

UNAFRAID

The Day Young Women Took the Battle to the Streets

Women's Testimonies from Ground Zero at Jamia Millia Islamia University



by
Independent Women's Initiative

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To you
amazing, inspiring young women all
for being who you are and doing what you do

Note:

Some names, where indicated, have been changed for reasons of confidentiality and personal safety. If, for purposes of an enquiry into the events at Jamia Millia Islamia University, these respondents need to be reached, please contact the authors of this report.

Two respondents filmed brief videos on their phones on December 13 and December 15. These videos are with the authors of this report.

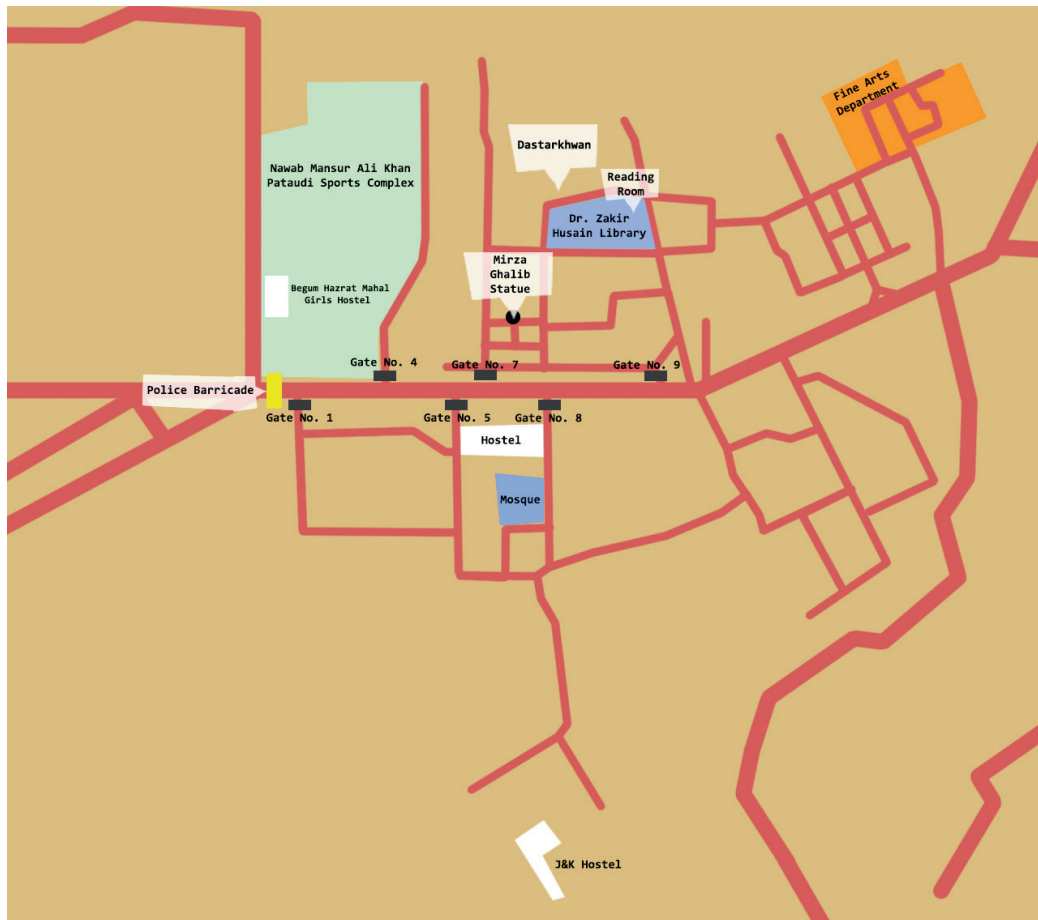
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Map of Jamia Millia Islamia University



Credit: Amina Razzack

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Prologue

The sight of state violence on the bodies of our young women and men, the sting of tear gas and sounds of rampaging policepersons in a library and on the campus grounds at the Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi on December 13 and December 15, 2019, has shocked citizens across India. This is the heart of our national capital. This is a place of higher learning. And these young women and men are our future.

By all accounts there has been worse brutality against students of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on December 15, 2019. The attempt to crush these student led protests against the recently passed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), has now galvanised lakhs of women, men and young people across the length and breadth of India. Ordinary folk are spilling out across campuses, *maidans* and streets to save their country from becoming a land of bigotry and compromised citizenship. They are standing up in renewed commitment to the India that was promised to us at that midnight hour of 1947, where all are equal and must speak equally; an India that aspires to the highest dreams of our Constitution.

Marching in the frontlines of the struggle at Jamia Millia, with their soaring voices proclaiming truth, justice and equality, have been India's young women. Inspiring images of them have flooded our conscience.

A group of women's rights activists spoke to the young women who have led and participated in these protests.* Most of them are students between 19-31 years of age, but some of them are ordinary housewives from the neighbourhood, who were stirred and who stepped out. In their own words, these women tell us the stories of those two days at Jamia that sparked a flame in all of us.

At the time of writing there were disturbing reports coming in from other parts of India, particularly Uttar Pradesh (UP), of grave injustices taking place against ordinary folk who have struck out spontaneously to oppose the CAA and the NRC; of targeted state violence, arbitrary arrest and detention of peacefully protesting citizens.

We hope the testimonies of these women tell us, and tell the state, that you cannot silence the unafraid voices of India's future.

* The interviews took place between December 17-19, 2019.



Wall writing at Jamia seen on Dec 16. Photo: Farah Naqvi

Name: Abida¹

Age: 30

Profession: Home maker

Current Residence: A locality near Jamia Nagar

Abida has lived in the Jamia neighbourhood all her life. After marriage she moved to a place close to her parents' home. She is oldest among her siblings. Her brother, Irfan, is the youngest and studies at the Jamia Millia Islamia University. Abida has three daughters. She has always been a homemaker. Before December 13, 2019, she had never taken part in any protest. And December 15 is a day, she says, she will never forget.

December 13: We reached Jamia around 3:30 PM. I was standing at Gate no.7 when "gola gira" (the ball of tear gas fell). There was light, and then smoke came out. Then another gola (shell) burst near the Pataudi Sports Complex. Boys were running towards us. My eyes had started hurting. Someone reached out with a packet of salt. They said put salt under your eyes and tongue. My sister Rehana and I leaned against a wall and stood there. Then it seemed to go quiet.

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

My sister Khadeeja was at home and got a call from a girl saying our youngest brother Irfan was hurt. We got very worried. There were two barricades. We were told that between these two barricades the police had beaten up students. The first barricade was near the sports complex. We were behind it. The second was at the Jullena red light, just after Holy Family Hospital.

We ran towards the barricades and slipped through the side. So now we were in between the two barricades. We met girls who said, "yes, Irfan is hurt and he is in Holy Family". We then saw him coming out. His foot had been hurt and he was limping. The police was not letting us go from either side now. My sister Khadeeja also reached. We heard the *azaan* for the *Maghrib namaz*. So it must have been approximately 5:30 PM. There was one person there whom everyone was calling Sadiq Bhai. They asked him to lead the *namaz*. Right there on the road in front of Holy Family we made two lines, and men and women together performed *namaz*.

But as soon as *namaz* was over, 3-4 policemen grabbed Sadiq Bhai. Two of them held his legs, and two held his arms. One girl ran and said "*Chhodo Sadiq Bhai ko!*" (leave, Sadiq Bhai!). Seeing this, we grabbed his kurta as well, and pulled him away from the police. We somehow left that place on foot towards Taimur Nagar side, to Zakir Nagar, then towards Ghafoor Nagar and back to Jamia Gate no.7. We reached Jamia around 6:45 PM and sat at Gate no.7 till midnight. Irfan was hurt but unwilling to leave the protest.

That is the day something in me said we could not stop. *Ab Lathi Kha Li Hai* (We have faced blows). Now, we cannot go back.

**"That is the day something in me said we could not stop.
Ab Lathi Kha Li Hai (We have faced blows).
Now we cannot go back."**

There were huge crowds. What decided it for me was that we had seen the police attack girls and hurt them. How can we step back now, I thought. Even I have three daughters and I have to educate them. I was really scared but scared not for myself. I was scared for my daughters. Today it is these girls. Tomorrow it could be my daughters as well.

**"What decided it for me was that we saw the police attack girls.
How can we step back now?
Even I have three daughters Today it is these girls.
Tomorrow it could be my daughters as well."**

I felt really strongly that women should come forward. Now it is a matter of our children, our daughters. I also want to send them to University. I fear that someone will take revenge on my daughters because their mother has stepped out. [Abida cried

as she was speaking] I am very scared. I swear to God, my heart is frightened but my inner self is not letting me stop. If I don't speak today, then tomorrow why should anyone else...I have to be in front. We are housewives. Not terrorists.

“We are housewives. Not terrorists”

December 14: I was in the Jamia campus from around 10:00 AM, listening to speeches going on inside Gate no. 7. At one point, hundreds of us women formed a human chain. It felt good.

I thought there were not enough women. Women will make it safe for boys and keep them from shouting and climbing over barricades. I spoke to some women and took their numbers. We held hands. Towards the evening, a whole group of protestors and a lot of women moved towards Park no.9 in Kalindi Kunj, mobilising other residents for the march to Parliament. We were shouting slogans like “*Samvidhan Bachane Nikle Hain, Aap Hamara Saath Do* (We are on our way to save the Constitution, Join us) and *Bharat Bachane Nikle Hain, Aap Hamara Saath Do*” (We are on our way to save India, Come with us). Please *auraton ko lekar kal Jamia aao* (Please come with women to Jamia tomorrow). This went on till night.

December 15: We all sat down at Gate no. 7. A huge number of women. The protest started around 2:30-3:00 PM. Some people said what is the point of waiting. Let's go towards the barricades. I was in front. Some boys went forward. We were all together. Many ordinary women, housewives. We stopped at Jullena red light. It was an open road. Empty. No police. We finally saw barricading beyond Surya Hotel. We stopped. My 9-year-old daughter was with me. I was nervous. She had come with my mother saying “*Nani* I also want to go.” My mother was also there in the December 15 protest. Zoya, my daughter made a beautiful chart – “No to CAB.” I said, “let us talk to the policemen”. I went to one senior looking policeman (I did not see his name) and asked – ‘We are doing a peaceful march, can we protest?’ He spoke very politely and *pyaar se* (with affection). He said, “yes this is your right you can protest.” This is what is hurting me. He said – “Yes *beta* (child) you can protest. *Beta*, violence *nahin hona chahiye* (child, there should not be violence).” I said that we were just housewives. “Can we sit here?” I asked. He said yes. Meanwhile at the back end of the procession, some people diverted and took another route.

Suddenly the procession emptied. We also got up and turned around to follow the detour, which went to Mata Mandir road. I had hardly been on that road 10-15 steps, when I saw a large number of people running. I forgot my daughter. There was chaos. My sister Khadeeja fell. People fell on me too. I rolled over and reached one side of the road and Khadeeja was on the other side. Rehana was with me. We saw a New Friends Colony society gate, it was open and a group of us entered. There were 10-11 girls,

some boys also. Two of them were hurt on the head and bleeding. One was bleeding very badly and he had a deep cut on his head. He was starting to feel faint.

“Two of them [boys] were hurt on the head and bleeding. One was bleeding very badly and he had a deep cut on his head. He was starting to feel faint.”

The guard locked the gate. From behind those gates we saw the police using *lathi* and throwing stones at the students. We kept shouting at them to stop but when they did not listen we started shouting “*Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna Ab Hamare Dil Mein Hai. Dekhna Hai Zor Kitna Baazu-e-Qatil Mein Hai* (The desire for revolution is in our hearts, let’s see how much strength the enemy has).” That was the only slogan.

**“*Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna Ab Hamare Dil Mein Hai.
Dekhna Hai Zor Kitna Baazu-e-Qatil Mein Hai*
(The desire for revolution is in our hearts,
Let’s see how much strength the enemy has).
That was our only slogan.**

But police was so angry with this slogan, they ran towards us. Shaking the locked gate, shouting *gaalis* (curse words) – *Maar daloonga darwaza khol*. (We will kill you, open the gate) – they were shouting to the guard.”

The guard deliberately took a long time opening the gate, I think. The police entered. Boys ran inside. I felt since the police has come, we should do hands-up. I stood straight. One boy said to them, “ladies are here please don’t do anything”. One police said – “*saala video banata hai?*” (you bastard, you want to make a video?). They stopped his video and dropped the mobile. I am so proud of these boys. He was hit on his legs and thighs.

We ran inside the colony and sat in a small lane next to a house. God bless one elderly man from that New Friends Colony house. He brought out a jug of water and disposable glasses. Gave water to everyone. Got Dettol from his house. Cleaned wounds. And took the severely bleeding boy in his car to Holy Family Hospital.

