



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

Regd. Under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 (Regn. No. 13 of 1933-34) and under the Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950 (Regn. No. F/715[N])

QUADRENNIAL THEME 2016-2020: TOWARDS JUST AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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CAB Polarises Communities, Contravenes Fundamental Principles of Constitution

The National Council of Churches in India, which is a fellowship of 30 churches representing 14 million people, is strongly against religion-based citizenship. Indian Christians have held this stand ever since the formation of India as an independent democratic republic. We strongly believe that any amendment to any legislation should keep in mind the secular ethos of the Constitution.

We believe that an India without its many multiplicities is not the India we know and any attempt to homogenise religion, culture, language and practices will only polarise communities. Any law which goes against this principle will harm the Indian living system.

The present Citizenship Amendment Act is projected as a measure to safeguard persecuted people from three neighbouring countries. However, instead of persecution and suffering of people as a criterion, the Act has given special preference to people who belong to different religions including Christians. Although Christians are included, we understand the exclusion of some categories of people within this act polarising communities based on faith and creed.

Moreover, the Act underlines the message that religion is the criteria to remain a citizen in this country. This is in contravention to the fundamental principles of the Indian Constitution. As the core spirit of the Constitution is being challenged, the minorities will face even more anxiety and fear.

The reactions and protests in the North-East India point towards how the indigenous people of the region are sceptical of this Act and the National Register for Citizenship (NRC). We affirm the demands of indigenous communities to retain and celebrate their distinctive cultural and linguistic heritage and traditions. While the government is keen on a nationwide NRC exercise as a tool to build a 'New India,' many continue to live in fear of exclusion. Assam, which became the first demographic laboratory for the testing of NRC, is witnessing a lot of protests.

Furthermore, the present outbreaking of the protest of youngsters from the university campuses against religion-based citizenship and the counter actions of police forces are creating havocs in the society. We are concerned about the psychological trauma of the grooming generations who witness the result of ruthless violence charged with communal spirit.

Therefore, we ask the Government to end any action of othering of the minorities to make sure a peaceful atmosphere in India. The National Council of Churches in India assures our prayers and support for maintaining peace in our country. Also, we request our Churches and organizations to take efforts locally to ensuring peace.

Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew
Executive Secretary.
Policy Governance and Public Witness

Rev Asir Ebenezer
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