women journalists to intimidate them."⁴

3. Name: Shariq Adeel Yousuf

Media House: Pal Pal News

Place and Date: Delhi, 15th December, 2019

Shariq Adeel Yousuf, a reporter with the YouTube channel Pal Pal News said first he took the permission from the police to go inside the protest site at Jamia Millia University where several other journalists were covering the protest. "After 20



² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfmejkPYl4w&feature=youtu.be>

³ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/citizenship-amendment-act-protest-jamia-millia-islamia-students-journalist-attacked-delhi-police-1628500-2019-12-15>

⁴ <http://www.uniindia.com/iwpc-flays-attack-on-woman-bbc-journalist-by-delhi-police/india/news/1823445.html>

minutes when I came back outside, at a certain point few police men started abusing me and asking for my phone. When I refused they started brutally beating on my hand by laathi. Then they broke my phone by their boots and took my press card.”⁵

- 4. Name: Ujjwal Roy and Sarabjeet Singh**
Media House: ANI (Asian News International)
Place and Date: Delhi, 16th December, 2019

Asian News International’s (ANI) reporter Ujjwal Roy and cameraperson Sarabjeet Singh were assaulted while covering protests near Jamia Millia Islamia University’s Gate-1 on December 16 in New Delhi. They are undergoing treatment at Holy Family hospital in Okhla.⁶



- 5. Name: Azaan Javaid**
Media House: The Print
Place and Date: Srinagar, 17th December, 2019

In his first-person account ThePrint’s Journalist Azaan Javaid said On Tuesday afternoon, I and a couple of fellow journalists drove to Srinagar’s Islamia College of Science and Commerce where we had heard a student protest was underway.



We wanted to speak to the students to find out what the protests were about, whether they were related to the anti-citizenship law demonstrations that were happening across campuses in the country.

⁵ https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1779143385553735&id=100003742737506

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dalZSdhVNRs>

Once we got there, we saw personnel of the J&K police and CRPF standing guard outside the locked gate of the college. Stones were being thrown from inside the college towards the main road where we were standing along with the security forces.

Sensing that we won't be able to interact with the students, we decided to return. On our way back, I saw Rashid Khan, Station House Officer of Srinagar's Rainawari area, grab a couple of youth who were walking on the main road — at some distance from the protest site.

I, along with other journalists, began clicking pictures and videos of the incident. On seeing this, Khan first threatened me and demanded that I stop using my phone. When I protested, he snatched the phone.

Khan and Superintendent of Police Sajad Shah, who had been watching the commotion, then questioned my press credentials and asked why I wasn't wearing a press badge. I said my badge was in my bag and showed them my card. I then demanded that the two return my phone, to which SP Shah said I should visit his office to collect it. When I protested the behaviour of the two officers, SP Shah began to abuse me. "Do whatever you want," he said, following it up with a string of abuses.

This was when the policemen on duty started hitting me. It was only after the intervention of some journalists that I was let go. At some distance, I saw another colleague being thrashed by Khan.⁷

6. Name: Dr. Aleemullah Khan

Media House: Qaumi Raftar

Place and Date: Lucknow, 18th December, 2019

Founder editor of Urdu newspaper Qaumi Raftar, Dr. Aleemullah Khan was detained and taken in custody for more than a day by the Lucknow police in Aliganj police station. In his first-person account⁸ he wrote that SHO Fareed Ahmed called him mastermind of riots for calling a peaceful protest against CAA in Lucknow and taken into custody. Even I wasn't allowed to ask for a blanket from my home in that cold night. They



⁷ https://theprint.in/india/abused-hit-phone-snatched-theprint-journalist-azaan-javid-beaten-up-by-jk-police/336760/?amp&_twitter_impression=true

⁸ <https://www.newslaundry.com/2019/12/23/caa-nrc-lucknow-protest-police-atrocity-qaumi-raftar>

charged me under IT Act 153 and 67 and I got to know about this only after when I was taken to the court.

7. Names: Unknown

Media Houses: Unknown

Place and Date: Sambhal, 19th December, 2019)

The protest in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal turned violent on 19th December as protesters set state transport buses on fire. Several media persons were also attacked during the protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act.⁹ Press association of India issued a statement mentioning this incident and said, The Association is anguished over such incidents and demands speedy investigation to deter perpetrators of such crimes.¹⁰

8. Names: Mujeeb, Shabber, Aneesh and 5 others

Media Houses: Asianet News, Asianet News, News 18, MediaOne and TwentyFour

News Place and Date: Mangaluru, 20th December, 2019

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Eight Malayali media persons who were taken into custody on Friday morning by the Mangaluru police were released after seven hours of detention. The media persons from four prominent Malayalam news outlets — Asianet News, News 18, MediaOne and TwentyFour News — were taken to the Karnataka-Kerala border and handed over to the Kerala police.

The eight people, including a driver who worked with MediaOne, were detained from the Wenlock hospital where they were covering the post-mortem of the two protesters who died in the police firing in Mangaluru.



