

**A Report on
Recent Assaults on Journalists in Delhi**

REPUBLIC IN PERIL



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Introduction

Speaking at the Press Club of India in 2017, eminent jurist Fali S. Nariman quoted a judge who said, “Today the basic question is not of freedom of speech rather freedom after speech. No one is stopping you from speaking the truth but as soon as you express your mind there is no guarantee of your life”.

Much water has flown into Yamuna during last three years. The post-speech peril that Nariman had outlined then has now become a pre-speech phenomenon. Scribes based in Delhi would ratify this who have covered the Capital city in last few months.

The recent spate of assaults on journalists in Delhi points toward a sharp change of paradigm in the context of Right to Freedom of Expression and Speech. Now a journalist covering an event/incident on ground is being apprehended by his/her banner/brand and reacted upon much before he/she speaks (truth or whatever).

Not only this, journalists on ground are directed and forced to speak and write the version of truth that his/her intimidator wants to get through. If it does not suit their version, journalists are attacked, molested, ashamed publicly.

The recent case of assault on journalists in National Capital Territory of Delhi bears phenomenal change in two fundamental dimensions: the nature of assault and the identity of assaulter. This could be seen in the chronology of events as well as in the details of assaulted journalists on upcoming pages.

This report by Committee Against Assault on Journalists (CAAJ) is an attempt to understand this change. The emerging trends in repression of speech need to be decoded simultaneously with the unfolding of socio-political developments because journalists do not operate in silos.

The timeline of this report starts with the last month of 2019 when Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed by the parliament of India that instantly attracted criticisms and protests all over the country that continue till date. The major turning points in this protest, specifically in terms of Delhi, were the incidents of Jamia Millia Islamia and JNU. The process finally erupted as a systemic violence that lasted for more than 48 hours in Delhi in the last week of February 2020.

This report is aligned according to the same timeline. There have been three phases of assaults on Journalists in Delhi i.e. in December 2019 and in January-February 2020.

The structure of this report is comparative: one could relive major socio-political developments month-wise and simultaneously track the assault cases. This helps in placing and decoding the assault on Press in the contextual framework of larger socio-political developments.

Once you go through the events and assault list, it would be easier to correlate both and grasp the trends analysed in the concluding chapter, form a 360 degree understanding of the issue and apply it to the larger context of the definition of a Republic resting on Four Estates, of which Press is the fourth one.

CAAJ had also documented cases of assault on journalists nationwide after anti-CAA protests erupted. For reference, it could be seen in the Annexure. The present report is an extension to it.

This report is compiled from facts first-hand reported on social media by affected journalists and secondary reports published online and offline.

The basic idea behind this report is to understand the issue of assault on journalists in the larger context of terms like Republic, Democracy and Constitutional Estates.

We are hopeful that this report achieves its goal.

Summary

Committee Against Assault on Journalists (CAAJ) has prepared a report titled "Republic In Peril" on recent cases of Assaults on Journalists in Delhi covering three months from December 2019 to February 2020. This report documents a total of 32 cases of various types of Assaults on Journalists covering socio-political developments in the capital city of India after the eruption of anti-CAA protests.

The report outlines three phases of assault in Delhi.

First in December, 2019 that started after anti-CAA protests erupted with centrestage being Jamia Millia Islamia University. A total of seven cases have been documented where Journalists who went to cover Jamia were assaulted physically. These assaulted journalists included mainstream news channels, agency, international media BBC and digital platforms. The assaulters included mob and police.

This first phase lasted for five days from December 15 to December 20, 2019 although assaults continued nationwide for the whole month till the end of 2019. These 16 cases of nationwide assault in journalists covering anti-CAA protests were documented and released by CAAJ (see Annexure).

The second phase of attack lasted much longer, almost for the whole month of January, 2020. On January 5, 2020 journalists were targeted outside Jawaharlal Nehru University campus, which was attacked on the same evening by a veiled mob. The number of cases reported in various media outlets and first-hand cases reported on twitter count to half a dozen. Those assaulted were also specifically targeted, stopped from coverage and directed/intimated by the mob.

This phase reached its peak on the last day of January, 2020 when journalists were hounded, beaten up and detained at ITO and Rajghat. The numbers included more than ten, many of them senior scribes who were there to report Satyagraha March and pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary. More than half a dozen journalists were detained until dark in a local stadium. Delhi Police was solely responsible for this assault. Press Club of India released a condemnation statement on the same day.

The third phase is a dark chapter of horror in the history of Freedom of Press in Delhi that reminded many of the Emergency days. Around 18 cases were reported where journalists were not only stopped from coverage, but identified as Hindu/Muslims, ashamed publicly and beaten up by the rioting mob. Their camera, equipment broken and vehicles burnt up by the mob. Many cases have gone unreported due to horror.

Mainstream media journalists from almost each and every banner recounted their ordeal on social media. Almost each and every media rights organisation condemned the assaults and raised question on the complicity of police forces in not containing the ravaging mob.

The report observes these three phases in continuity. The first spate of attacks by the state and non-state actors was a testing ground that builds up into a full-fledged consolidated attack on Press during Delhi violence in the last week of February.

The frequency speaks a lot. The first phase lasted for about a week, second phase stretched up for the whole month but cases were almost same in number counting up to a maximum of ten. The last phase was not only horrible in terms of numbers and frequency but intensity too. Within a matter of two days when violence spread in North-East Delhi, around 18 assault cases took place that makes ten cases per day an average.