**“God bless one elderly man from that New Friends Colony house.
He brought out a jug of water and disposable glasses.
Gave water to everyone. Got Dettol from his house.
Cleaned wounds. And took the severely bleeding boy
in his car to Holy Family Hospital.”**

We kept hearing sounds of violence, screaming. We were stuck inside New Friends Colony for a long time. We finally left from some back route and sat in a park for a while. I heard the *Maghrib azaan* (call to prayer), so must have been 5:30 pm. By this

time most people had run away to safety. Roads were empty. In the meantime my daughter called me from some stranger's phone. A girl took her to the hostel and then one boy took her home. We went from Taimoor Nagar to Zakir Nagar, and spent the night at a stranger's home. Everyone had opened their doors in Zakir Nagar and Batla House that night for anyone who needed a safe place.

By about 7:00 PM is the first call we got from my brother, Irfan. Around 7:15 PM, his phone was smashed. We could hear the police. The phone went silent. By 8:30 PM, we heard that he had been hurt. The next morning we met him at Batla House chowk. He was hurt. The Zainul Abedin clinic inside Batla House did his treatment at night. But we headed back to Jamia on December 16. Now so much has happened, there is no other way. We cannot go back.



Scene of injured: A female protester undergoes treatment. Photo: Facebook/ Harjit Singh Bhatti, published in Youth Ki Awaaz

Name: Afreen¹

Age: 21

Profession: Student, BA (final year), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Current Residence: Near Jamia Nagar

December 13: I was there from the start. I was shooting images as a part of my Photo Journalism curriculum. Everyone was collecting peacefully at Gate No. 7 of the University for a long march to Jantar Mantar against CAA and NRC. Barricades had already been put up but we still kept collecting – *Barricade ki wajah se darne lage toh sab kuch toh implement ho hee jaayega* (If we start getting scared of barricades, then everything will be certainly implemented). I was not at Gate no. 7 but at Gate no. 4, which is towards Jullena red light. *Pata chala ki police ne lathi-charge shuru kar diya hai. Toh sab log bhaagne lage* (We got to know that the police has started lathi-charge, that is why every one is running). This is around 4:00 PM. Now, obviously lathi-charge has happened, people have to defend themselves. So, some people started stone pelting. But the police attacked first. After the lathi-charge, the barricades were pushed down and broken.

Next, the sound of tear gas shell started coming. From Gate no. 4 where I was, tear gas shells were thrown inside campus. There were I don't know how many dozens

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

of tear gas shells. *Hamare yeh nikalne lagne* (These things starting coming out)...[she points to the eruptions on the skin on her cheeks]. *Bahut saare students choke hue*, (Lot of students felt that they were choking) and then went and got admitted. Some got skin rashes. I was at Gate no. 4, and the Ansari Health Centre is right inside that. By 5:00-5:30 PM, I saw injured people being brought in. There were literally dozens of students being admitted there, many had wounds on their feet. My friend called me from inside the Health Centre. *Voh choke ki vajah se admit hui thi. Voh keh rahi thi uska yeh poora* [pointing to throat] *jal raha hai* (She was admitted as she was breathless and her throat was burning).

**“I was at Gate no. 4, and the Ansari Health Centre is right inside that.
By 5:00-5:30 PM, I saw injured people being brought in.
Literally dozens of students were admitted there.”**

Then we got out of Ansari Health Centre and exited from the Indian Bank gate. I saw tear gas being shelled everywhere. I immediately took the camera and started shooting photos. Eventually, the tear gas stopped, I think that is when some teachers arrived on the scene. Students sat there the whole evening, along with teachers, while there was heavy deployment of police. Eventually, I went home.

December 15: Sunday *bahut kuchch hua* (On Sunday a lot took place). Everything was okay till morning but then even more troops came in. Metro stations were *bandh* (closed), Sukhdev Vihar *bandh* (closed), Okhla Vihar *bandh* (closed), Jasola and Shaheen Bagh *bandh* (closed), Jamia Metro Station *bandh* (closed). Loads of troops were stationed at Sukhdev Vihar Metro Station. But I believe everything started at NFC (New Friends Colony).

I was here in the campus only. We got the information that police is marching towards us and doing lathi-charge. It all happened around 6:30-7:00 PM. I was near the Main Library when I saw police entering our campus. Boys asked girls to move inside the campus, into the library, as we were of the opinion that they will not enter the library. But they did. We got to know that police was entering from the boys hostel side – there is a back gate to the library - and eventually, from the main gate.

**“We went into the library because we felt it was the safest place at that moment. *Hame pata tha ki voh library ke andar aaygi hee nahin.*
(We were confident that police will not enter the library).
We hid inside the library, and asked people to
put off the lights so we can’t be seen.”**

We were hundreds of students inside the library including both the ground and upper first. One boy choking outside was also brought in at one point and made to lie on a table, almost passing out. We asked everyone to be silent. The next thing I heard was

the sound of a tear gas shell falling inside our library and the whole library became smoky. Then it was lathi-charge. Some people were hit on the head. It was so dark. There were many policemen. *Sabke paas lathi thi* (All had *lathis* with them). I was towards the back and there was such a stampede that I couldn't even hear what the police was saying. I felt that's it, this is the end. I don't know what's happened to that student who was made to lie down. Because it was so crowded, and then they asked us to queue up, and he was unable to breathe, he was half conscious. Everyone was made to sit on the ground. Whoever had to be beaten up, was. *Phir hame haath upar karke bahar nikaala gaya* (They made us raise our hands and took us out). And they were like – if anybody puts their hands down they will be beaten on their legs. They made us queue up and walk to the main road.



Akhtarista Ansari, Aysha Renna, Chanda Yadav after the attack on Dec 15. Photo: ANI

Name: Akhtarista Ansari

Age: 19

Profession: Student, BA (honours) Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Deoghar, Jharkhand

Current Residence: Jamia old girls hostel

Akhtarista has two older sisters. She is the youngest in the family. Her brother and one older sister are lawyers in the Ranchi High Court. Akhtarista has been involved in the Jamia protests from December 12 onwards. Her accounts of both the December 13 and 15 incidents of violence are corroborated by her friends and fellow students Chanda Yadav, Ladeeda Farzana and Aysha Renna. What we reproduce below are additional facts and experiences that Akhtarista shared. Akhtarista is a member of a student group AISA.

December 11 & 12: The CAA was passed on December 10, so from 11th night itself we started planning the protest. We had a meeting in the hostel. And groups of girls mobilised in all four of the Old Girls' Hostels and in the Begum Hazrat Mahal Hostel also. On December 12, we started the march around 7:30 PM. Students from the Jamia School, Class 11-12th students also wanted to join. Their provost came to the back gate of the hostel and said that the school kids have a 6:30 PM curfew, and they must be sent back. But they just insisted and joined the march. We went to the New

Girls' Hostel. When we came out to start the march there were already a large number of male students gathered outside the Old Hostel to join in solidarity of this women's march. This was really good to see that male students were joining a march called by women students, under their leadership. The march ended around 9:00-10:00 PM at Gate No. 7, where you saw the pictures of women students raising slogans. NESA – North East Students Association – joined and they also spoke to the crowd. It rained heavily that night, so then the meeting was shifted to the library with speeches and ended around 10:30-11:00 PM that night. We announced that the students would be marching to Parliament Street on the 13th afternoon

December 13: On the 13th at 2:00 PM there was a public talk by the teacher's association (Ghalib Lawn in front of Gate No. 7) which we attended. Our march to Parliament Street began at 3:00 AM from Gate No. 13. When we reached Gate No. 1, we saw that police barricades had been put up. The barricades were between the Holy Family Hospital and the Sports complex, where the campus begins. The Police had started barricading off the campus since the morning. The students wanted to march to Parliament Street so they began scaling the barricades. I was also on top of the barricade. The Police started dragging us down. This was around 3:30 PM. Students were detained and were taken to Badarpur Police Station, several students were injured. One female student Shaziya got a head injury. She was taken to the hospital by other students.

**“One female student Shaziya was hit. She got a head injury.
She was taken to the hospital by other students.”**

After the detained students were taken away, the lathi-charge began. Several students ran into the campus. I was on the road near Gate No. 1. In response to the lathi-charge students started pelting stones on the Police. The Police also pelted stones. After the lathi-charge the Police started tear gas shelling. Sumedha, a friend of mine, and I started shouting slogans against the Police – Delhi Police *Murdabad* (Down with Delhi Police). We were two women shouting slogans. The Police started tear gas shelling. I had never experienced it before. I couldn't breathe. I felt like I was suffocating and I would die. I was walking on the street alone and sat down. A friend gave me water to drink. I felt better. The students retaliated and started sloganeering and the Police moved back. The Police started lathi-charging again and throwing tear gas shells. This advance and retreat by the students and police continued. It wasn't as if the students ran away. Then the Police lobbed tear gas shells into the campus and entered through Gate No. 1 (near the Engineering and Architecture faculty). How can they tear gas students doing their exams and lathi-charge those who hadn't even joined the protests? They also fired tear gas and stun grenades inside the campus from outside the gates.

“How can they tear gas students doing their exams and lathi-charge those who hadn’t even joined the protests?”

I also went into the campus from Gate No. 4 and took refuge inside the campus book store as the Police was chasing students and lathi-charging. My friend Sumedha was with me. There were others. My eyes were burning. The book shop owner gave me water. Community members had come by then and they gave us salt which we used on our face. There were about 3-4 girls in the book shop. I can’t exactly remember when it all ended. I went back to my hostel well past 11:30 PM.

On the 13th itself we decided that we would call a strike, and boycott exams as many students had been detained or were in hospital. Some students were hospitalized at Holy Family Hospital on the 13th. There are various entrance exams too. We made posters and circulated it on social media. We also planned to block exams. I was worried as I am in my final year and I had an exam the next day.

December 15: We had first decided that on the 15th we would take out a peace march and called it Gandhi Peace March, within the local community from 12:00 PM. We were not planning to march to Parliament Street. Then we decided to join that march. There were barricades outside New Friends Colony Community Centre. We sat down, shouting slogans. The others who were behind us, when they saw the barricades changed their route and took the Mata Mandir Road. We also walked behind Mata Mandir, towards New Friends Colony (NFC). The march was totally peaceful till then. At the NFC red light, there was a huge deployment of police. They started lathi-charging. There wasn’t a single woman Police there. The male policemen were beating the female students. When the beating started many people started running. I fell down and as many people fell on top of me. The police continued lathi-charging. I felt I suffocated. I couldn’t think. I was choking. Somehow, I managed to get up. Half the crowd had dispersed by then. They ran towards the campus. This is when that incident took place with Chanda, Ladeeda, Aysha and Shaheen. [Refer testimony of Chanda, Ladeeda, Aysha]

We started shouting – *Dilli Police bahar jao* (Delhi Police go out). They started dragging Shaheen out on to the road, all the while abusing – *madar***d, behen***d* (mother f***ker, sister f***ker). This went on for 5-7 minutes. A man in civil dress without an ID card was also assisting the police in beating us (video evidence is available). I don’t think he was from the Delhi Police. There were many policemen and this man was in civil clothes. He kept telling us girls, “we will hit you, leave”. We kept shouting, “We won’t do anything we will go back”. This tussle and lathi-charge went on for 7-8 minutes and then the Police went ahead.

By the time we got back two buses were on fire. We were quite close to the buses. There were only policemen in front of the bus as the students had already been lathi-charged and had run into the campus and were hiding wherever they could find place. There were local NFC people around the bus but no students. Ladeeda's situation was critical as she is an asthma patient. Shaheen was bleeding from his nose and mouth. We were trying to get them to hospital. We asked one car to give us a lift. They refused. We got an auto to take Ladeeda and Shaheen to the hospital (Holy Family). Three of us remained – Aysha, Chanda and myself. Chanda couldn't walk as her foot was hurt. Three of us took an auto which dropped us at Jullena, as there was a road block after that. Despite our injuries we walked from Jullena to Holy Family. The road was packed with police and no civilians.

Scene at the hospital (on December 15) and Akhtarista's conversations with others:

While we were at the hospital many parents came. Many whose children were admitted were crying. One domestic worker who participated in the protest was beaten very badly and injured. Her situation shook me up. Her employer called while I was at the hospital to find out about her. Many students who had been beaten on campus were being brought to the hospital and I spoke to several. I asked one student in a wheelchair how he got injured. He was praying at the *masjid* (Mosque) when a lot of police came and shouted – *tu namaz padhega, abhi batata hu tujhe* (you want to read *namaz*, we will show you) – and then started lathi-charging. The Imam was also beaten, all those praying were beaten. This is the masjid near Gate No. 8.

My friends, Shoaib and Chandan were also beaten. Chandan and Shoaib had hidden in the washroom and locked themselves in the boys' hostel. When they didn't open the door for the police, they broke it down. They tied Shoaib's hands behind his back, with his shawl (like in Kashmir) and started beating him. Shoaib is a second-year law student. Chandan, a mass communication student was admitted at Al Shifa hospital. He had a head injury. Another student from Islamic studies, Manan – whose phone had been snatched and his hand was injured also came.

The teachers, boy's provost reached the hospital at 10:30 PM. The administration and teachers took care of the payment at the hospital. The provost of my hostel called saying that she had sent an ambulance to bring me to the hostel. But I decided not to go as I didn't feel safe going back. The head of department came and provided us a car and I went to Chanda's room. She lives off campus near Jamia. I don't know till when I am here or going home. For now I am here.