Speaking to the media following their release, the detained media persons said that the Karnataka police had treated them like 'criminals.' Though national media reporters and

⁹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/anti-caa-protests-up-sambal-violence-1629632-2019-12-19>

¹⁰ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/press-association-condemns-attack-on-journalists-during-protests/articleshow/72919019.cms>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/dhanyarajendran/status/1207990744616558597>

Kannada media were covering the post mortem, only Malayalam media reporters were detained. At the time they were detained, it was falsely reported by a few Karnataka outlets and then by an English website Daijiworld reported that fake journalists who had tried to enter Mangaluru with deadly weapons had been arrested.

Despite a few of the journalists having ID cards and accreditations issued by the Kerala government, the reporters were kept in a police van for hours. The police did not even let them drink water or eat food.

“We were one of the first few media persons to reach the hospital. Around 8.30 am, the Mangaluru Police Commissioner asked us to leave the hospital premises. We went out and then he asked for ID cards and accreditation, then we were detained. The MediaOne reporter Shabber, cameraperson Aneesh and their driver were kept separately. The police took away Sahbeer’s bluetooth headset. But Kannada media and national media were allowed to report from the same place,” Mujeeb Rahman¹², an Asianet News reporter said.¹³

Several prominent leaders including Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Karnataka AICC General secretary KC Venugopal condemned the detention. In a statement put out on Facebook, Pinarayi said “I strongly condemn those who have been portraying media reporters as violent and their news collection devices as weapons. It is a fascist attitude to curb media freedom. Public dissent should only rise higher against this attitude.”

9. Name: Omar Rashid

Media House: The Hindu

Place and Date: Lucknow, 20th December, 2019

Omar Rashid, a journalist with The Hindu said in his first-person account; Around 6:45 pm on Friday evening, I was trying to grab a quick meal at a dhaba outside the Uttar Pradesh BJP office, waiting to hear about a press conference to be held by the UP government a few blocks away, when at least four men in plainclothes barged in. I was



¹² <https://twitter.com/dhanyarajendran/status/1207910272377094144>

¹³ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/treated-criminals-kerala-journos-released-after-7-hours-detention-mangaluru-114464>

accompanied by Robin Verma, a local activist and friend, and two others, both journalists. The men did not identify themselves and inquired about us using strong and aggressive language. They told me they wanted to question me about something. At the very first instance, I revealed my identity as a journalist and asked them what the matter was all about. However, they packed the two of us, Robin Verma and me, into a police jeep, snatched my mobile phone and asked me to not call or inform anyone or I would regret it. They refused to explain anything to me and asked me to talk only when they asked.

They drove us to the Hazratganj police station a km away, where we were told a senior police officer wanted to talk to us. We were then escorted to a room — it looked like a cyber-cell — where within seconds of entering, cops, already stationed there, started thrashing Robin with a thick leather belt and slapped him many times.

They locked the room and asked me to keep silent when I protested why I was brought there. The policemen threatened me they would book me under 120B of the Indian Penal Code if I didn't keep quiet and also said they had evidence to show I was part of the arsonists who vandalized police property and engaged in violence during the protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act. I again clarified that I am a journalist and showed them my identity cards. One of them knew me as a journalist but that obviously was not considered.

They responded by abusing me and said I should keep my journalism to myself, in abusive Hindi. My Kashmiri background was referred to several times and despite informing them about my newspaper, they continued with their questions and threats. “You are a suspect,” I was told and asked to shut up.

For the next few minutes, the policemen badly beat up Robin Verma. They made the same charges against him. We were then packed into the rear seat of a police jeep and driven a few km away to the Sultanpuri police outpost without being told anything.

Here too, we were taken into a tiny room and questioned. The cops repeatedly asked me about the whereabouts of some “Kashmiris” and where I was hiding them. I replied to all their questions in the negative as I had no clue why I was brought there in the first place. A few minutes later, two policemen, of the rank of CO, came in.

I was told to stand up. The police officer, whose name I don't know, told me he would set me right. He was wearing protective gear.

I was then taken to another room in the quarters of a constable, where I was also photographed like a suspect.

The same cop, who threatened to put me in place, again asked me about the “Kashmiris” and said he would tear out all my beard and thrash me if I didn't answer his questions as per his liking. Since I didn't have my phone, I could not note down the long list of expletives used against me. He left after some time and I was kept in the room till around 8:30 pm. I was then called to the office of the Circle Officer of Hazratganj who questioned me for a few more minutes. I was asked the same questions I was asked earlier: if I was a part of the protest, if I knew certain individuals, especially Kashmiris and about my professional and background. I informed them that I was indeed present during the protests, as a journalist covering it. The CO asked me if I felt regret at the violence during the protests and refused to believe me when I did. He also lectured me on the “hypocrisy” of Leftist ideology and heavily criticised China and its clampdown on citizens.

By then, the information had reached the CMO.