Not only this, the nature of assault was also unprecedented. A Journalist was directly shot at, one was forced to drop pants and another was forced to chant religious hymns. Religious identification was the bottom-line during third phase of assault.

Not a Co-Incidence

December 2019

Chronology of events from Jamia to Lutyen's Delhi

December 10: CAA passed in Loksabha

December 11: CAA passed in Rajyasabha

December 12: Signed by President

December 13: Students of Jamia Millia Islamia University march to the Parliament protesting CAA. Fifty students detained after clash.

December 15: More than two thousand students of Jamia joined the protests against CAA. At 6:46 pm, hundreds of police officers forcefully entered the campus of Jamia, without the permission of college authority. The police used batons and tear gas on the protesting students. Nearly a hundred students were detained by the Delhi police and released at 3:30 am next morning. The university shut until 5 January 2020 and the residents asked to leave the campus.

December 17: Seelampur area had stone-throwing crowds face off against the police. The police retaliated with tear gas and batons, in which, according to local reports, several protesters and officers were injured. There were also reports of a police station being set on fire.

December 19: Administrative authorities imposed a ban against public gatherings in parts of Delhi. 20 metro stations were closed to prevent the movement for protests. At least 700 flights were delayed and more than 20 cancelled due to traffic jams caused by police closing the roads to stifle protests. Protest meetings were held defying the ban in Red Fort and Mandi House. Access to the mobile internet was restricted in certain places in Delhi.

December 20: Two Delhi Metro stations - Jamia Millia Islamia and Jasola Vihar Shaheen Bagh were closed. In the evening a car was torched in Daryaganj after which the police attacked the protesters with water cannons and lathi charge.

December 21: Journalists across the country protest against the police brutality on the journalists covering the Anti-CAA protests especially in the states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

December 23: Protests held at multiple locations. 93 other students protesting outside Assam Bhawan and demanding the release of RTI activist Akhil Gogoi were detained by the police.

December 24: Police imposed a ban on gatherings in central Delhi's Mandi House near the Lutyens' Zone to prevent the protest march of students from multiple universities. The anti CAA-NRC protest march was to start from Mandi House to Jantar Mantar.

December 27: Delhi Police used Facial recognition software by recording a video of the protester and checking it with the database of criminals maintained by them.

First phase of Assaults on Journalists

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.

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 me .

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.

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 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."

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.

5.

Name: Jaideep, cameraman

Media House: Zee News

Place and Date: Delhi, 16 December, 2019

In a statement Press Association of India 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.

6.

Name: Dinesh R and Wasim Sayeed

Media House: Asianet News

Place and Date: Delhi, 16 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 protests by Jamia Milia Islamia students against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Wasim Sayeed, video journalist, and Dinesh R, reporter, were injured. Mr. Wasim Sayeed was seriously injured in stone-throwing and admitted to hospital.

7.

Name Reporter Arun Shankar and Cameraman Vaishakh Jayapalan

Media House: Mathrubhumi News

Place and Date: Delhi, 20 December, 2019

News reporter Arun Shankar and Cameraman Vaishakh Jayapalan with Mathrubhumi News were brutally attacked by the Delhi Police 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.

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.

Kerala Press Club in Delhi 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."

OUTSOURCING VIOLENCE

JANUARY 2020

Chronology of events from JNU to Rajghat

January 5: A masked mob armed with rods and sticks attacked the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Hindu Raksha Dal, or the Hindu Defense League, a right-wing group, claimed responsibility for the attack on Jawaharlal Nehru University students.

January 6: During a panel discussion on the Times Now, ABVP Delhi joint secretary Anima Sonkar accepted that ABVP members were armed.

January 9: Around 1,000 JNU students and teachers held a protest march to the HRD Ministry office in Delhi demanding the resignation of the vice-chancellor. The protesters were stopped by police who chased them and struck them with batons. Several students were detained and later released.

January 10: India Today aired a sting operation on the JNU attack. Two first-year students, named Akshat Awasthi and Rohit Shah, seemed to have confessed to leading the attack on the Periyar hostel. Awasthi confessed to carrying a rod in his hand, wearing a helmet, and channeling and mobilising the attack with the help of students who were members of ABVP, as well as members from outside the campus. He also confessed to calling an organisational secretary of ABVP to organise the outside support. The aired videos also raised questions over the involvement of the administration and the police in the attack. The reporter asked Awasthi, "Who had shut down the light?", and on reply he said, "Admin.....I think police". The reporter further asked him, "So the police helped the ABVP?" In reply he said, "Whose police is it, sir?". He claimed that police were also present inside the campus and a DCP (Deputy Superintendent) of Delhi police asked them to "hit [students]". He also claimed to have been committing acts of violence inside the campus for the last six months.

January 11: Police claimed they had identified 37 out of a total of 60 members of the WhatsApp group that included 10 outsiders, named 'Unity against Left'.

January 15: Delhi police confirmed the identification of the masked woman as a member of ABVP and a student of Daulat Ram College in Delhi University.

January 30: An armed man was detained after he brandished a pistol at Jamia Millia Islamia students demonstrating against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The man was overpowered by protesters. A student appeared to have been injured in the incident, which led to panic in the Jamia area.