Aysha Renna, Ladeeda, Chanda, Akhtarista, Shaheen under police attack on Dec 15.

Photo: Scroll.in

Name: Aysha Renna

Age: 22

Profession: Student, MA (honours) History, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Calicut, Kerala

Current residence: Private accommodation near Jamia Community Centre

Aysha has been in Delhi for 2 years. Before this she did a BA in Farook College, Calicut. Her father is head master in a school and her mother is a teacher. Her husband is a freelance journalist. He is from Thrissur.

My husband is here with me. We are living together here near the Jamia Community Centre. He is fully supporting me.

“O my parents are proud, not scared!”

My parents are so much proud. Scared? O my parents are proud, not scared! A lot of hate campaigns have started against us. But they are calling me and telling me, ‘Don’t become low by seeing all those things. You are doing something great. You have to go ahead in spite of all the things they say about you.’

December 12: I was among the girls giving slogans in front of the Ghalib statue. There are no leaders like that. It is just all of us together. Our slogans were – against Amit Shah,



Aysha Renna being dragged by police on Dec 13

Photo: Prabhat Tewari

against Hindutva Agenda. To revoke NRC, revoke CAA, and like *Amit Shah tera naam hai Islamophobia*, (*Amit Shah your name is Islamophobia*) *Hum kya chahate Azadi, BJP se Azadi*, (*What do we want? Freedom. Freedom from the BJP*) *Sanghwad ki Qabar khodenge Jamia ki dharti par/ Manuwad ke Qabar khodenge Jamia ki dharti par*, (*Hindutva shall be buried at Jamia. Upper caste ideology shall be buried at Jamia.*) *Neel Salaam, Assalaam, Intifada inquilab!* (*Blue salute, Long live the uprising*) It was very powerful for us and for everyone. It was the beginning.

**“There are no leaders in this.
It is all of us together.”**

December 13: This is the date when they blocked us in front of Gate no. 7. They attacked me very brutally, they dragged me. I think

you might have seen in the videos; I was wearing a blue scarf that day. It was 4-ish. We got on to the barricade. We were not at all scared. People ask us whether you were scared, whether you have fear, but we don't. Actually, this Hindutva agenda targeting us is the scariest thing and we are facing that. So, now why do we have to be scared of this police or their police *lathi*? The cause is right. We have to do it now.

The female police pulled us off the barricade. At that time there were some girls from Delhi University, they protected us, like when the police tried to drag us and detain us, they jumped over us and forced the police to back-off. That is why both Ladeeda and me got away but my friend Ayisha Noureen got detained on that day. She was the only girl in the Badarpur Police Station. She has now gone back to Kerala. **

**“We were not at all scared. People ask us whether you were scared, whether you have fear, but we don't. Actually, this Hindutva agenda targeting us is the scariest thing and we are facing that. So, now why do we have to be scared of this police or their police *lathi*?
The cause is right. We have to do it now.”**

The police used *lathis*. We were on the other side of the barricade – because we were dragged to the other side and they tried to detain us from there. They literally physically dragged our friends to the bus to take them to Badarpur Police Station. After that, all the clashes happened. The police entered the campus, used tear gas. So, what happened was that a



Aysha Renna protesting. Photo: Prabhat Tewari

group of students including us were stuck near the Holy Family Hospital, because they closed the other end with barricades. Since we did not have any strength to break that barricade at that moment, we started raising slogans from there. Then we came to know that police were using brutal methods on the Jamia side, so we went to the Sukhdev Vihar metro station, took the train to the Jamia metro station and came back to join the protesters. We were probably the last lot to use the Jamia metro station that day. Soon after that, they shut it down.

Whenever they grabbed me, they pinched me all over. It is like pincer. It was so painful. All over my body. This was so much pain at that moment of time. It feels like they dig their nails into your skin. You know the Delhi lady police, they don't use *lathis*, but they have some special brutal kind of finger pinching method



Aysha Renna protesting. Photo: PTI

[Aysha showed us deep purple bruises all over her arms, shoulder, neck]. Lady police, instead of using *lathi* is using these kinds of methods – pinching, dragging. They dragged me by my neck. They also kept trying to pull off my *hijab*. This was horrible. I later had severe pain in my neck, but it has become better now. I went to the hospital much later, because at that time, in that moment, we were not in a mood to go to hospital at all, so we stood with the protest.

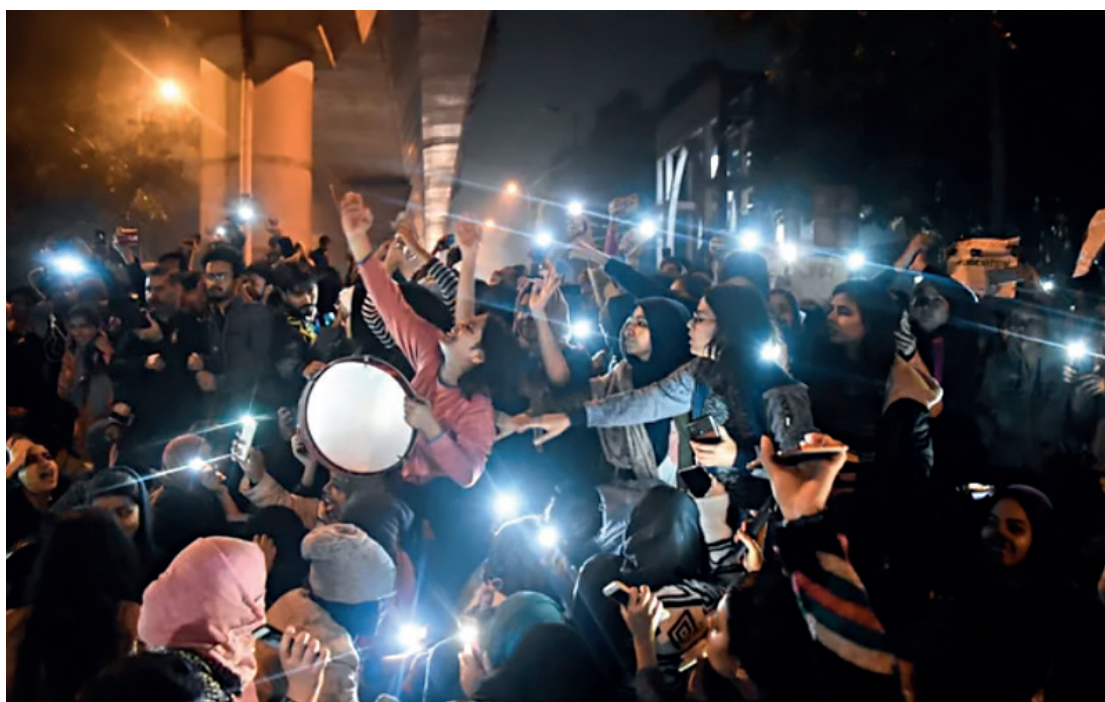
**“You know the Delhi lady cops they don’t use *lathis*, but they have some special brutal kind of finger pinching method.”
[Aysha showed us deep purple bruises on her arms, shoulder, neck]**

December 14: The next day we protested completely by boycotting the examinations. That was a peaceful thing. But you could tell the local people were so agitated now towards this CAA, and towards the attack on students.

December 15: So, on the 15th the local people joined with us in the protest, and then the whole thing happened. We were five girls stuck alone in New Friends Colony – Chanda, Fatima Tasneem, Ladeeda and Akhtarista. And then Shaheen joined us. You have seen that viral video. All I will say is that as they were beating us, there was no lady cop. They hit me badly on my back. They hit Ladeeda, while she was struggling to breathe because of her asthma. And Shaheen was only trying to tell the police that he will just take her to the hospital but they just kept hitting and yelling, and saying “*Saala*” and other very horrible things. There was no lady cop at that time. But the male police used *lathi* over us. A person in civilian clothes was also there beating us. He had a *lathi* and helmet and a hard-outer vest, with no police uniform. People say they are sponsored *goondas*. I don’t know. Please find out.

**** We spoke to Ayisha Noreen on the phone on December 21. She was in Mallapuram, Kerala. She is a 22 year-old final year student doing her MA in Media Governance at Jamia.**

I was the only girl in the bus they took to Badarpur Police Station on December 13. Rest were all boys. There was no camera there to record how they dragged me by my *hijab* and my neck. But I was not scared. I was sitting alone downstairs in the police station with one lady (I don’t know her exact designation) and the boys were upstairs. Where I was sitting there was one cop in the station, I did not note his name, saying such communal things – this is the law of India and you can leave the country if you don’t like it! We got picked up around 3:00 to 4:00 PM and released maybe 7:30 or 8:00 PM. On December 17, I left for Mallapuram, because the proctor and all were also worried and encouraging us to leave the girls hostel. But I hear the hostel is open, and mess is still working, and I want to come back in a week or so, and join the protest again with my friends.



Chanda playing a *dafli* (tambourine) during the protest on Dec 12. Photo: The Quint

Name: Chanda Yadav

Age: 20

Profession: Student, BA Hindi Honours at Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Chandoli District, Uttar Pradesh

Current Residence: Off-campus house in Jamia Nagar

Chanda is from a small village in Chandoli district in Uttar Pradesh. She is the first girl in her village to go to a University. She lives on her own outside the campus in private accommodation.

December 11: We started planning for a women's march. We had a meeting at the new girls' hostel and made a group where we added others to reach out to more women. We initiated the call for the march against CAA and NRC.

December 12: The next day, students from the Old Girls Hostel (Tikona park) and New Girls Hostel were to march inside the campus. Girls met in front of Gate nos. 7 & 8, in front of the Ghalib statue– many came to protest against NRC and CAA. The protest was when the photo was taken that went viral – of three girls standing and I was playing the *dafli*. It began raining very heavily but the was shifted to the library. We ended the protest at 10:30 PM with a call for a march from Jamia to Parliament from 2:00 PM on the December 13 to begin at Gate no. 7 along with the Jamia Teachers' Association (JTA).

December 13: We had a public meeting with JTA from 2:00 PM in front of Gate no. 7, in front of Ghalib Lawn, and then we started our march from 3:00 PM. We gave a call for boycotting the papers (exams of 3rd year BA from December 14) for the next few days, which were to be taken by about 1000 students and then went to Gate no. 1 where we continued the protest. It was a completely non-violent protest.



Chanda Yadav climbing the barricade. Photo: Prabhat Tiwari

As soon as we reached Gate no. 1, we saw there were barricades there, ahead of the sports complex. Some students climbed over the barricades. The police used tear gas and stun grenades (*aag phir dhuwan waali*). Police hit journalists, beat students. The protestors scattered into groups – those at Gate no. 1 (at the barricade) near Holy Family Hospital and those at Jullena red light. Most of them were behind Gate no. 1. Police began hitting students who were on both sides of the barricades. We were caught in-between the two barricades – but the Police on either side did not allow us to go. Several students were detained and sent to Badarpur Police Station. Many students were hospitalised at Holy Family Hospital, and Al Shifa Hospital.

December 14: At Gate no. 7, many students gathered and the protests continued.

December 15: We decided on a march and gave a call for it to begin at 11:30 AM – we gave the call to the community around Jamia and there was increased participation from students in the girls' hostels. We began moving towards Jullena from Batla House. The protest started at 12:30 PM and at 3:00 PM we reached Gate no. 7. We sat there for sometime. Then we moved towards Jullena – there was a barricade on the

New Friends Colony Community Centre side, where the Surya Hotel is also located. Police were standing there with *lathis*, so we changed the route. We reached the New Friends Colony red light when we saw police with *lathis*, who had come suddenly – they weren't there earlier. They came suddenly as if to attack and students started running. There was a stampede. I fell and it seemed like there were many people above me and I couldn't breathe. When the students who were on top of me got up, the police came and beat me on my legs and kept shouting at me to get up and leave.

“They gave *ma-behen gaali*, (sister f*ker, mother f***ker) and said, ‘*randi ki aulad, ja nikal!*’ (get out of here, you child of a whore!)”**

They gave *ma-behan gaali*, (sister f***ker and mother f***ker) and said, “*randi ki aulad, ja nikal!*” (get out of here you child of a whore!). I sat on the road, friends gave me some water. We were just five girls and one boy (Shaheen) and about 10-15 Police behind us. They kept shouting at Shaheen and saying ‘*kheencho aur maaro*’ (grab and beat him). He had a press card because he works with an online media portal and tried to show it to the Police but it was no use. They kept on shouting “pull him and beat him”. For nearly 5-6 minutes, they kept beating him with their *lathis*. We girls jumped on him and dared the police to beat us and stop beating him.

