



# Discrimination Against Muslims in India: New Citizenship Policy and the Coronavirus Crisis

## Information for students

- In your Contemporary World class, you have likely explored the theme of Tensions and Conflicts. Some of the topics include:
  - Rights, freedoms and cultural identity (ethnicity, religion, etc.)
  - Diplomatic crisis and armed conflicts
  - Intervention of third states or international institutions and humanitarian assistance
- Most tensions and conflicts arise out of explicit demands, which take different forms, and may involve questions about rights, territory, the control of resources or political autonomy. In addition to explicit demands, there may be deeper causes, such as previous tensions and conflicts or deeply rooted ideological differences. These underlying social and economic factors could lead to grave consequences, including genocide: the systemic and deliberate murder of a national, racial, political or cultural group of people.
  - Note: If the topic of genocide has not been covered in your Contemporary World course, you can activate your prior knowledge by thinking about books you might have read or movies you might have watched, or simply do some research on the subject.
- As the number of coronavirus cases in India keeps rising, violent attacks on Muslims continue to occur, a result of the Hindu nationalist ideology of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliated groups. In power since 2014, the BJP government has denounced Muslim refugees who fled an ethnic cleansing campaign in Myanmar and deported some of them, violating international laws.
- In a new report (April 2020), Human Rights Watch found that, “India’s discriminatory new citizenship law and proposed policies have spurred further violence against Muslims. The Citizenship Amendment Act, for the first time in India, makes religion the basis for granting citizenship . . .”<sup>1</sup> The HRW, an international non-governmental organization, now fears that Indian Muslims could be stripped of their citizenship rights and identified as illegal migrants or infiltrators by their government.
- While the planet is paralyzed by an ongoing pandemic, violence against Indian Muslims keeps raging and is threatening the effort to enforce a lockdown in a country that has nearly 18% of the total world population and some of the most densely populated cities. In addition, television channels and political leaders have falsely suggested that Islamic groups in India are responsible for the propagation of the coronavirus, leaving them even more vulnerable to violence.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/18/indias-steps-contain-covid-19-have-failed-curb-anti-muslim-rhetoric>



## Contemporary World

- With the United Nations Human Rights Agency seeking to join a case in India's Supreme Court against the new citizenship law and Amnesty International raising concerns over the fate of excluded Islamic groups, the situation is becoming urgent. Some world leaders have used the word *genocide* to describe what is taking place in the country.
- Genocide is a human phenomenon that can be analyzed and understood. It is a process that develops in ten stages, or steps, according to Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, Founder and President of Genocide Watch:
  - 1. Classification / 2. Symbolization / 3. Discrimination / 4. Dehumanization / 5. Organization / 6. Polarization / 7. Preparation / 8. Persecution / 9. Extermination / 10. Denial
  - You will find a description of the ten stages and prevention measures that can be taken at each stage on the website of the Montreal Holocaust Museum: <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/ten-stages-genocide/>
- In light of what you've read about the present situation in India and with your prior knowledge:
  - What could prevent a genocide from happening there? How would the situation be different from other genocides in history (the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, etc.)?
  - Keeping in mind that the stages of genocide do not necessarily follow a linear progression, what stage, in your opinion, is representative of the current situation in India? Explain.
  - How do you think the coronavirus crisis could influence the course of events? Discuss and provide supporting arguments.

### Materials required

Useful resources, depending on personal preferences and availability:

- Device with Internet access
- Writing materials (paper, pencil, etc.)

### Information for parents

Students could:

- remember that the goal is not to have the right answer but to reflect on the issues of discrimination, tensions and conflicts, and genocides

Parents should:

- discuss the information and the questions with their child and share their own thoughts with them; parents could encourage their child to contact a classmate if their child has more questions or wants to chat with a peer