January 31: A human chain was organised by citizens on Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom day when Delhi Police swooped down on political leaders, activists, journalists in the Raj Ghat-Red Fort- Daryaganj area of Delhi, detained them and locked them up in a stadium until late evening.

Second phase of Assaults on Journalists

1.

Name: Rohan Venkataramakrishnan

Media House: Scroll.in

Place and Date: Delhi, January 5, 2020

Rohan was recording a video of the sloganeering right-wing activists at the JNU main gate when he was surrounded, called a “Naxalwadi”, shoved around and hit on the head. Karnika Kohli of Scroll.in reported that a group armed with bats and sticks was stationed near the main gate. She overheard one of the members of the group say: “Beat up NDTV guys if you see them.”

2.

Name: Ashutosh Mishra and Crew

Media House: Aaj Tak and India Today

Place and Date: Delhi, January 5, 2020

“The moment I questioned Law and Order in JNU, mob in presence of police in dark attacked me and my cameraman, broke my mike, hurled abuses, called me Jihadis, Naxali,” tweeted the reporter Ashutosh Mishra. “I asked a cop why are they silent, their reply – why did u go there?”

3.

Name: Sidharth Ravi

Media House: The Hindu

Place and Date: Delhi, January 5, 2020

Reporter of The Hindu claimed that a group of people, some of whom were masked, heckled him and asked him to leave. “A group of people, including masked men in support of ABVP,

gathered around me and told me to leave the area after being identified as a journalist from The Hindu,” tweeted Sidharth Ravi. “Fled to avoid trouble.”

4.

Name: Ayush Tiwari

Media House: NewsLaundry

Place and Date: Delhi, January 5, 2020

Ayush Tiwari who reports for NewsLaundry said that he was confronted by few people outside the campus. “Some of the men asked us to chant ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’,” Ayush said. However, he said that some of the men among the mob did ask others to leave the press person. “We could not carry journalism in such a chaotic situation,” Ayush concluded.

5.

Name: Jitendra Sharma and Neeraj Gaur

Media House: Zee News

Place and Date: Delhi, January 30, 2020

Zee News team was heckled and assaulted by the protesters from Jamia area of Delhi. Zee News senior reporter Jitendra Sharma and his associate Neeraj Gaur had arrived at Sukhdev Vihar metro station in Delhi to cover the ongoing anti-CAA protests along with cameraperson Qamar Khan when they were attacked by the rioters.

6.

Name: Several Journalists detained including Rajesh Kumar and Parthiv Kumar, Shivesh Garg, Arvind Singh, Sanjay Jha, SK Pandey

Media House: Ex-UNI, Navjyoti, Mediavigil, Telegraph, DUJ

Place and Date: Delhi, January 31, 2020

Press Club of India in a condemnation statement said, "From the first reports we have, Rajesh Kumar, Shivesh Garg and a clutch of other journalists were forcibly taken away to an unknown destination- probably a distant detention centre or police station. We have no further information," it added. Other journalists were violently attacked by police, among them photographer Sanjay K. Jha of The Telegraph, and S. K. Pande, a senior journalist and leader of the Delhi Union of Journalists, the PCI said.

7.

Name: Basant Kumar

Media House: Newslaundry

Place and Date: Delhi, January 31, 2020

Basant Kumar was detained at ITO who was covering the Satyagraha event organized by Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav.

THE EXPERIMENT

February 2020

Chronology of events across Delhi

February 1: Another gunman opened fire at the Shaheen Bagh protest site.

February 2: Unidentified gunmen riding a scooter opened fire outside Gate number 5 of Jamia Millia University.

February 7: Supreme Court defers Shaheen Bagh plea for February 10.

February 10: Supreme Court said protesters at Shaheen Bagh cannot block public road and create inconvenience for others. Saying it will not pass any direction on protest without hearing other side, the SC lists matter for Feb 17.

February 17: SC asked senior advocate Sanjay Hegde and advocate Sadhana Ramachandran to talk to Shaheen Bagh protestors and persuade them to move to an alternative site where no public place is blocked. Matter posted for next hearing on February 24.

February 20: Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar 'Ravan' visited northeast Delhi and addressed the locals asking them to observe his call for a Bharat Bandh on February 23.

February 22: A group, largely comprising women, sat down to protest peacefully against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) under the Jaffrabad Metro Station, occupying one of the carriageways under the raised metro line.

February 23: A rally organized in nearby Maujpur, led by Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kapil Mishra, who demanded that anti-CAA protesters in Chand Bagh and Jaffrabad be removed within three days. If they weren't, he warned his people wouldn't listen even to the police. Soon after, stone pelting began in the area, and, by the evening, groups opposing and supporting the CAA were squaring off.

February 24: Maujpur erupted in violence, with large-scale stone pelting, and members of two communities blaming each other for the wave of violence. Various news media reported how communities fought pitched battles through the day. Later that night, in neighbouring Gokalpuri, a tyre market with predominantly Muslim businesses was set ablaze. Meanwhile, Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors senior advocate Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran handed over a report of their four-day endeavour to coax Shaheen Bagh protesters to shift their agitation. SC adjourned the matter for February 26.

February 25: The situation spiralled out of control. Violence spread to an even wider area on either side of the Jaffrabad main road. Maujpur, Chand Bagh, Kardampuri, Bhajanpura,

Gokalpuri, Khajuri Khas, Yamuna Vihar and Brijpuri, all of them close neighbourhoods, got engulfed in the conflagration.