Shaheen was bleeding, Ladeeda was having an asthma attack. We tried to look for some transport to take them but no one stopped their car. I don't blame them but the situation was like that. One auto finally agreed to take them to Holy Family Hospital. Three of them went ahead in that auto – Ladeeda, Shaheen and one girl. Three of us also



Chanda Yadav with Akhtarista and others after the attack on Dec 15. Photo: From Twitter

tried to get back in an auto but we were stopped at Jullena and couldn't go further because of the barricades. It was 5:30 PM but there was no one on the road. The police then threatened us, “go fast, or else...” We said don't threaten – there were those without police uniform in that group. We then walked to Holy Family Hospital. We got treatment for our injuries in the hospital, but MLC [medico legal case examination] was not done. And they didn't do for others also, I think. By then we got the news that the Police was in the campus and was beating up the students.

**“We got treatment for our injuries in the hospital,
but no MLC.”**

On campus, we heard that the police had entered the boys’ hostel, library, bathrooms, etc. They used tear gas, beat students with *lathis* and took away their phones. Those who were beaten were just left there. On the first floor in the library, students rushed in trying to escape the Police. They locked themselves in and switched off their phones. The police came there and barged into the library and asked all those who were there to raise their hands over their heads and to come out. One of my friends had a bleeding hand which she had to raise above her head and walk out.

**“They called students – *Jinnah ke dalal* (agents of Jinnah),
go to Pakistan”**

So many students ran to the campus thinking that it was safe. The police abused them “*Jinnah ke dalal* (Jinnah’s agents), go to Pakistan” and the police entered and even broke bathroom doors. They entered the girl’s reading hall, switched off bathroom lights. The police even went into the masjid – over there they caught a boy and beat him very badly. The police actually cannot enter without the permission of the Vice Chancellor (VC).

Many students were injured – so many were injured but they are scared to come forward as they think that they may not get their degrees. That night from about 9:30 PM onwards professors came and took students from Holy Family Hospital and Al Shifa Hospital to their respective homes. I also got home. A professor took us home. They were quite helpful. I did not sleep on the 15th. I think I finally slept at 6:00 AM on the 16th. At 10:00 AM I woke up suddenly feeling very scared and went to a friend’s house.

My mother says come home, you have nothing to do with this, don’t be in the forefront, stay back, girls should not be getting involved in all these things. You know how it is – my family is very conservative, patriarchal. I come from Chandoli district in Uttar Pradesh, from a small village there. I am the first girl in my village to go to a University. I understand how they think but I cannot remain distant.

**“I did not sleep on the 15th – I think I finally slept at 6:00 AM
on the 16th. At 10:00 AM I woke up suddenly
feeling very scared and went to a friend’s house.**

This will affect the girls a lot – it is not easy for them to come to University, they have to negotiate with their families and then something like this will only make it more difficult. They are my friends, and this is my university. The CAA and NRC are unconstitutional whether you are a Hindu or Muslim or someone else.

They have to negotiate with their families and then something like this will only make it more difficult.”

December 16: We had a peaceful protest on campus with our hands on our mouth from 7:00 PM till late. Some boys were taken to Okhla and some boys (non-students) have been taken today. At 11:00 AM there was a force of police opposite Holy Family Hospital. Police is strictly checking Aadhar card in the area. Now, the University is closed till January 6th – the reason provided is “winter vacation”. I had received the message on WhatsApp. But how can this be when I still have two papers remaining – I am a 3rd year Hindi Honours student. I am worried about this – I have to start planning for my future studies and don’t have many months left, but I haven’t been able to complete two papers. On December 19, there is call for the protest – whoever is here will join. I will be there. In Jamia, we will continue the protest and they will be peaceful protests. Till CAA is not taken down we will continue to protest.

**“They are my friends, and this is my university.
The CAA and NRC are unconstitutional whether you are a
Hindu or Muslim or someone else.”**



Dayar-e-Shauq Mera is the Jamia tarana (Land of my hopes). A protester at Jamia on Dec 16.

Photo: Farah Naqvi

Name: Farheen Fatima

Age: 23

Profession: Student, Mass Communications, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh

Residence: Jamia girls hostel

Farheen's father is abroad and her mother is in Aligarh. Her elder brother did his Masters from TISS, and her younger brother is in Class 11, studying in Aligarh. They are originally from Bihar but the family felt there would be better options elsewhere and therefore decided to move out of Bihar.

December 12: That night there was a call for a women's march. We were gathered on the road outside Gate no. 7 and for sometime we blocked the roads and then we entered the campus – you must have seen the picture of the three women standing and giving speeches – that is from the same night. They were talking when it started raining very heavily, so everyone dispersed and it ended haphazardly.

December 13: I had an exam. I was coming out after giving the exam, when I saw barricades being taken to Gate no. 1 by some policemen and I even discussed with my

friends that they are going to do something. We knew that a call had been given by the Jamia Teachers Association (JTA) for a protest at 2:00 PM and at 3:00 PM there was a call given by students of Jamia.

We reached Gate no. 1 where there was a barricade, I was in the front, and some girls were on the barricade. These girls told the police to let us go, that we are having a peaceful march. Suddenly something happened and everyone started running. There was a commotion. I was there in the crowd. I fell and people fell on me. Students started running and some of them fell on me while running. A boy said, “she is a girl, don’t fall on her” and he helped me. While I was running, the police tried to hit me but they saw that I was girl so they pushed me but did not hit me. They said, “Go inside”. Luckily I escaped. This was near Gate no. 1, near Engineering faculty. We were at Gate no.1, we were just standing there and we realised suddenly that police were using tear gas inside the campus. Within 5-10 minutes, it was like a war zone – we heard stun guns – those that are very loud and sound like bomb blasts – it was very scary, like some explosion. They were using tear gas everywhere. This happened around 4:30 PM and continued till 7:00 or 8:00 PM. I think we reached our hostel at around 10:30 PM.

“It was like a war zone. We heard stun guns – those that are very loud and sound like bomb blasts. It was very scary, like some explosion. They were using tear gas everywhere.”

December 15: Some of the students joined a march of “local people of Jamia” that went to Batla House, Shaheen Bagh and Jullena side. Around 3:00 PM or 4:00 PM, I got a call from my friend that she was in Jullena and they were being lathi-charged because a bus was set on fire. Some of my friends were stuck in the library, I was in the J&K Girls Hostel inside the campus but didn’t want to stay there. So, I rushed to Gate no. 7 – after crossing Gate no. 8 you get to Gate no. 7. Everyone was saying not to go, as the police was already there. When I reached Gate no. 8, it was very crowded. Police was already using tear gas. At Gate no. 8 after about 10-15 minutes police entered the campus – Gate no. 8, they went inside the mosque and thrashed people who were there. Then they went to the History Department and vandalised the whole place. Then they even came till Physiotherapy Department, which is like a *chauraha* (crossroad). We were standing at Maggi Point, next to the Law Faculty. The Law Faculty is very inside but the tear gas was coming till there.

If you cross Law Faculty, you get to enter the girls’ hostel lane. There is an escape route from behind; after the residential coaching academy, there is a gate that opens to Ghaffar Manzil. Most of the people who wanted to escape, they went there. By then people were texting each other that the locals have placed a ladder there and whoever wants to escape can. The situation was so bad that those who were injured could not

go anywhere. They had barricaded the whole campus. If you went out you knew that you are going to be beaten.

It was a situation like anything could come and hit me. But I said no, I will not go to the hostel. Police was chasing us and we were just running. Completely horrible experience for me – it felt like my last day. They were treating the students as if they were some terrorists. They just wanted to beat them up. They were not considering that we were students and not some animals who can be beaten any way. They were just thrashing – even when students were telling them that they were not doing anything.

“They were treating the students as if they were some terrorists, they just wanted to beat them up. They were not considering that we were students and not some animals who can be beaten any way. They were just thrashing – even when students were telling them that they were not doing anything.”

It affected me a lot. I cannot sleep at nights. I can't tell my mother all this. The internet is off in Aligarh and she will panic. When I was in the hostel and heard the slightest noise, I felt like someone was coming for me, and I just couldn't sleep. The same day we also started getting news from AMU that police had entered the hostel. I haven't even eaten properly these few days. The next day the proctor came at 10:15 AM and said, “The crackdown was only for 15 minutes, the administration is with you and we will look into the matter.” We were there and saw that the crackdown lasted from 4:00 to 9:00 PM, not for 15 minutes. And this so called narrative that girls will be safe in the hostel, they will put curfews in girls' hostels. Where was the administration when this happened? That moment we had no one to approach. We were feeling helpless and stuck.

“It affected me a lot. I cannot sleep at nights. ...When I was in the hostel and heard the slightest noise, I felt like someone was coming for me, and I just couldn't sleep. The same day we also started getting news from AMU that police had entered the hostel. I haven't even eaten properly these few days.”

This is the worst that can happen to anyone. It felt like we were in a war zone. I now understand how people in conflict situations must be feeling.

“This is the worst that can happen to anyone. It felt like we were in a war zone. I now understand how people in conflict situations must be feeling.”

The hostel is almost empty. I spoke to some of the girls. Some of them can't find tickets to go home, others have financial issues and are not able to go. Many of them are from

faraway places. Some of the women students have gone to stay with others who are local. Parents will not feel like sending their girls, because you are not safe in campus even. You stay at home and study. This hampers women. It is very problematic.

**“Parents will not feel like sending the girls, because you are not safe in campus even.
You stay at home and study! This hampers women.”**

But women students, who live outside the campus, have been very cooperative. We have been getting a lot of support – people have been helping. I will be here and continue to protest against CAA and NRC.



A local community protest, Shaheen Bagh, Jamia. Photo: Ghulam Hussain

Name: Khadeeja¹

Age: 27

Profession: Homemaker

Residence: A locality near Jamia Nagar

Khadeeja currently lives with her parents in Jamia. She is married and soon hopes to join her husband who is working in Europe.

December 13: I was at home when I got a phone call around 4:00 PM from one of my brother Irfan's classmates saying that Irfan is injured and he is in the Holy Family [hospital]. I went completely blank. I didn't have any idea about what happened. I didn't know how badly he was injured. I just ran towards the hospital.

December 14: At around 1:00 PM, I joined the protest. We actually wanted to march to Jantar Mantar to join one protest we knew happening there, but we were not allowed to go. So we kept protesting at Jamia itself. It was still calm. But there was some tension in the air that there may be some police action. By 6:00 PM, we felt that instead of just sitting there, we should go around Jamia so we took out a march around Abul Fazal Enclave and Shaheen Bagh.

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

December 15: I went to Jamia through Gate no. 7 around 3:00 PM and joined the protest and there was a lot of police presence. So we thought we could march up to the barricades and do a sit-in there. So we took out the march, led by the girls. So we came beyond Jullena, near Surya Hotel, where there were barricades and sat behind the barricades. My sister talked to one senior looking policeman, requesting him to allow us to take out a peaceful march. But he explained very nicely that he couldn't allow that, but we could sit behind the barricades. So we sat there, behind the barricades, chanting our slogans like "Take back NRC", "Take back CAB", "We need justice", "*Hum Samvidhan bachane nikle hain, Aao hamara saath do, Desh bachane nikle hain, Aao hamara saath do!*" (We have stepped out to save our constitution, come join us!).

Then after 10-15 minutes, we decided to march towards Mathura Road, New Friends Colony (NFC) side. Since one group was already there, we felt wherever we go, we should be together. So we marched very peacefully towards NFC. The distance must be around 1 km or so. Now, about this bus that was burnt down – as we were marching, we saw a bus harmlessly parked there. It was all fine, there was nothing wrong with it. And we were so close to it when we crossed it. Had it been on fire, we would never have missed it. Our march ended as we reached the barricades over there. Hardly two-three minutes later, all of a sudden people started running, saying that the police were doing lathi-charge.

We were appealing to everyone not to run, to stay right there. We had our Indian flags in our hands, so the boys tried to cover us with the flags thinking that may be they won't hurt us if they saw the Indian flags. We just stood there as people ran past us. But very soon the lathi-charge became brutal. The police were using tear gas and everyone ran to save their lives.

“We had our Indian flags in our hands, so the boys tried to cover us with the flags thinking that may be they won't hurt us if they saw the Indian flags.”

This was around 4:30 PM. As people ran helter-skelter, I fell down. The police were approaching with full force, the people running all over the place, my glasses fell somewhere, people ran over my body, it was mayhem! When I managed to get up, I could see no one except the [police] force. When I got up, imagine, I was sitting helplessly in the middle of the road and the police was all around me, with their sticks, rifles and stones.

I was just looking at them, wondering what next! I just decided to recite the *kalma*, looked very angrily at their eyes as if to say, “Do whatever you want to do.”

“As people ran helter-skelter, I fell down. The police were approaching with full force, the people running all over the place, my glasses fell somewhere, people ran over my body, it was mayhem! When I managed to get up, I could see no one except the [police] force.”

I got injured very badly – my entire left side was bruised and it hurts a lot. I slowly managed to get up and sit under a tree nearby, when I heard the police saying, “*Ab goli la, daud ke la!*” [Get the bullets now, get them fast!] I was so numb that I just helplessly sat there watching all this going by. I tried to look around to see if I could see anyone I knew who could help me. But all I could see was fire. When I somehow got up and started walking into the lanes, I could see them pulling out boys from wherever they were hiding and beating them with full force. And such awful language they were using!

