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Humanitarian Representation on CAA Documentation Challenges for Bangladeshi Hindu Refugees in West Bengal

1 message

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OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PMO), GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Subject: Humanitarian Representation on CAA Documentation Challenges for Bangladeshi Hindu Refugees in West Bengal

Date: 11th Jan 2026

Respected Shri Narendra Modi Ji,

Hindu Samman Foundation (HSF) has been working on the ground with Pakistani and Bangladeshi Hindu refugee families across India, providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating legal awareness. Over the past two weeks, our team visited multiple Bangladeshi Hindu refugee settlements in West Bengal, where we documented serious challenges these families face while applying for citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

These families have been living in India for decades, yet remain undocumented due to the violent and forced nature of their displacement from Bangladesh. We wish to present the following findings for the kind consideration of the Government of India.

1. GROUND OBSERVATIONS

During last year and early January 2026, HSF visited and interacted with Bengali Hindu refugee families in:

- Murshidabad district
- Siliguri and surrounding areas (Islampur region, Gunjariya border settlements)
- North 24 Parganas district

Nearly all families interviewed expressed **inability to fulfill documentation requirements** mandated in the current CAA online application system.

2. CORE DOCUMENTATION ISSUE

More than 90% of Bangladeshi Hindu refugees residing in West Bengal **entered India illegally under duress**, fleeing targeted violence, village burnings, forced conversions, and sexual violence. Refugees repeatedly stated that they crossed the border under barbed wires without carrying any belongings, identity cards, passports, or supporting documents.

Most received basic Indian documents only after entering India (e.g., Aadhaar, ration cards), but **do not possess any Bangladeshi identity documents** to upload in the CAA portal. As a result, they are unable to complete the application process.

This documentation barrier risks leaving nearly **2 crore Bengali Hindu refugees in West Bengal** unable to benefit from CAA despite being the primary intended beneficiaries.

3. OTHER LINKED CONCERNs

- The CAA portal currently restricts eligibility to those who entered India **on or before 31st December 2014**. However, significant refugee inflow continued post-2014 due to ongoing persecution, especially after recent

political shifts in Bangladesh.

- Without access to citizenship, these communities remain legally “illegal immigrants”, creating fear of deportation and exclusion from democratic rights.
- Several families reported that **voter IDs are being deactivated under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** process, which risks removing large numbers of Hindu refugees from electoral rolls, thereby ensuring that no elected representative feels accountable to them.

This combination creates a silent humanitarian crisis: refugees cannot apply for citizenship due to lack of Bangladeshi documents, and simultaneously risk disenfranchisement due to SIR-related voter exclusion.

4. HUMANITARIAN & CIVIC IMPLICATIONS

If documentation barriers are not addressed:

- A civilationally persecuted Hindu population remains stateless
- Refugees may lose voting rights in West Bengal
- Political services and welfare deny them due to non-citizen status
- Large populations remain vulnerable with no legal protection

Many of these families have been living in India for **20–40 years**, contributing to local economies peacefully while waiting for citizenship.

5. HUMANE ADMINISTRATIVE SUGGESTIONS

With utmost respect, we request consideration of the following:

- Allow waiver of Bangladeshi identity document uploads** for Hindu refugees who entered India informally under persecution and possess Indian-issued documents.
- Extend the CAA eligibility cut-off date** beyond 31st December 2014 to account for continuous refugee inflow post-2014.
- Introduce alternate verification mechanisms**, such as:
 - Self-declaration affidavits
 - Community verification
 - Local SDM/DM certification
 - Digitally recorded refugee testimonies

These mechanisms exist in various international refugee processes and ensure legitimacy without compromising national security.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

HSF acknowledges the historic significance of CAA as a civilizational act that gives dignity, citizenship, and protection to persecuted Hindus. We deeply appreciate the Government of India for taking this bold humanitarian step.

Our appeal is not criticism, but a request for **administrative accommodation** so that genuine Bangladeshi Hindu refugees—who lack documents due to persecution—are not left behind.

7. HSF COMMITMENT

HSF is organizing **Free CAA Camps** to support legally compliant applications and wishes to help the government streamline this process. We are ready to share detailed field data and testimonies if required by the authorities.

With **West Bengal elections approaching in 2026**, ensuring refugee access to citizenship and democratic participation aligns with India's constitutional and civilizational values.

With utmost respect 

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- Ministry of Law & Justice - Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal Ji, Hon'ble Minister of Law and Justice (Independent Charge) mljoffice@gov.in, Shri Avnit Singh Arora, Director- Ministry of Law and Justice avnit.singh@gov.in
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