February 26: Reports started emerging of marauding mobs stopping vehicles and asking people their religious identity. Depending on the answers, members of one community were spared while members of the other were thrashed, their papers looted and vehicles damaged. There were many instances of journalists being attacked specifically, both on 25th and 26th. There were also numerous instances of mobs snatching phones from journalists to delete incriminating photographs and videos. Delhi police also issued a shoot-at-sight order to try and end the violence. Supreme Court pulled up the Delhi Police over their handling of the ongoing clashes in the capital while deferring to March 23 hearing on a plea to shift the Shaheen Bagh protesters.

February 26: At midnight on 26 February, the court bench consisting of Justices S. Muralidhar and Talwant Singh, heard the plea to provide the safe passage to the riot victims to reach their nearest government or private hospitals. Following this, the court ordered the police to safeguard and help all victims to reach their nearest hospitals. The bench also directed the police to submit a report of compliance that would include information about the injured victims and the treatments offered to them. The same was to be placed before the court for the following hearing date. On the late night of 26 February, Justice S. Muralidhar who presided over the plea hearing, was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court.

February 27: Police and the Rapid Action Force (RAF) conducted flag marches through many of the affected neighbourhoods. The High Court resumed the hearing with a new bench consisting of the Chief justice, D.N. Patel and justice C. Hari Shankar. During the previous hearing, the Delhi police was given 24 hours to decide on the filing of FIRs over hate speeches by four BJP leaders. The government's lawyer claimed that the situation was not "conducive" and that the government needed more time before it could take appropriate action. The new bench accepted the same arguments that the previous bench had rejected. The new bench agreed to give the government more time to decide on filing of the cases for hate speech. NSA Ajit Doval visited affected neighbourhoods.

February 28: Death toll crossed 40. Two SIT's formed to probe violence, 630 people arrested and 148 FIRs lodged. High Court issued notices to Delhi and central governments seeking their responses on registering FIRs on Congress party leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi on the charges of delivering hate speeches. Hearing another plea, the bench also issued notice to Delhi police and central government for their response on registering FIR on AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, actress Swara Bhaskar, radio jockey Sayema Rahman, activist Harsh Mander and on AIMIM leaders like Akbaruddin Owaisi, Asaduddin Owaisi, and Waris Pathan. The court later posted the matter to be heard again on 13 April.

Third phase of Assaults on Journalists

1.

Name: Akash Napa

Media House: JK 24

Place and Date: Delhi, February 24, 2020

He was shot by a mob while he was reporting from Maujpur. He was admitted to the GTB Hospital. "The bullet is stuck inside and the doctors have said operating is risky," his brother told Newslandry. "He has been shifted to a ward and they are doing some tests."

2.

Name: Saurabh Shukla and Arvind Gunasekar

Media House: NDTV

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

They were rounded up by a group of "CAA supporters" and beaten up badly. The mob circled Gunasekar and hit him in the face, according to NDTV. "A lathi was about to be brought down on his head when his colleague, Saurabh Shukla, intervened." The lathi hit Saurabh instead. "He was also punched in the back and the stomach and hit on his leg... Arvind lost three teeth in the attack."

Saurabh said the attack happened when they were shooting a religious place being vandalised and burnt at Gokulpuri. "I was just behind Arvind, 20-30 metres behind him. When we stopped recording, one protester, or one rioter for that matter, he spotted Arvind. They grabbed Arvind and started beating him up. I saw Arvind was lying on the floor. He was bleeding. I came for his rescue," he said. "They were about to hit Arvind with a stick on his head. I intervened, and so that stick landed on my shoulder."

Saurabh said the mob punched him and dragged him away from Arvind because they thought Arvind alone was filming. "Later, I did not show them my NDTV ID. I had a Foreign Correspondents' Club card. I had shown them that and told them that I was not reporting for any Indian television; I was from some foreign agency," he said. "They kept telling us, get Arvind

to delete everything from his phone. And later, they did stop beating us up because they saw my name and said, 'You're from our own community. You should not be doing this. You should not be filming this.'"

Speaking to NewsLaundry, Arvind recounted, "We saw a mob attacking a building [a Muslim shrine] at Meet Nagar, and we went there to shoot it. The group vandalising the building surrounded us. They started bashing me. They were shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans. I was wearing a black shirt and they might have thought I was Muslim."

Saurabh told the mob they were both Hindu, Arvind added. "By then, one snatched my phone. They demanded I delete the videos. When one said I had shot videos, they attacked us more. They let us go only after they deleted all the videos."

3.

Name: Runjhun Sharma

Media House: CNN News18

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

She was with Saurabh and Arvind on Tuesday. She stayed with them when the mob attacked. She was heckled by rioters in the affected area of north-east Delhi.

"They beat him up," she told CNN News18, referring to Arvind. "His mouth was bleeding...Even Saurabh was heckled by these men. He was beaten up. I was surrounded by these men. They kept asking us for our religious credentials...We had to fold our hands in front of them. We had to plead for several minutes to let us go."

4.

Name: Ismat Ara

Media House: Freelance journalist

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

Ara, writing in Firstpost, recounted her terrifying experience reporting at Maujpur on Tuesday. She saw a Hindu priest instructing a group of men "to beat Muslims as an order had come from the top". When she inquired about the priest, the group became suspicious of her, and asked

for her identity. She'd to fake her religious background, hide her press card and dodge the question with a cooked-up answer.