Whichever lane I took, people were running and telling me also to run and hide. By then it had become dark. Somehow, along with some other girls, we took various lanes and escaped.

I was so tense. I didn’t know where my brother was and I had no idea where my two sisters were or what could have happened to them. I kept asking around for my sisters – how could I go home without them? I was particularly tense about my brother. There was so much noise – of explosion, chaos and confusion – it was terribly frightening. Whoever I called to enquire about my brother, said nobody seemed to know where he was. Probably he was detained. I could do absolutely nothing. They were saying that the police was patrolling the entire area.

I also heard that many students ran to the library thinking that the police would certainly not come to the second floor and into the library. I cannot give an accurate account because I wasn’t there, but from what I gathered, there were some students who were studying inside the library and some who ran in to hide. They stood in the way of the force at a distance of around 100 steps, raised their hands and told them that they were unarmed and were not going to indulge in any violence. They appealed to them to not attack them and let them go.

The police broke the CCTV cameras that were mounted at the library entrance. They told the students to sit. When they sat down, they began to beat them up brutally. The girls in that group tried to come in between the cops and the boys hoping they won’t beat the girls up, but they were severely hurt. There were no women police I heard.

Now, that we have been speaking to so many people, we are feeling a bit scared. I just hope we won’t be targeted. Even though we know that we have to speak out – that’s why on December 16, after so much happened the previous day, we went straight to the campus and talked to the media. You just never know.

“Now, that we have been speaking to so many people, we are feeling a bit scared. I just hope we won’t be targeted. Even though we know that we have to speak out – that’s why on 16th, after so much happened the previous day, we went straight to the campus and talked to the media. You just never know.”

My father is such a pillar of strength and my mother too is supportive though bit worried. I cannot even imagine what they must have gone through. My husband got to know the news and was calling me from abroad. He was worried for me. And I also want to say this, the girls were protecting boys and boys were protecting girls. We were really all there for each other.

My shoulders are hurting a lot as I fell down and I already have spondylosis, my whole body is hurting. I took some pain killers. I had irritation of the skin on my face and my eyes were also burning because of the tear gas. I was given salt to apply on that day but I can still feel the irritation. I cannot sleep peacefully and this experience still haunts me. I keep worrying about my brother who was injured and also about other girls and boys who were on the streets. I will continue to protest against CAA. We have to speak against these politics of hate *nafrat*, and uphold our rights and rise against any act like CAA which is against the Constitution. We will join the December 19 protest. After all that I had gone through, I am not scared any more.

“I will continue to protest against CAA. We have to speak against these politics of hate *nafrat*, and uphold our rights and rise against any act like CAA which is against the Constitution. We will join the December 19 protest. After all that I have gone through, I am not scared any more.”



Chanda, Ladeeda and Aysha sloganeering on Dec 12. Photo: Sreekanth Sivadasan

Name: Ladeeda Farzana

Age: 22

Profession: Student, BA in Arabic (1st year), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Calicut, Kerala

Current residence (until the students were advised to leave): Jamia old girls hostel

Ladeeda, a first year student of Arabic, has been in Delhi for just over 5 months. She arrived in August 2019. Her husband teaches sociology at a private college in Calicut and her parents live in Kannur. Her father is a salesman in a stationary shop and her mother a part-time madrasa teacher. She came all this way, not to make waves, but because the Jamia Arabic faculty is among the best in the country. She wants to do a PhD in Philosophy or Theology, travel the world, study at the world's best universities. But for now, she is part of the resistance at Jamia.

“If we will not, who else will?”

December 12: We called a march from the old girls hostel to Jamia, Gate no. 7. That was the start of the protests, by us the girls of Jamia. We never imagined there would be such a response, and a huge crowd. I am doing this because if we will not, who else will? The CAA is not just against Muslims, it is against the Constitution. I am a citizen of India. I have the right to talk about my right. CAA and NRC are both anti-national.

“I am a citizen of India. I have the right to talk about my right.”

We started from the girls hostel around 7:00 PM. Climbed on the wall. In front of Gate no. 7. On the way we were mobilising people to join. We started as a small group, but by the time we reached, there must have been maybe a thousand students or more. Maybe it was 8:00 PM or 9:00 PM. We were angry and we didn't think much, just climbed the wall to shout slogans. We believe in *bahujan* politics, in solidarities, so we shouted, “*Neel Salaam Assalam, Intifada Inquilab*” (Blue salute, Long live the uprising), “Down with CAA, NRC down down.” Most of the hostel girls were there. It was a mixed group, from all communities. All of us were leading the crowds. You can see in the pictures.

December 13: Next day a march from Jamia to Parliament was planned. After Jamia Teachers Association (JTA) protest, the march to Parliament started, from the proctor's office. The police stopped us with 2-3 rounds of barricades. That was 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM. We were forced to stop. We were peaceful. We had no weapons. Why did they begin the violence? We wanted to move forward to the Parliament, why were they forcing us to stop?

**“We were peaceful. We had no weapons.
The attack on us has made us stronger. ”**

I was beaten by the police. We tried to crawl over the barricade and they just dragged us from the barricade. It was vicious. And it was female police that day who hit us. They wanted to take us into the police van. We resisted. I can identify the police women. There was a big mixed crowd there. Many friends – Aysha Renna, DU students, JNU students, Fatima.

Then the Police started lathi-charge. I was on the other side of the barricade towards Holy Family Hospital. The lathi-charge started on this side, towards Jamia side. We were all scattered, I moved forward towards Jullena red light, towards Holy Family. Suddenly there was tear gas.

**“I've had asthma since I was 14 years old.
I could not breathe.”**

I've had asthma since I was 14 years old. I could not breathe. Inhaler was with me. I used it. Someone took me to hospital – some random guy, a student at Jamia. There I got treatment – oxygen and nebuliser, and was discharged later that night.

**“A lot of women students were hospitalised that evening.
I saw them.”**

Many women were hurt. A lot of women students were hospitalised that evening. I saw them. They had injuries on legs and arms, on muscles from *lathis*. Shazia, a fellow hosteller was given two stitches on her head. But even after that she addressed a gathering of protestors the next day! On December 14, you can see pictures of her. The attack on us has made us stronger.

One of our friends was detained at the Badarpur police station that evening – Ayisha Noureen. She was only one girl there with lots of boys. I was in hospital till night. I came back to campus by 9:00-10:00 PM. Protests were still going on! But I was not feeling well so I went back to the hostel.

December 15: Me and Aysha Renna were among those in the march to Parliament that moved towards Jullena. It was a huge procession. We don't know what happened in front. We were towards the back side. Suddenly people ran back screaming. We knew lathi-charge had started. I could not see what was happening in the lead of the procession, but I think when we reached one barricade, the protesters decided to take a back route, to another side. I am in Delhi only since a few months so I don't know names of the roads and everything. But there was mayhem. *Lathi*, tear gas, banging sounds like gunshots. People were screaming and running for cover. Me and Aysha Renna hid behind a tree. Some injured girls were there. We tried to help them. Police came banging *lathis* on the road and said to us to go back, in a threatening way. We did not know where to go. The road had become empty. Only full of police. Just a few of us girls were left there. We did feel scared.

But in the meantime our friend Shaheen Abdulla, who heard about our location from someone, and knew we were stuck, came. He is also from Kerala and knows I have asthma, so he made his way to us to try and rescue us from there. He is a student of Convergent Journalism at Jamia, and also works with the Maktoob Media, an online portal so he has their press card. He showed his press card to the Police, and said, "let me take these girls to safety", but as he was talking to them, they kept beating him on the legs! Continuously. They were just not listening.

And then they fired tear gas on the same road. It was very near to us so I could not breathe. My friends took me and we ran into the gate of one house that was not locked in New Friends Colony. It was evening time, maybe 4:00-5:00 PM.

As my friends were trying to give me the inhaler from my bag, the police started trying to enter the gate. I was not getting any breath. Tear gas was everywhere. I felt I would become unconscious. The police started entering the gate to get Shaheen, because he was the only guy there.

"We have to protect our brother, because he came to protect us!"



Ladeeda bends to cover Shaheen as Aysha wards off police on Dec 15. Photo: Twitter

But we had to protect him. We have to protect our brother, because he came to protect us. I even forgot my breathing. We just had to save him from those goons. Police dragged him. They were just abusing all the time. I covered Shaheen. We all lay down over him. I got beaten on my back. Aysha Renna on her leg. Chanda too. There was one guy in helmet with *lathi* but not in police clothes who was hitting so viciously. Who was he? I don't know.

“There was one guy in helmet and *lathi* but not in police clothes who was hitting so viciously. Who was he? I don't know.”

Finally police stopped hitting us only because they saw two-three media cameras recording it.

“Police stopped hitting us only when they saw media cameras recording it.”

I just fell down on the road then. I was unconscious. I had used up my full strength in covering Shaheen. Somehow we stopped one autorickshaw and left for the police station. I could not breathe and Shaheen was bleeding. Police kept trying to stop us from leaving. Why? If you wanted us to disperse then when we are trying to leave, you want to grab us and hold us and beat us. Why? Why? One time the police even tried to grab Shaheen from inside the autorickshaw. At Holy Family we both got treatment. By then Aysha Renna also came with Chanda who was injured in her leg.

We came to know the police had entered Jamia. It was shocking. We were crying inside the hospital. Our friends were there. Why have they entered our campus brutally

beaten our friends? I was so desperate I just kept calling everyone I knew. I had some numbers of Kerala Members of Parliament (MPs), so we just kept dialling randomly. I think I spoke to one N. K. Premachandran, he is an MP. I just kept saying, do something, do something.

Back home in Kannur, I have two younger brothers and a younger sister. I am the oldest. My parents are proud of me. I am standing up for a good cause, my father said and he sent me a screenshot of that December 12 picture. “Be bold”, he told me on the phone. My mother is worried because media keeps going and getting bytes from them also. One English media channel told my mother, the police is going to charge your daughter under UAPA! They are scared too but did not say “come back.” My husband is very supportive. That is why I married him. It was a love marriage, not arranged. I just told my parents I found a partner who will support me in whatever I want to do.

“Be bold, my father told me on the phone!”
“I am a living example of the fake narration about Muslim women”

I will study. I will do my PhD, and if I see injustice I will react also. I am a living example of the fake narration about Muslim women. This fake narration of liberals that say women are oppressed and Muslim women have to take permission from husbands and *papas* [fathers] to do anything. I am an individual. I am a person. We are citizens of India. We are equal.



Photo: Sreekanth Sivadasan

Name: Madiha Aziz

Age: 24

Profession: Former student, MA in Sociology (completed in 2018), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Resident: Abul Fazal Enclave, Jamia Nagar

Madiha has done both her BA and MA from Jamia Millia Islamia and is presently exploring options for further education. She lives with her parents close to the University. She has close ties to the area and Jamia.

December 15: I saw everything unfolding before my eyes on Sunday evening. It was around 5:00 PM. I was a little late. The protests outside the University were underway. I decided go into the campus rather than protest on the road. I will be safe inside, I thought. I entered through Gate no. 7.

I was inside the campus with my friends when we suddenly saw tear gas outside the gate. There was a lot of commotion. So we started moving further in (away from the road) towards the library. We were sitting on the library steps, quite scared. There was *afra tafri* (chaos) all around. "The police are going to enter the campus! The police are going to enter the campus!" – spread like wild fire. A friend of mine took my hand and dragged me towards the PhD research section, which is above the library. We were

very scared. We thought, OK, even if the police come into the campus they won't enter the library and classrooms.

“We were very scared. We thought, OK, even if the police come into the campus they won't enter the library and classrooms.”

We saw the police enter the gate. We saw them beat the guards very badly. We saw them beating students near the Xerox point. It was one student to 3-4 police. The students had no chance of escaping. We were watching from the window. In a sense we had a birds' eye view. We were quite a large group of students and many of us were girls.

Then we realised that the police intended to enter the buildings. We locked the doors of the room. Put off the lights. Turned off our phones. We didn't want the police to know where we were hiding. We were cowering on the floor in silence. Then we heard *cheekhne ki awaz* (screams). We realised that they had entered the library. We knew from the screams that girls were being beaten.

Then they (police) came upstairs. It was around 7:00 PM. As my phone was off I don't know the exact time. They switched on the lights. We did not panic. I don't know exactly how the police came in or who opened the doors. We did not scream. We did not resist. We were told to go downstairs. We were not lathi-charged. No grenade (tear gas) was thrown.

