



Dated: May 1, 2020

Shri Amit Shah
Hon'ble Minister of Home Affairs
Government of India
North Block
New Delhi

Respected Shri Amit Shah,

As you are aware hundreds of young people have been arrested and placed in jail since the lockdown over the past few weeks. Most of them are young students and adults who were involved in the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests as part of democratic activity, against whom the Delhi Police has invoked Sections 13, 16, 17 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Sections 16 to 18 of the UAPA refer to 'punishment for terrorist act', 'raising funds for terrorist act', and 'conspiracy etc' related to a terrorist act.

These are all young people with no such record. They were demonstrating against the Citizenship Act, as thousands of their fellow citizens across the country. That they are being linked to the violence in north-east Delhi is a matter of deep concern, particularly as it is now a well documented fact that this violence was triggered by irresponsible comments and hate speech by certain political leaders. Media reports and fact finding missions by responsible citizens also detailed the trigger for the violence, the initial clash between two communities, and then the assault by mobs on Muslim individuals, homes and business establishments.

It is a matter of deep worry that while the country is struggling with the pandemic, the arrests have been made and even a pregnant young woman has been jailed in congested and unsanitary conditions. There is a high probability that they will be exposed to coronavirus and thus face life threatening conditions. Many of the detainees Sir, including Umar Khalid, Shafiur Rehman, Safoora Zargar and Meeran Haider are political and social rights activists who have been participating in demonstrations and protests for months in their young adult lives. They are not running away, and have been cooperating and are prepared to cooperation in whatever investigations that are held. Their safety is imperative.

Safoora Zargar, one of the detainees is a research scholar from Jamia Millia Islamia university and is in the second trimester of her first pregnancy. She has been jailed under the stringent anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 2019 (UAPA). Before her arrest, with her advancing pregnancy, she had restricted physical movement. And after the outbreak of COVID-19 she had virtually stopped stepping out of the house except for essential work. Despite this she has been arrested, and put in jail with grave risk to her and her child's well being.

We would also like to bring to your notice that recently the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India also said that there was need to decongest jails in wake of the pandemic. Tihar jail in Delhi is one of India's most crowded prisons with nearly double more than the inmates it can accommodate. Instead of releasing prisoners as per the court directives, the police is arresting young persons on charges that defy belief. The next date of hearing by Delhi High Court is 24 June, a long period of incarceration for young adults without trial.

According to media reports lawyers and families are not being allowed to meet the young students. They have not been able to speak to their lawyers over the telephone. We are sure you will agree that this is in violation of all humanitarian considerations.

Using such measures against ordinary students, and that too during the time of Covid 19 pandemic shows that the slow and delayed access to justice during the lockdown is being used to implicate and imprison student activists who led the peaceful anti-CAA protests.

Even though Delhi High Court has directed that arrests shall be done in accordance with the Supreme Court guidelines related to arrest and detention, we appeal to you that considering the very high risk to life due to Covid 19 pandemic, the medical condition of some of the detainees, and the ongoing month of fasting, those arrested should be released with immediate effect.

Sir, IMPAR believes that the death of 53 people, many more injuries and loss of property was a most unfortunate incident in the capital, a blot after the 1984 anti-Sikh violence. We are all ready to extend all our possible support to the government and any independent enquiry commission set up for a fair and objective investigation so that those guilty are brought to justice without delay.

We hope Sir, that you will intervene on the side of justice and ensure the release of all the young people arrested under draconian provisions of the law during these weeks.

Issued by IMPAR Steering Committee Members

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About IMPAR - Indian Muslims for Progress and Reforms

Promoted by 270 plus most prominent Muslims from different walks of life, IMPAR is a national forum, which aims to work in making a meaningful difference to the community's engagement with the society and the nation. IMPAR is mobilizing the voice of progressive and modern Muslims to collectively express their constructive views to the media and the nation. IMPAR also aims to working on promoting education and awareness, national ethos and shared culture, rationale thinking and scientific temperament, reforms and positivity in the community towards maximizing social and economic access and opportunities. Like Mahatma Gandhi said, let's be the change that we wish to see in the world. IMPAR is committed to bring about a positive change in the community and to meaningfully contribute to the social and economic development of the nation.