But later, as Ara went inside one of the lanes, she was followed by some of the men from the group. She was stopped and asked, "Media se ho toh bolo na. Jhoot bolke humare pundit jee ke baare me kyun pooch rahi ho?" Tell us if you are from the media. Why are you lying and asking about our priest?

A verbal spat ensued.

She was stopped a few more times by different men from the same group. "Those who had blocked the roads were carrying bricks, bats, lathis, sticks, rods, and axes," she wrote. "On the roads of Maujpur, with no police or CRPF around and a charged-up mob, I was scared they would catch and harass me for being a journalist, molest me for being a girl, and lynch me for being a Muslim if they found out my identity."

5.

Name: Shivnarayan Rajpurohit

Media House: Indian Express

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

He was confronted by a mob at West Karawal Nagar on Monday. The mob assaulted him, snatched his phone and smashed his spectacles. His diary was taken away and thrown into a burning heap of bakery items. At different points, he was followed and surrounded by three different mobs.

"A man, seemingly in his 50s, removed my spectacles, stepped on them and slapped me twice for 'reporting from a Hindu-dominated area'," he wrote in the newspaper. "They checked my press card. 'Shivnarayan Rajpurohit, hmm. Hindu ho? Bach gaye.' Not satisfied, they wanted more proof whether I was a real Hindu. 'Bolo Jai Shri Ram'. I was silent."

Then, another group of people came after him. "They ordered me to run for my life. 'Ek aur bheed aa rahi hai aapke liye (Another crowd is coming for you),' one of them said. Shaking, I scampered to my bike. I rummaged my bag for the bike key. Every minute was precious. 'Jaldi karo. Wo log chodenge nahi,' said one of the men from the crowd. Finally, I found the key, and blindly set off through unknown lanes to the safety of Pushta Road," he wrote.

6.

Name: Vijayta Lalwani

Media House: Scroll.in

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

In an article for Scroll, she described how a group of men stood chanting “Jai Shri Ram” and “Bharat Mata Ki Jai”. They warned journalists not to take photos or videos. Some in the mob even threatened to target the reporters.

7.

Name: Tanushree Pandey

Media House: India Today

Place and Date: Delhi, February 24, 2020

She was threatened and harassed by a mob in the Maujpur area on Monday.

This is a riot! Protesters from both sides heckling & thrashing media persons. I was told "Camera band karle warna gaad denge yahin pe". All this while 10 men were holding me tightly from my waist & shoulders. Have never felt so scared! Camera person was pushed badly with lathis

8.

Name: Parvina Purkayastha

Media House: Times Now

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

Parvina was abused by a group of CAA supporters near the Maujpur metro station. She told the Print, “I was reporting from Maujpur metro station. I was reporting from a safe corner, and I was not alone. I could see pro and anti-CAA protesters clashing...Suddenly, a group of pro-CAA protestors singled me out. A group of five to six men came with wooden sticks and said maareng. I had to sit there and plead with them to not beat me and let me go.”

8.

Name: Sreya Chatterjee

Media House: News X

Place and Date: Delhi, February 24, 2020

Chatterjee said that she was with a group of reporters that was stopped from reporting at Maujpur. She told the Print that a mob supporting the citizenship law threatened to beat them. "They were saying Hinduon ki ladayi hai, humara saath dijiye, record mat kijiye, hum fass jayenge," Chatterjee said. This is the fight of Hindus, support us, and don't record all this. Otherwise you will be in trouble.

9.

Name: Shantasree Sarkar

Media House: Republic TV

Place and Date: Delhi, February 24, 2020

She faced a hostile situation while reporting from Bhajanpura on Monday. Replying to AdityaRajKaul, she wrote on twitter: Sir, I was reporting from Bhajanpura today. PRO CAA Protesters happily chanted #JaiShriRam and pelted stones, bricks. They were attacking every man wearing a skull cap. Is this the time to take sides and flare up the existing communal fissures?

10.

Name: Anindya Chattopadhyay

Media House: Times of India

Place and Date: Delhi, February 24, 2020

Among the journalists attacked, heckled and harassed was Anindya Chattopadhyay, a photographer with the Times of India. He wrote about his ordeal in the newspaper. Stepping out of the Maujpur metro station just past noon, he wrote, he was "taken by surprise when a

Hindu Sena member suddenly approached me offering to put tilak on my forehead saying it would make my work 'easier'. 'You are also a Hindu, bhaiya. What is the harm?' the man said."

When Chattopadhyay tried to photograph a building that had been set on fire, a few men wielding bamboo sticks and rods surrounded him. They tried to snatch his camera, but his colleague, Sakshi Chand, stepped in, and the men went away.

But later, he wrote, a group of men followed him. A youth accosted him and said, "Bhai, tu zyada uchhal raha hai. Tu Hindu hai ya Musalman?" Brother, you are acting very smart. Are you a Hindu or a Muslim?

Chattopdhyay said they threatened to take off his pants so they could confirm if he was Hindu or Muslim. Only after pleading with folded hands was he let go.

11.