**“One policeman shouted – ‘haath upar karo!’ (put your hands up!).
It felt like we have stolen something, we are the *gunhegar* (guilty).
There was not a single policewoman anywhere.
All along they mentally tortured us. They threatened us –
‘put off our phones or we will arrest you!’”**

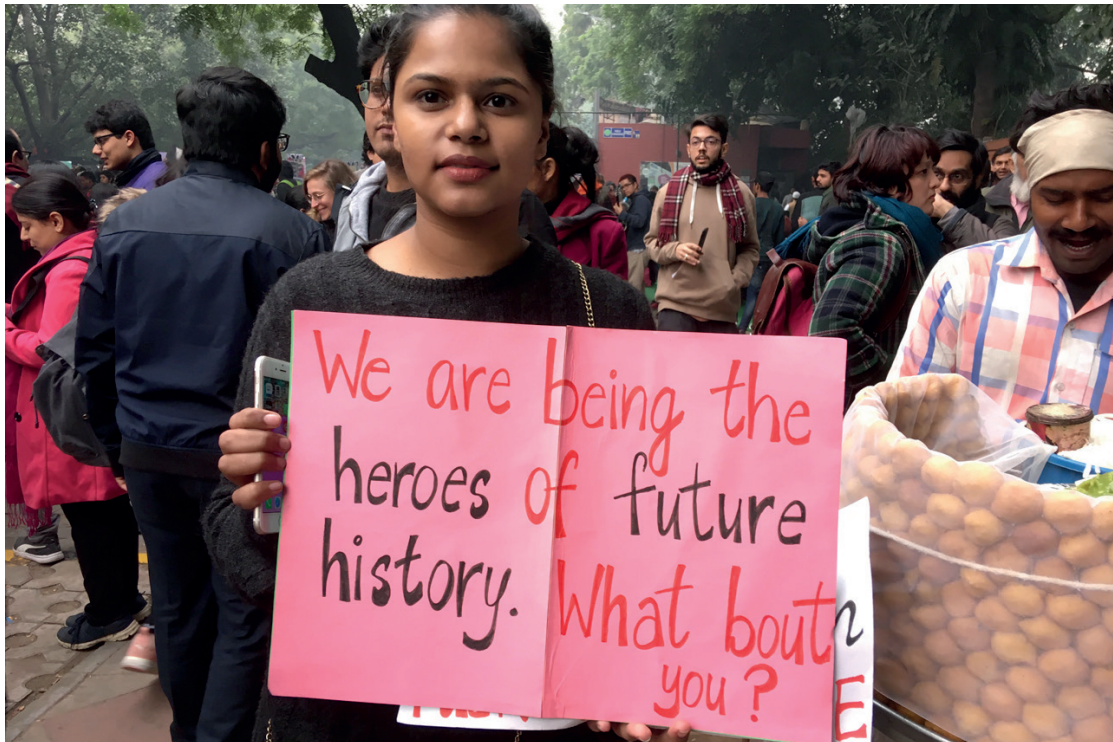
When we came down, we saw the aftermath of the violence. We saw the tear gas shells. Everything was broken – windows, books, tables, chairs. We didn't know where we were being taken. They stopped us near the Xerox point. We saw a group of boys sitting near the masjid gate surrounded policemen. I don't know what had happened. We were taken out from the masjid gate, made to walk along the side of the main campus, towards Sukhdev Vihar. One policeman shouted – “haath upar karo!” (put your hands up!). It felt like we had stolen something, we are the *gunhegar* (guilty). The police were constantly provoking us – “Ab maar ke dikha!” (now attack and show us!). There was not a single policewoman anywhere. All along they mentally tortured us. They threatened us, “put off our phones or we will arrest you”.

“They came *maarne ke iradey se* (with the intent to beat), to communalise the protest. But all classes and communities were beaten. No one here was Hindu or Muslim. *Hum sab Hindustani lad rahe the!* (We were all Indians fighting!)”

After the violence, especially against the girls, there is a *junoon* (strong desire) within us that we girls have to speak. We will resist this violence. After police representatives denied that they had vandalised the library in the media, I knew I had to speak. I was there, how could he say that! The police are saying that they came to disperse the crowds. I know there were no threatening crowds inside. They came *maarne ke iradey se* (with the intent to beat), to communalise the protest. But all classes and communities were beaten. No one here was Hindu or Muslim. *Hum sab Hindustani lad rahe the!* (We were all Indians fighting!)

“If we girls do not raise our voices then how will people know the truth? ...This movement is not about any gender, any religion, any caste, any group. They are trying to communalise it. We will not let them. This thing is driving us. We are fighting for our rights.”

Half the students who were beaten were in hospitals. They couldn't speak. The rest were in police stations. The girl victims are afraid of coming out. They fear threatening calls will start coming to them. The police are targeting the boys. *To bachey hum log* (So, we are the ones left to fight). If we girls do not raise our voices then how will people know the truth? After the library incident, the girls are coming out, even with their mothers. Now their families are not stopping them. This movement is not about any gender, any religion, any caste, any group. They are trying to communalise it. We will not let them. This thing is driving us. We are fighting for our rights.



A young protestor in support of Jamia, against CAA & NRC, Jantar Mantar. Photo: Farah Naqvi

Name: Nameera Nawaz Khan

Age: 25

Profession: Student, MA in Media Governance (final year), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Meerut

Current residence (until the protests): Abul Fazal Enclave, Jamia Nagar

Nameera Nawaz Khan, who comes from Meerut, is granddaughter of Major General Shah Nawaz Khan, a freedom fighter who served in the INA, and was convicted by the British Army for treason. Major General Shah Nawaz Khan hailed from Matore Village in Rawalpindi. But at independence, like millions he chose India and served it his entire life, including as minister in Nehru's cabinet. On December 13, 2019, his granddaughter also stood up for her country.

**"I am glad my grandfather is not around to see this day.
He would have died a thousand times."**

December 13: So it all started December 13, Friday. We had our exam. We had already got notification through a message that there is a protest. That Jamia Teachers Association (JTA) is standing in protest against the bill. As we finished our exams, *hum*

log, sab log (all of us) one by one after lunch, we all reached and gathered inside Gate no. 7. For a long time we were there. Just shouting slogans in protest. A crowd slowly gathered. When a lot of people had gathered, after about like an hour by about 3:00 PM, the rally slowly started moving towards Sukhdev Vihar side. As we were going forward near Gate no. 1, police had already come with barricades, so that students/teachers could not go any further. We stopped there. Everyone knew we could not go further. We all knew there is police. More people gathered. The entire road got filled with people. As far the eye could see. I stood there too. The CAA and NRC are wrong, and I mean it is against our country.

No one did anything. We just stood there, shouting slogans and holding up posters, along with other students. Peacefully. Suddenly it became violent. There was tear gas everywhere. People were running. Suddenly police was using *lathis*, pulling kids.

“The CAA and NRC are wrong, against our country.”

Many were frightened and came inside the campus gates. But the tear gas, first it was quite far. Then it came inside the campus. That was shocking. No one felt they could throw it inside. Students kept coming in and going out.

In a desperate defence some students picked up stones lying around and threw them back. We are students. We had no protection. They had helmets and shields. Near the Engineering Dept at Gate no. 1, tear gas shells were bursting. Some people had got packets of salt, that is all we could do, and my friends were applying them to their cheeks, under the eyes, where ever there was irritation. We were all in a state of shock I think. How could this happen? This is my university. I come here to study everyday. They turned it into a warzone.

**“We are students. We had no protection.
They had helmets and shields.”**

The police entered the Engineering Department gate. Firing things in the air, throwing things at us. I don't know what they were. Stun grenades? Or, something else? All I know was the flash and sound of boom boom boom was everywhere! One tear gas can fell near me. I was with my friends and classmates. I recognised them all. It was just us, all students. Vismay, Kashif, Faraz and many others. Another classmate, Ayisha Noureen, was picked up by the police.

Police tear gas *door door phaink rahi thi* (throwing as far as they could). They started coming deliberately wherever there was a crowd. Why were they attacking us? We had nothing in our hands.

I stayed with the protests till about 10:00 PM and then I walked home, alone. It's about

15 minutes away to my aunt's place in Abul Fazal Enclave, where I live. I was shaken and shocked.

The next day I moved to my brother's home in Noida. We have had people over – many students evacuated from hostels. Many of my friends are at Jamia because they wanted to join Civil Services, the IAS. This is not why they came here, to be beaten up. Many were not part of the protests. They were just peaceful students. They were told it would harm their professional chances of joining the Civil Services if they took part in any demonstration, so they stayed away. Still they were affected. Traumatized. This is what they did to aspiring IAS youngsters. Traumatized them.

I am proud of having been there at the start of the protest on December 13. But I feel like a coward for not being there on December 15. This is not what India was supposed to look like. I am glad my grandfather is not alive to see this day. He would have died a thousand times.

Ayisha Noureen, my classmate who was taken into detention on December 13, was such a quiet girl in class. You would never imagine there would be such a fighter in her. I saw her, shouting slogans as she was being hauled away by the cops.



Young protesters in Jamia. Photo: Sarojini N

Name: Nasima Choudhury

Age: 23 years

Profession: Former student, completed BA (honours) in Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Guwahati

Current residence: Guwahati (formerly at Jamia girls hostel)

Nasima is from Assam – Guwahati. She graduated this year. She came to Delhi from Guwahati a month ago to collect her degree and certificates. Nasima is a member of AISA and was part of Pinjra Tod in Jamia. She has been part of the protests from the beginning, that is the 12th of December.

I would like to mention that my name has been included in the Assam NRC list and I am apparently safe, an 'Indian', but I am against NRC and CAA. I have been through the NRC procedure in Assam and I know how it takes a toll on our private, professional and personal lives. You are called for a hearing at any time, any day, you have to be present, your family members have to be present, your legacy data gets mixed up. It is a torturous thing that everybody – Muslims, women, children, men, old, young – everybody goes through. I wouldn't want my fellow Indians to go through what we did.

**“I’ve been through the NRC in Assam.
It is a torturous thing that everybody – Muslims, women,
children, men, old, young – everybody goes through.
I wouldn’t want my fellow Indians to go through what we did.”**

It is an exercise at such a large scale that, nobody, nobody can ensure that it will be problem free, error free. It is impossible. I have had my legacy data mixed up with someone from another district. I remember, one time in 2018, I was in Delhi and I had to be present, but I couldn’t travel as the tickets were really costly. So, my native family (which is from Silchar, Barak Valley), my entire family, my aunt, my uncles, my grandfather, everybody had to travel 300 kms. to Guwahati to sign a petition that I was a member of their family.

December 15: On the Sunday, there was a call for a march by the community and Jamia students. There was a huge crowd, larger than we had ever imagined. Around 3:00 PM, a friend who is a member of one of the student organizations, got a call from the SHO saying that the police would give protection till Jullena, and not beyond that. I was a bit disturbed. If you are giving us protection then why only till Jullena?

The crowd had reached NFC and we went to NFC to see what was going on. People were telling us, *ladkiya mat jao* (girls don’t go). I was with my friend Parveen. We were like, what is this? Just because we are girls. *Maar hi lenge, kya kar lenge* (they will beat, what else). We were not ready to give up.

**“People were telling us, *ladkiya mat jao* (girls don’t go).
We were like, what is this? Just because we are girls...
We were not ready to give up. ”**

Just after we reached Jullena we heard that a bus has been burnt. There was commotion all over. The police started lathi-charge, so we hid inside Evergreen Sweets. The police shouted at us. A reporter was there. He was a journalist. A policeman told him, “*mobile bandh kar, video bandh kar.*” (shut your mobile, don’t video) So, I was like, “aren’t you a journalist?” And he said, “I guess I am but I am not allowed to record anything. After about 5 or 10 minutes we stepped out on the road.”

We were trying to get back to the campus. Because we were under the notion that the police will never enter the campus and that we are safest inside the campus. We stopped at about 10 metres away from Gate no. 1, as police had started lathi-charging. There was no student on the road and we were trying to reach the campus. And just as we started walking towards campus, the police started firing tear gas shells right in front of us. We could not breathe, we were choking, we felt very suffocated and we could not move. We were two girls and one guy. I stopped as I could not walk beyond.

That was when some policemen came. I stopped them. I was standing behind a tree and my friend was just two steps behind me. And I asked them, “please stop, we are not doing anything, we are only going to the campus.” And it was very sad, the policeman stopped. He thought for two seconds. And then he saw me. He saw I was wearing a scarf. I am not making this up. He saw me wearing a scarf, he saw my hijab and then he started beating me left right and centre. It was really bad, I fell down right to the ground. This was right in front of this NGO called Cheshire Homes. After they were done hitting me, they went to my friends, Parveen and Ashish. Parveen tried to cover Ashish, as we believed that they wouldn’t hit women, but they did. Either way, they hit Ashish and Parveen both. And we were screaming and crying, saying we are not doing anything, don’t hit us.

“I asked them [police], ‘please stop, we are not doing anything, we are only going to the campus.’ ... He thought for two seconds. And then he saw me. He saw I was wearing a scarf, he saw my hijab and then he started beating me left right and centre. And it was really bad, I fell down right to the ground.”

There is school right here, Don Bosco school. We jumped the wall of the school, in order to save our lives. We knew they had started lathi-charging and that they would not spare us. There was broken glass on top of the wall and Parveen had the presence of mind to put her shawl on top for us to go over the wall. And we hid there for half hour to 45 minutes till the brother of the school came and said, “I can help you escape from the back gate. Come with me.”