The same cops who abused and intimidated me earlier now apologised to me and tried to explain that I was picked up due to a “confusion.” This was despite the fact that I had identified myself as a journalist from the very first moment. The police then let me off.¹⁴

10. Name: Ratandip Choudhury and NDTV Crew

Media House: NDTV

Place and Date: Guwahati, 11th December, 2019

NDTV Crew attacked in Guwahati amid protests against CAB on 11th December. Talking to NDTV Ratandip Choudhury said “In the morning we seen the peaceful protests at the secretariat by the students but until the evening we did see that some other outside elements got inside the protesting crowd and it slowly turned in to a violent mob and started vandalising public property. That’s when police actually used force. By that time curfew enforced and we were coming back from the secretariat to our office. In that area at one point mob tried to attack our vehicle. I got down from the vehicle and tried to explain them that we are from media and we are reporting what is happening and we are reporting your demands. But, it didn’t seem to me that the people inside the mob had any idea about what the protest was all about. They were emotionally charged then they tried to manhandle me, they broke the wind shield of the car but somehow we were able to escape...”¹⁵

¹⁴ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/a-first-person-account-by-the-hindu-correspondent-omar-rashid-of-how-he-was-picked-up-threatened-and-released-by-cops/article30361909.ece>

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIGHN_Dfw1Y

11. Names: Arun Shankar and Vaishakh Jayapalan

Media House: Mathrubhumi News

Place and Date: New Delhi, 20th December, 2019

News reporter Arun Shankar and Cameraman Vaishakh Jayapalan with Mathrubhumi News were brutally attacked by the Delhi Police on 20th December while they were covering the protest. Both journalists sustained injuries in the attack and have been taken to a hospital.



The journalists were covering the massive anti-CAA stir at Delhi Gate in the national capital. While they were capturing the police brutally beating up the protesters. At that time, several policemen attacked the Mathrubhumi News crew from behind.¹⁶

Enraged that the journalists were capturing the visuals of their brutal attack on helpless protesters, the police officers forcibly took away the video camera and destroyed it. Despite sustaining injuries to his head, Vaishakh Jayapalan continued to capture the visuals of the police brutality which was aired by Mathrubhumi News.¹⁷

Kerala Press Club in Delhi on Saturday condemned the alleged manhandling of journalists by the police at the Delhi Gate during the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on Friday evening. In a statement, the association said that the camera was snatched by police because of the visuals that were captured in it. "It was done with the sole purpose of suppressing the truth."¹⁸

¹⁶ <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/delhi-police-attack-mathrubhumi-journalist-cameraman-destroy-camera-1.4378832>

¹⁷ <https://tv.mathrubhumi.com/en/news/india/caa-another-clash-in-delhi-attack-against-journalists-1.35120>

¹⁸ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/anti-caa-protest-kerala-press-club-in-delhi-condemns-attack-on-journalists/article30366279.ece>

12. Name: Khurshid Misbahi

Media House: ETV Bharat

Place and Date: Meerut, 20th December, 2019

Khurshid Misbahi, a reporter with ETV Bharat was attacked by rioters in Meerut, UP. In his first-person account he wrote in a Facebook post¹⁹ - "I am a reporter with ETV Bharat. On 20th December, I was covering the riots in Meerut. When I was taking some visuals of burning bikes and a police chowki then 3 to 4 rioters came and attacked me on my head by iron rod and bricks. I have severe injuries on my head. They snatched my office mobile, camera stick, microphone, ID and helmet."



13. Names: Prakash Kumar and Dinesh Kumar

Media Houses: Republic TV and Dainik Bhaskar

Place and Date: Patna, 21st December, 2019

Protesters in Patna turned violent during Bihar Bandh called by opposition parties against CAA-NRC. They attacked media. Journalists ran into a building to save themselves. FIRs have been lodged against unidentified persons by journalists Prakash Singh of Republic TV and photojournalist Dinesh Kumar of Dainik Bhaskar, who have alleged that they were assaulted by bandh supporters.²⁰ A Congress leader Ashutosh Sharma has been arrested for attacks.

[Press Association of the India and Kerala Union of Working Journalists, mentioned three other incidents of assault on journalists in two separate statements]

14. Name: Dinesh R and Wasim Sayeed

Media House: Asianet News

Place and date: Delhi, 16th December, 2019

Two journalists – Dinesh R and Wasim Sayeed of Asianet News, a prominent Malayalam news channel – were also attacked in the national capital during the coverage of the

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/khurshid.misbahi/posts/740775363076270>

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSsk9d6bOnc>

protests by Jamia Milia Islamia students against the Citizenship Amendment Act.²¹ Wasim Sayeed, video journalist, and Dinesh R, reporter, were injured. Mr. Wasim Sayeed was seriously injured in stone-throwing and admitted to hospital.²²

15. Name: Jaideep

Media House: Zee News

Place and Date: Delhi, 16th December, 2019

In the statement it said, an attempt was made to allegedly manhandle a video journalist of Zee News, Jaideep. Camera of a news channel was damaged while another's was taken but not returned as yet.²³

16. In the statement with the Sambhal incident it is also mentioned that **OB vans were torched in Lucknow.**

²¹ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/press-association-condemns-attack-on-journalists-during-citizenship-amendment-act-protests-2152558>

²² <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-journalists-protest-against-police-brutality/article30368384.ece>

²³ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/press-association-condemns-attack-on-journalists-during-citizenship-amendment-act-protests-2152558>