Name: Soumya Pillai, Anvit Srivastava and Fareeha Ifthikar

Media House: Hindustan Times

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

They noted in a report that they were surrounded by a mob and chased by two bikers. "The mob surrounded our car. We managed to break free but then two bikers from the mob chased us. We escaped only after leaving the area," Pillai said.

Srivastava, in the same report, stated that a mob threatened to thrash him unless he proved his religious identity. "They asked me if I could show anything to prove if I am a Hindu. I offered them my identity card but they insisted that I show them some religious thread, pendant or tilak to substantiate my claim. When I could show none, they asked me why I didn't sport a tilak? They were armed with rods. They later let me go after some of their peers intervened and checked my identity card," he added.

12.

Name: Mariyam Alvi

Media House: NDTV

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

NDTV's Mariyam Alvi was hit on her back. "Compared to my colleagues, what I experienced was nothing. I got away scot-free," said Mariyam Alvi, an NDTV reporter who was attacked at one of the clash sites.

13.

Name: Sushil Manav

Media House: Freelancer, covering for Janchowk

Place and Date: Delhi, February 25, 2020

Sushil Manav, a freelance journalist on coverage for website Janchowk, was stripped, identified, forced to chant Hanuman Chalisa and beaten up with rods and ultimately let off after they dropped their pants to reveal their identity as Hindus.

14.

Name: Sanchit Khanna

Media House: Hindustan Times

Place and Date; Deli, February 25, 2020

Hindustan Times photographer Sanchit Khanna had gone to cover the violence at Karawal Nagar when his motorcycle was set ablaze by a group of unidentified rioters. A while later, another group cornered him and deleted the pictures he had taken of the violence, threatened and assaulted him.

"I was on the terrace of a building to cover the area and saw a group of men setting vegetable carts and a car on fire. They headed towards the police post and started pouring petrol over the parked vehicles there. Before I could react, I saw the vehicles, including my motorcycle, up in flames," said Khanna.

Despite this, Khanna continued to document the violence. Minutes later, he heard some men running up the building. This group, of around four to five unarmed masked men, cornered Khanna who was with photographers from other news publications.

"These people kept insisting that I show them the pictures that I had taken. One person was yelling to others to confiscate my camera's memory card," he said.

“They threatened to smash my camera,” he said.

“While some of the people from the group kept abusing me and pulling me towards the crowd, a senior member of the group asked me to show him my official identity card as well as my documents. They took a picture of those and eventually let me go,” Khanna said.

Many other journalists reported heckling and problems during coverage. Devjyot Ghoshal, Reuters was heckled. He wrote on Twitter:

"Eventually, as the violence continued, it got too hot to work, and we pulled out. We weren't the only journalists to be cornered".

Others that reported this kind of problems include Adrija Bose of CNN News 18, who was also heckled.

Analysis and Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction chapter, the recent spate of assaults on journalists in Delhi points toward a sharp change of paradigm in the context of Right to Freedom of Expression and Speech. Now a journalist covering an event/incident on ground is being apprehended by his/her banner/brand and reacted upon much before he/she speaks (truth or whatever).

Not only this, journalists on ground are directed and forced to speak and write the version of truth that his/her intimidator wants to get through. If it does not suit their version, journalists are attacked, molested, shamed publicly.

The recent cases of assault on journalists in National Capital Territory of Delhi bear phenomenal change in two fundamental dimensions: the nature of assault and the identity of assaulter. The chronology of events as well as profile of assaulted journalists may be helpful to uncover some bitter truths.

Phase 1: Not a co-incidence

A total of three journalists, all Muslims, were mistreated by the Police: one from Urdu Media, another from a digital platform and third from BBC, an international media outlet. No discrimination in terms of banner or organisation, as we could clearly see. This does not point towards a clear case of identification based assault because the same fate was met by journalists from Matrubhumi News too, both non-Muslims. This only proves a point that journalists with Muslim identity are more vulnerable during coverage. There is nothing new in this observation.

Another three cases where mob attacked journalists are from Zee News, ANI and Asianet News. The mob here essentially comprised Jamia students and locals. Decoding assault on Zee News and ANI by Jamia mob does not require much wisdom. It clearly relates to the partisan character of these media outlets that have created a sense of hatred towards them in minority.

Polarisation in media is also not new. Media has gradually shifted sides during last few year dates as per its ownership patterns and interests. This has not only resulted in the polarisation of ground coverage but views too. It is not a co-incidence that Zee News, that boasts itself as "Rashtravadi" (nationalist) news channel was targeted around Jamia. Republic has also complained of attacks on its crew in Jamia. It also boasts itself of being nationalist. ANI holds a business monopoly in syndicating visuals to electronic news channels and in the last six years, it has been instrumental in spreading pro-establishment narrative among masses.

Deepak Chaurasia from News Nation and Sudheer Chaudhary from Zee had gone to cover Shaheen Bagh but they were not allowed by the locals to enter inside. This was only due to the partisan character of their platforms.

The partisan character of media results in the partisan character of assault. This phenomenon is gaining traction inside Indian society now for long. That is why first phase of assaults were not a co-incidence.

Phase 2: Outsourcing Violence

JNU is the center stage of this phase where larger narrative of "nationalism" (as floated by the ruling regime) is operating behind attacks. As could be seen in the testimonies, assaulters where a sloganeering "rightwing" mob including ABVP students who termed journalists as "naxalwadi", "jihadi", etc. These journalists belonged to national media outlets like Aaj Tak, Scroll.in, The Hindu, Newslandry etc.