We escaped through Sukhdev Vihar and there is a colony here Ghaffar Manzil, we came by rickshaw to Ghaffar Manzil. By then the police had reached the campus. And our friends were continuously calling us and saying, “*Aap log campus mat aeye, mat aeye. Campus mein police ghus gayi hai.*” (Don’t come to the campus, the police have entered the campus) We thought they were probably mistaking guards for policemen.

**“Our friends were continuously calling us and saying,
“*Aap log campus mat aeye, mat aeye.
Campus mein police ghus gayi hai.*”
(Don’t come to the campus, the police have entered the campus)
We thought they were probably mistaking guards for policemen.”**

We tried to enter from the Fine Arts gate (Gate no. 18). The guard would not let us in. We said we are students, we showed him our ID cards, but he would not let us enter. So, we went to Gate no. 17 and as we entered, we met a fellow activist who said, “Nasima please hide in some safe space because the police have entered the hostel as well the entire campus and it is not safe at all.” At that point a student from the Jamia school, a minor, he reached out to us and said you can hide in our hostel. The boys

hostel. There won't be any problem. It was really sweet of them. They let us enter their dorm, they switched off the lights because the policemen were entering every place. We were there for 2 hours, the students offered us water and food. And then the hostel officials came and said we cannot let outsiders stay here. Legitimate point! We were girls and we were adults and students of Jamia, they were school students, they were minors, boys' hostel. So, we were like OK, we are leaving but we had no idea where we would leave.

So, we stepped out and it was like a complete war zone. We were out in the open when some officials from Jamia, possibly some professors saw us and they said we will take you to safe space. And we were taken to Fine Arts canteen. I had to go back to Shaheen Bagh which was impossible. My friend had to leave for hostel, another had to leave for Noida. So, we thought we would spend the night at fine arts canteen. It was chilling, cold. At 9:00 PM at night in December in Delhi what do you expect! That is when some of our friends from Batla House reached Fine Arts canteen. They told us that there are some people stuck in the masjid and you can leave with them. There are some girls from the hostel as well. And that is when we reached the masjid and we found that an ambulance was taking the girls to the hostel. The hostel was open for all. I don't live in the hostel currently, but I did when I was in my bachelors. I found out that the warden had said so. Any girl who wants to stay tonight can stay. A guard from Jamia escorted us to the hostel and when we were leaving, we could only see smoke, stones, blood and policemen on the road. It was filled with policemen. By 9:30 PM we reached hostel.

“Finally, I just want to go back to that moment (of being hit by policemen) and ask him why so much of hate? I have never been targeted personally like this for what I wear... but since 15th one thing has been sure and I know it, I am NOT scared of anybody right now.”

Finally, I just want to go back to that moment (of being hit by policemen) and ask him why so much of hate? I have never been targeted personally like this for what I wear... but since 15th one thing has been sure and I know it, I am NOT scared of anybody right now.



Photo: Sreekanth Sivadasan

Name: Nazia¹

Age: 20

Profession: Student, BA (3rd year), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Current Residence: Jamia Nagar (with her family)

December 13: We were at Gate no. 1 and girls were at the front of the protest. We were protesting peacefully and wanted to move forward. Some of the girls were asking the police to allow the protest to proceed, but they did not allow. We were students from Jamia and also from other Universities. The plan was to march to Parliament. We continued with the protest and slogans when without any warning, police with *lathis* rushed at us. They were all male police. I fell under one of the barricades, which was pulled down. Some people helped me to get up. We started running. The lathi-charge was very bad, they beat whoever they could – girls, boys. They came behind us, they came into the campus.

There was some stone throwing (*pathrav hua*) by the protesters. The police used tear gas and lathis to beat the students. We ran and scattered everywhere but we were all barricaded to one side and couldn't come into Gate nos. 7 or 8. This continued for almost three hours between 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM. Finally, I managed somehow to get out and leave – I went home. My brother, who was passing by later that night told me

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

that the protests were on late into the night. The protest was against NRC, CAA – it was about equality, and religious freedom. It was a call given by students, teachers, all together.

**“The protest was against NRC, CAA.
It was about equality, and religious freedom.
It was a call given by students, teachers, all together.”**

December 14: On Saturday from morning I was on campus for the whole day and took part in the protests.

December 15: On Sunday we had planned a march. I received a call around 3:00 PM from some friends at Mathura road (near Mata Mandir road). I was not there, I was here (on campus) – there were two parts of the march. Some students were going to Mathura road and many of us were on campus. Later, I got news that a friend was hurt and had been taken to the Holy Family Hospital. So I went there. I heard that the police had chased the students from the Jullena side and beaten them very badly with *lathis*. Many of them were in Holy Family Hospital. When I went there, it was very full – there were students in different wards. There were over 100 students – I remember looking at the list that they had put up with the names to find my friend’s name. Then around 5:00 or 5:30 PM I tried to get back into the campus. We thought that it would be safer there. There was too much lathi-charge outside and I was stuck at Holy Family Hospital. A friend somehow managed to bring me out of the hospital and bring me to campus. I thought if I go inside Gate no.7, it would be safe. It was very scary.

**“It was clear that they were not trying to clear the place.
They were trying to beat up everyone.”**

There were so many police everywhere – outside the hospital and all the way till Gate no. 7 – it was filled with them. There were a large number of students at Gate no. 7; the guards were checking I-cards [identity cards] to enter. At Gate no. 7, they started using tear gas. Students who were at Gate no. 8 were peaceful. Then students started to run when the police started using the tear gas and did lathi-charge. It was clear that they were not trying to clear the place, they were trying to beat up everyone.

We ran wherever we could. I just did not think... I was so scared...I ran towards the girls’ common room and hid under the stairs there. Students were hiding everywhere – in the trees, at Xerox point, canteen – everywhere. We were two girls under the stairs. I wanted to cough but was too afraid even to cough because I thought that we would get caught. The campus was dark – fully dark. They had switched off the lights. We were even scared to switch our phone torch as we were worried that the police would find us. I was worried. I had told my family that I was going to my friend’s place and that I would be back by 8:00 PM. I called some seniors on the phone. I don’t know

how, but they came. When we got out and were running to find another place where we could be safe, I fell down and hurt myself. (pointing to right thigh and leg). It still hurts so badly. I couldn't breathe from the tear gas everywhere. One of my friends had got very badly hurt from the lathi-charge. He could barely walk.

“The campus was dark – fully dark. We were even scared to switch our phone torch as we were worried that the police would find us.”

The police were there only to hit us and I was thinking God knows what they will do to us. I couldn't speak and kept thinking this is the end. I somehow managed with the help of my friends to reach home at about 8:30 PM. I couldn't say anything. I am usually in the forefront of protests but I thought this was the end.

I recall a boy whom I know – he hasn't ever been part of any protests – he keeps his distance from them. He is doing his UPSC preparation. He was in the first floor of the library. He was hurt very badly trying to get out. His leg is fractured. The police were using tear gas everywhere and everyone was trying to escape that and the *lathis*. They were banging, pushing down the doors to find students.

Even the guard who was outside the library was beaten. A staff in the canteen was beaten. The police entered the canteen. They did not spare anyone. They were beating students, guards, anyone who was there with their *lathis*. It felt like this whole attack on students by the police was planned. It was meant to be a peaceful march.

Students who were in the girls hostel that night were scared. Everyone was. But there was no one to turn to for help from the administration. We would always think that if there was any problem with the administration we could call the police. But here the police were beating us up, beating everyone – administration, teachers, everyone. We could not turn to anyone. I am feeling very mentally disturbed. But we have started this (protest) – we will end this. We cannot accept something as bad as CAA-NRC.



Photo: Sreekanth Sivadasan

Name: Parveen¹

Age: 21

Profession: Student, Law (5th year), Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Mumbai, Maharashtra

Current residence: Jamia girls hostel

December 13: We went for the march on December 12. Then there was a call for a long march next day against CAA and NRC from Jamia campus to Parliament Street. At 2:00 PM, Jamia Teachers Association (JTA) had also called for a protest within the campus, and from 3:00 PM there was a march called by the students. Many locals also got to know and joined the march. We joined from Jullena, we were a little behind. Everyone had gathered, there was a huge crowd near Gate no. 7.

All of us knew that the march would not be allowed to reach the Parliament Street and we would be stopped in between, maybe at Ashram or New Friends Colony (NFC). We did not know that the police would barricade right outside Jamia. So, we came out of Gate no. 7 and reached till Gate no. 1 where there was complete barricading and there were a lot of police. We had not expected that there would be so much of police force present there and that we would be stopped so soon, so we stood there and protested.

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

“We have been to many protests earlier too but we have never seen the police lathi-charging within half an hour of the protest! ... Because it is a minority institution, they started lathi-charging within half an hour of the protest starting?”

We have been to many protests earlier too but we have never seen the police lathi-charging within half an hour of the protest. We had joined the JNU protest earlier when the march went on for 7-8 hours, and only after that we had to face lathi-charge. So students felt why? That because it is a minority institution, they had started lathi-charging within half an hour of the protest starting? When the police first lathi-charged I was at the front, everyone started running and I got left behind a little. The police came but they did not hit us. I and a friend of mine were there; they hit the male students a lot but did not hit us. They just kept telling us, “Go! Leave!” There were no female police officers, only male police.

We retreated and the students thought that they could keep going inside the campus and coming out to protest. Then the police started firing tear gas shells, when the lathi-charge did not stop the students, because the students kept going into the campus and coming out. They thought the campus was safe; the police could not enter the campus as they require permission to do so. The tear gas continued and many students were distributing different things like toothpaste, salt, etc. to counter the effects of tear gas. Towards the evening after sundown, the police started retreating. Around 6:00 PM, the people were on streets and the police had left. There were barricades but there were no police. So we thought it had subsided and all was well.

December 14: The next day also there were a lot of locals and we protested inside the campus only. The police was at Sukhdev Vihar, they did not come this side; we also did not go to the other side.

December 15: On Sunday, we decided that we should march till Jullena. I was in the campus when the march started, I did not know that the march had started. I called up a friend, he said we are sitting at Jullena, and I told him that I would go there. By the time I reached Jullena, they had already reached Community Centre (New Friends Colony) and some of them had reached the Mata Mandir Road. So, as I was reaching Jullena, I called the students present there to ask where they were and where the march had reached. They were also frantically calling us to let us know that if we had not reached then we should go back to the campus because the situation was very bad. The police had started lathi-charge and tear gas. By that time we had reached Jullena. At Jullena there is a shop called Evergreen Sweets. The shopkeeper told us to go inside. We went inside and he pulled the shutter down. But inside there was smell and smoke from the tear gas as the shutters of the shop were closed, we were feeling suffocated. We waited for 10 minutes inside the shop and then asked the shopkeeper to let us out.

The police had already reached there. The shopkeeper went outside and requested the police that there were three students inside; they want to leave, so to let us go. Police allowed us to leave. We did not take the main road as the police was there. We took a detour and went through the Sukhdev Vihar Metro Station road.

We thought the campus would be the safest place at the time – it is a Central University! Everyone had started calling each other saying that everyone should go back to the campus because the situation was not good outside. We also thought that somehow we should reach the campus.

We started walking towards the campus from Sukhdev Vihar side; there were not many people – some locals on the street and the three of us – Nasima was an ex-student who had come to get her provisional certificate. She had to leave earlier in the week but could not do so because her train was cancelled. So she, me and another MA student Suresh walked towards the campus. As we headed towards the campus at Gate no. 1, the police started firing tear gas shells. This was around 4:30 PM. There were too many tear gas shells and it was so concentrated that we could not breathe. So we started retreating. We moved towards the Don Bosco School and Cheshire Home. But we could not move ahead because of the tear gas and could not move back because the police was there. We had to sit against a wall as we were coughing a lot.

“We pleaded with the police that we were trying to reach home and to not hit us. We said that because they were male police officers, they cannot hit females. We feared that they might surround Suresh and, as women, we could try and save him. But these policemen paid no heed to us. They started inching closer and started hitting us. They hit me, they hit Suresh.”

We saw a large number of policemen running towards the campus. A group of policemen saw us and charged towards us. We pleaded with the police that we were trying to reach home and to not hit us. We said that because they were male police officers, they cannot hit females. We feared that they might surround Suresh and, as women, we could try to save him. But these policemen paid no heed to us. They started inching closer and started hitting us. They hit me, they hit Suresh. They hit me on the left side with a *lathi* and now I am having pain killers. Suresh and I were standing together, and I got hit on the left side and he got hit on the right side. Nasima was standing a few feet away from us and she had fallen down. She was hit by a couple of policemen. We kept on telling them that they cannot hit women, but no one listened. The three of us were all alone there and we kept telling them that we wanted to get back to the campus. Just as the police went back a little, we tried to enter the Cheshire Home, but they had closed the gates.

We began to run. We picked Nasima up and as the Cheshire Home gate was closed, we headed towards Don Bosco. The wall of Don Bosco is not that high, but there were glass pieces on the boundary wall. So we put shawls on the glass pieces, climbed over and jumped into the school. After that the guard of the school escorted us out of the school to the campus.