A number of testimonies from harassed scribes posted on Twitter the same night reported the same sentence overheard in the mob: "Beat up NDTV guys if you see them." This shows that the "rightwing" mob present outside JNU on January 5, 2020 was acting solely on its partisan perception that NDTV, Aaj Tak, Scroll, The Hindu etc. are "anti-national" media. Hence they were stopped from doing their duty and Ayush Tiwari was forced to chant "Jai Shri Ram" to prove his "nationalism".

Again Zee News team was assaulted near Jamia which proves the point that partisan character of media invites partisan assault.

But the fundamental departure from first phase of assaults became eventually clear on January 31, 2020 when several journalists were picked up and detained from Rajghat by Delhi Police, although there was no confrontation on that site. People gathered there peacefully to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi but the police did not allow them to do so and picked each and every journalist present there indiscriminately.

This proves an extra case of partisan perception and thus polarised assault on media by State apparatus as well as "rightwing" mob. The icing on the cake is the violence outsourced (the rightwing mob)!

Phase 3: The Experiment

The third phase of assaults when North-East Delhi was burning was a build-up and mix-up of first two phases. Reality cannot be starker than this when not a single journalist was spared by

the mob that went on ground to cover violence. Bottom line was clear: prove your identity to mob and speak what is dear to it.

Akash Napa of JK 24 News was shot at. NDTV crew was attacked. Firstpost, CNN News 18, The Indian Express, Scroll, HT, India Today, Times Now, News X, Republic TV, TOI, Reuters, the entire spectrum of national media outlets became vulnerable to a rioting mob. The weakest of them, a freelancer Sushil Manav, covering for website Janchowk was not only ashamed but forced to chant Hanuman Chaleesa twice and still beaten up.

This was a complete collapse: indiscriminate attack on the Press, not a co-incidence, with outsourced violence and an all-out experiment in itself that needs to be seen in historical perspective.

The Last Nail

Chronology of events and assault cases run side by side in this report. As could be seen from February timeline, it came as a ray of hope when the High Court of Delhi presided by Justice Murlidharan took cognizance of violent situation at midnight, opened the court for hearing and directed the police to submit a report of compliance which should include information about the injured victims and the treatments offered to them. Next morning during the hearing, court directed the police to decide within 24 hours on filing cases related to the hate speeches made by the four BJP leaders Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Verma and Abhay Verma. The bench expressed "anguish" on the inability of Delhi Police to control the riots and its failure to file FIRs against the BJP leaders for their hate speeches.

Unfortunately on the late night of 26 February, Justice S. Muralidhar who presided over the bench, hearing the plea, was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court. This was the last nail in the series of events that unfolded since CAA was passed by parliament. The "experiment" came to its full and final.

Republic in Peril

Since last three months national discourse is centered on the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act. CAA was passed by parliament without much debate in an aggressive manner. It is true that CAA was passed by majority of parliamentarians that represent the current government, but another face of reality should not be ignored: Among 91 Crore eligible voters where just 67 per cent turned out to vote in 2019, BJP secured around 22 Crore votes which is just one-fourth of the total eligible voters. Making an act on the basis of 25 per cent electorate and ignoring rest 75 per cent is the root cause of opposition to CAA. BJP led regime has ignored this crucial point. This is the failure of Legislature.

Coming to the Executive, we know that as per the Constitution of India, Prime Minister leads the executive branch of Government of India in the capacity of head of Council of Ministers accountable to it. In reality, we see that the whole executive branch has been centralised since 2014 where Council of Ministers has been reduced to irrelevance. This has been proved time and again, more recently in Maharashtra where President Rule was invoked at midnight and Devendra Fadnavis was sworn-in without the Union Cabinet meet. The constitutional obligation of PM being accountable to Union Council of Ministers is a rare sight in this government that proves the failure of Executive.

Media has been called the Fourth Estate of Republic. In recent times, we have witnessed a complete partisan character of media owing to its ownership and business model. The coining of new terms such as "Godi" (lapdog) media and "Rashtrawadi" media suggest a complete polarisation among media outlets. This has created a perception polarisation among media consumers who consume the information and news from "our" media and reject "their" media. The polarisation of news landscape has resulted in identification of individual journalists from their banners/brands. This identification either glorifies an individual journalist or vilifies it.

Here comes the polarised character of assault too. The assaults on journalists have increasingly become some sort of "identity punishing", depending which group he/she is representing. This we have shown in first two phases of assault in December and January. Whenever this sort of assault takes place, the reaction inside the media fraternity is also divided on the same lines. Never has been a single incident of assault in last few years when the whole fraternity spoke in a single voice.

The natural result of this complicity and partisanship was what we witnessed in the last week of February when no one was in the condition to prove his/her innocence and credentials in front of a rioting mob, asking for identity proof. A scribe from a partisan media house was targeted for the same cause whereas another scribe from a non-partisan outlet was targeted due to the polarised perception. The reality and perception both stand polarised heavily. Journalists on ground are paying price for it.

So, where is that Fourth Estate of Republic?

All the four pillars of democratic republic appear to have crumbled down in the light of what Chief Justice of India SA Bobde said on March 3, 2020:

"We cannot stop things from happening. We cannot give preventive reliefs. We feel a kind of pressure on us. We can only deal with the situation after it occurs, the kind of pressure on us, we can't handle that. It's like Court is responsible. We are reading newspapers; we know the kinds of comments are made. Courts come on to the scene after the thing is done and courts have not been able to prevent such a thing."

Annexure

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

28 December 2019

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.

Anand Swaroop Verma

A K Lari

Paranjay Guha Thakurta

Rajesh Verma

Santosh Gupta

Shesh Narain Singh

(CAAJ Statement Committee)

List of nationwide 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 16.¹

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fmejkPYl4w&feature=youtu.be>

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 me².

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."³

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 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."⁴

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.⁵

² <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/citizenship-amendment-act-protest-jamia-millia-islamia-students-journalist-attacked-delhi-police-1628500-2019-12-15>

³ <http://www.uniindia.com/iwpc-flays-attack-on-woman-bbc-journalist-by-delhi-police/india/news/1823445.html>

⁴ https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=177914338553735&id=100003742737506

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dalZSdhVNRs>

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.

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.⁶

⁶ https://theprint.in/india/abused-hit-phone-snatched-theprint-journalist-azaan-javaid-beaten-up-by-jk-police/336760/?amp&_twitter_impression=true

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 account⁷ 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 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.⁸ 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.⁹

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

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.

⁷ <https://www.newslandry.com/2019/12/23/caa-nrc-lucknow-protest-police-atrocity-gaumi-raftar>

⁸ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/anti-cao-protests-up-sambal-violence-1629632-2019-12-19>

⁹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/press-association-condemns-attack-on-journalists-during-protests/articleshow/72919019.cms>

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 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 Rahman¹⁰, an Asianet News reporter said.¹¹

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 accompanied by Robin Verma, a local activist and friend, and two others, both journalists. The men did not identify

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/dhanyarajendran/status/1207910272377094144>

¹¹ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/treated-criminals-kerala-journos-released-after-7-hours-detention-mangaluru-114464>

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.¹²

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...”¹³

¹² <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>

¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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."¹⁶

12. Name: Khurshid Misbahi

Media House: ETV Bharat

Place and Date: Meerut, 20th December, 2019

¹⁴ <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/delhi-police-attack-mathrubhumi-journalist-cameraman-destroy-camera-1.4378832>

¹⁵ <https://tv.mathrubhumi.com/en/news/india/caa-another-clash-in-delhi-attack-against-journalists-1.35120>

¹⁶ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/anti-caa-protest-kerala-press-club-in-delhi-condemns-attack-on-journalists/article30366279.ece>

Khurshid Misbahi, a reporter with ETV Bharat was attacked by rioters in Meerut, UP. In his first-person account he wrote in a Facebook post¹⁷ - "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.¹⁸ 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 protests by Jamia Millia Islamia students against the Citizenship Amendment Act.¹⁹ Wasim Sayeed, video journalist, and Dinesh R, reporter, were injured. Mr. Wasim Sayeed was seriously injured in stone-throwing and admitted to hospital.²⁰

15. Name: Jaideep

Media House: Zee News

Place and Date: Delhi, 16th December, 2019

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/khurshid.misbahi/posts/740775363076270>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSsk9d6bOnc>

¹⁹ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/press-association-condemns-attack-on-journalists-during-citizenship-amendment-act-protests-2152558>

²⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-journalists-protest-against-police-brutality/article30368384.ece>

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.²¹

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>

About CAAJ

Committee Against Assault on Journalists (CAAJ) is a collective of independent media and civil society groups to defend press freedom and uphold the right to report without fear of intimidation. CAAJ is not a traditional journalist welfare body as such, neither a trade union nor a non-government organisation. Rather it is a process that is evolving since last couple of years to intervene on the issue of assault on journalists through various ways like documentation, research, seminars, lectures and active alliances.

CAAJ was introduced to the journalist fraternity first through a two-day national level convention against assault on journalists in New Delhi that saw journalists from more than ten states and families of some deceased journalists too. At this very first convention, CAAJ released a booklet documenting assaults in Indian journalists during last ten years.

In the last one and a half years, CAAJ has organised three major meetings, one in Raipur, other in Chandigarh on the need of Journalist Protection Act and the last one in Varanasi where celebrated journalist P. Sainath delivered lecture on dangers of reporting to rural journalists.

CAAJ has continuously tracked cases of attacks on free voices and updated on its blog and social media handles. During last one and a half years, CAAJ has recommended assistance to assaulted scribes and networked with agencies that provide legal help to journalists in crisis. CAAJ has also advised CPJ, Asia on various occasions regarding media freedom in India.

After the completion of one year of its national convention, CAAJ called upon various stakeholders for stocktaking of the situation and future course of action in September 2019. Representatives from Delhi NCR, UP, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Jharkhand and Bihar attended the meeting. Representatives of IFWJ, Press Council, PIB Association, Kashi Patrakar Sangh, many members from Press Club of India, senior writers, journalists and members of civil society participated.

This meeting resulted in the expansion of alliances and process. Some interim sub-committees were formed like Screening Committee, Statement Committee, Legal Team and Social Media Committee. State co-ordinators were put in place.

The Apex sub-committee is the Statement Committee that includes senior and respected journalist Anand Swaroop Verma, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, Shesh Narain Singh, A K Lari, Rajesh Verma and Santosh Gupta.

CAAJ is in the process of bringing out an Annual Assault Report for 2019 very soon.