“When we reached the campus, we could hear the explosions, tear gas, it was difficult to breathe, there was so much noise – we were really scared. We couldn’t understand where to go.”

When we reached the campus, we could hear the explosions, tear gas, it was difficult to breathe, there was so much noise – we were really scared. We couldn’t understand where to go. We were getting all kinds of confusing messages that the police was getting inside the hostel, that they were firing tear gas shells outside the hostel, etc. – it was completely chaotic. Suresh, Nasima and I hid in the canteen of the Fine Arts Department. A couple of guards recognised us as students and helped us to hide in the canteen, which was dark at that time. It was so cold! We waited for some friends who told us over the phone that they were near Batla House and were trying to come to the campus. We were really scared. Suresh was hurt and was almost in tears. He just wanted to stay alive.

We sat in the canteen till 9:00 PM, when some friends came and took us to the nearby masjid, where around 20 other girls had taken shelter. Around 9:00 PM – 9:30 PM, the masjid guard got an ambulance, and we were dropped to our respective hostels. Our hostel was in a chaos. The girls’ hostel is usually very strict regarding rules, permissions, leaves, out-times and in-times, regarding outsiders coming to the hostel, and things like that. But that night they had opened their gates to anyone who wanted to come in or bring any friend with them. Even if a girl could not come back to the hostel, she was told to remain in any place where she felt safe.

“The girls’ hostel is usually very strict regarding rules, permissions, leaves, out-times and in-times, regarding outsiders coming to the hostel... But that night they had opened their gates to anyone who wanted to come in or bring any friend with them.”

We were really scared when we were hiding inside the campus. We could hear the explosions, tear gas shootings, it is difficult to breathe, so much noise – we were really scared. Now, even the sound of the ambulance feels scary...Yes, any loud noise makes us tense. It’s traumatic.

My parents are supportive, but not all students have that kind of support. Obviously, they [parents] will be anxious – especially about their daughters – if this kind of violence is taking place.



Protesters in support of Jamia, against CAA & NRC, Jantar Mantar. Photo: Farah Naqvi

Name: Rehana¹

Age: 22

Profession: Student, BA (final year) in English Literature from a leading national open university

Residence: A locality near Jamia Nagar

Rehana's father was a professor of English and had taught at Jamia for a while. Her brother Irfan is currently doing his BA from Jamia, and is active in the student protests.

December 13: Since the CAA was passed we have been outraged. My brother Irfan was raising awareness about the Act on Campus. On December 13, there was a call to march to the Parliament and my sister and brother went. I decided to stay at home and support them online. Suddenly we received a phone call that my brother had been held and thrashed by the police. Then at around 4:00 PM we received a call that he was in the hospital.

When I reached the campus, I saw that there were protests going on and tear gas was being used on the road outside Jamia. Police were standing at Gate no. 1 and had put

¹ All names in this testimony have been changed for confidentiality. Some personal details have been withheld.

up barricades there. Behind this heavy barricade was the Holy Family Hospital where my brother was. My sister and I started walking towards the hospital. We saw my brother coming out of the hospital. He was limping. This is what my brother reported about what happened to him: “The police took away a group of about 30-40 students and barricaded them from both sides, and thrashed them. Some were taken to the police station and some to the hospital”.

It was *Maghrib* time, we prayed on the road. As soon as we finished our prayers, the police started shooing away the protestors. Everybody ran away. My sister, me and another girl – we were the only women – we also ran away. 6-8 policemen caught the boy who was leading the prayers and started thrashing him. This was the first time we were seeing such police brutality. The police had almost torn his clothes off and were thrashing him with a *danda* (stick). Somehow we managed to jump on him and save him and we took him away. The police kept shouting “get lost” (*nikal, nikal yahan se*) and were abusing us. We took a very long route – behind New Friends Colony. It was dark by then. It was about 7:00 PM. We three women were in *abaya* and the environment created by the police was very threatening, as there was a huge deployment there. It was dark and the boy was injured and he was limping. So we were continuously praying and walking; we reached our area and came back to our place.

“We three women were in *abaya* and the environment created by the police was very threatening, as there was a huge deployment there. It was dark and the boy was injured and he was limping. So we were continuously praying and walking.”

December 14: Protests continued and I joined them. We shouted slogans like, No NRC, *NRC vaapas lo* (Withdraw NRC), and my favorite *naara* (slogan) *Samvidhan bachane nikle hain aap hamare saath chalo* (We have stepped out to save our constitution, come join us!).

December 15: We decided to march to Jantar Mantar peacefully and present our dissent. We all collected on Jamia road and began to move forward shouting slogans. We reached Jullena where there was heavy police deployment and barricades. As the police was not letting us go further, we decided to sit there and continued sloganeering.

**“My favorite *naara* (slogan)
‘*Samvidhan Bachane Nikle Hain, Aap Hamare Saath Chalo*’
(We Have Stepped Out to Save our Constitution, Come Join Us!).”**

But everyone wanted to move forward so we thought that maybe we should take another route – maybe via Mata Mandir Road. As soon as we reached there, the lathi-charge started. I saw the police coming at us with *lathis*. I remember thinking, we are not going to run, we are here for a peaceful protest, if they want to beat us, then beat

us. But people ahead of us started running and there was a stampede. In the stampede, few girls from our group fell down and were trampled on. They were crying out loudly.

I was feeling very strong and I wanted to impart my strength to everybody else. You don't need to cry, or shout, just stand here – nobody can order us about.

“I saw the police coming at us with *lathis*. I remember thinking, we are not going to run, we are here for a peaceful protest, if they want to beat us, then beat us.

The boys had formed a chain around us and were protecting us; they continued to stand steadfast although the police was particularly targeting them. We (girls) were trying to protect ourselves as well as the boys. The police were chasing people. The way they were beating them was totally chilling – they held their *lathis* with both hands and brought it down full strength on the protestors. Their *lathis* were almost touching the ground behind and then they would bring it forward and hit.

“The way they [police] were beating them was totally chilling – they held their *lathis* with both hands and brought it down full strength on the protestors. Their *lathis* were almost touching the ground behind and then they would bring it forward and hit.”

They were beating the boys and shouting at them to “leave immediately” and abusing. I can't recall the abuses – it was a flash. Our group was right in the middle and we did not know where to go and we were not leaving each other. It's a road and where should we go. If we ran, the police were running after us. We just stood at that place stunned.

We entered this colony *gali* (lane) in New Friends Colony and the guard closed the gate. He put a lock on it and chained it. The police was not able to enter. We were safe and we could see the police on the other side; they were beating people mercilessly and we couldn't do anything to save them. We started shouting the slogan – *Sarfaroshi Ki Tamanna Ab Hamare Dil Mein Hai. Dekhna Hai Zor Kitna Baazu-e-Qatil Mein Hai* (The desire for revolution is in our hearts, let's see how much strength the enemy has). What have we done that you are beating us like this. Some in the group were saying, “Sister, let's just leave, let's run from here”. I felt that we should gather evidence, make a video so that we can show other people what happened.

The police heard us and turned towards us. It was like they were so vengeful because of the way we were behaving. The police came towards the gate in anger and started shaking it viciously as if they would pull it down. The police was shouting “open the door else we will break it” – they were abusing and shouting at the guard. The guard was so helpful, he was giving us time and was being slow in opening the gate. We were

not really running and were still shouting at them. Don't know how that happened; we were just in that moment and it happened.

When we were hiding we saw black smoke rising. And we were thinking "oh no, why is this happening, who did this". Until then we were thinking that the situation would soon calm down in ½ to 1 hour. That the protestors will go inside the campus and the police will recede and we could go back. We then slowly moved out. All streets were deserted. It must have been 5:30 PM because it was just *Maghrib* time. As we entered our area, we started getting more news – that the police had entered the campus and were being brutal and we got very worried about where the others could go. We were receiving calls all along from people wondering where we were and to check if we were okay, thinking we were in the campus.

We were stuck here and we were surrounded from all sides and we just did not know what we could do and we were crying. We were getting calls from my parents, my brother in Hyderabad – we told them we were okay but we did not know about Irfan. We did not know if he was alive or not. This went on for a long time – I cannot recall how long. But we thought that internet may be shut down soon so we shared all the videos with others so that they should know what is happening. That way we were also able to get the information on what is happening to the JNU and DU unions so that they do something. Despite our brother still not traceable, we felt that the reason we were there and what was happening should be known to everyone. Our protest should continue, our evidence should not be destroyed.

Soon after, Irfan was found. He was injured and stayed in someone's house that night. We stayed in some house in Zakir Nagar.

"Irfan reported what happened – how he was used as a hostage and as a human shield by the police, how vengefully he was beaten, accompanied by abuses (*bol bol ke mara*) – things like '*tu azadi dilvayega humein?!*' (you will get us freedom?!)."

December 16: Irfan was adamant on going to campus and he was right – at the time there was a huge presence of press, a lot of people had gathered, all the protestors were there. It was important to build solidarity and if we didn't go there the police's narrative would triumph, would become the truth. The false narrative that they were constructing that these students were being violent. The police statement was that the students had come prepared for causing violence.

Irfan reported what happened – how he was used as a hostage and as a human shield by the police, how vengefully he was beaten, accompanied by abuses (*bol bol ke mara*) – like "*tu azadi dilvayega humein?!*", how they broke his glasses and his phone. They humiliated him and if this was not provoking people, then I don't know what it is?! We

also shared our story with him. My eyes are still affected by the tear gas and continue to tear a lot. I have been using eye drops. Have been having a problem for the last 2-3 days.

**“We need to tell our story and people should know.
We want to speak against the politics of hate, the protection of
the country is our religion and that we need to rise against any step
to say that CAA is against the Constitution.”**

We will have to come in more numbers and continue till they take back NRC and CAA. If there were 100, there should be 200 till this politics of hate ends. *Inshallah* our struggle is a right struggle and if we do it the right way. We have the right to this struggle, this is against the unconstitutional politics taking place. We are thankful to the solidarity nationally and internationally. Brutality unleashed on Jamia was also thought as something that would not matter – like Batla House went unnoticed, they had created fear, there was no accountability, they used to pick up anyone from home. The fear is slowly going away. There should be no fear in laying down our lives for our country. People are coming on the streets, standing in solidarity with the students, especially about how this was done to students. We need to tell our story and people should know. We want to speak against the politics of hate, the protection of the country is our religion and that we need to rise against any step to say that CAA is against the Constitution.



Photo: Sreekanth Sivasadan

Name: Samreen¹

Age: 21

Profession: Student, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Current Residence: Private flat near Jamia Nagar

December 13: There was a callout for a march to protest against CAA and NRC on whatsapp groups, so four of us reached Gate no. 5 [diagonally opposite Gate no. 7]. The march was supposed to start at 2:00 PM. But police barricades had started at 12:30 PM. We were massive numbers of people between Jamia Metro Station and Gate no. 5. I must have been 10-15 rows behind the Gate no. 1 barricade [around Gate no. 5]. The crowd kept swelling up and there was pushback. The police kept saying move back. My friend and I managed to climb on top of the divider to get some space. The next thing I saw was cops beating up the students in the front. There were about eight cops beating one of the students. We thought we had outnumbered them but they had enough power. The first tear gas shell exploded within 30 minutes of us assembling. The stone pelting started after the lathi-charge.

Within ten minutes there were many tear gas shells. We couldn't breathe and everyone started running back towards Gate no. 8. It became a stampede and we fell on the road, *ghasite gaye* (dragged along). At least 15 people must have run over us as we

¹ The names of Samreen's friends have been changed in this testimony for confidentiality. Minor personal details have also been withheld.

were face down, before we could get up and also run towards Gate no. 8. We got hurt on our knees. We can't blame anyone because people were trying to save themselves. *Ek insaan ko 10-10 log maar rahe the* (Each person was being hit by 10 cops).

We went inside Gate no. 8, the tear gas shells were also fired inside. We kept moving further in, and tried to take the back way to MCRC. Even inside the campus we couldn't breathe, there was a haze of smoke. I was with Shefali and Brijesh. In front of us, dozens of tear gas shells must have been dropped. Till 8:00 PM we stayed at the Hygienic Canteen, where many other students were also taking shelter. We heard people were getting detained outside.

December 15: At 11:00 AM, there was a peaceful march to all the neighbourhoods around Jamia – Batla House, Zakir Nagar, etc. It was organised by many small groups on campus. People were holding hands, many women's groups were there, a lot of women from the community were there from all neighbourhoods.

At 2:00 PM, we came inside the college, Gate no. 7. Word started spreading that something was going to happen. Heavy deployment of troops was seen, size of force had increased. Gate no. 7 was closed. We started making posters – “We follow the Gandhian way”, “Flowers not sticks and stones”, “No to stone pelting”.

**“We started making posters –
* We follow the Gandhian way
*Flowers, not sticks and stones
*No to stone pelting...”**

Then we saw smoke at NFC. By 5:40 PM, the roads were empty. We thought it's done. But then, we saw police chasing people, and by 5:45-5:50 PM, tear gas started coming inside the campus. That's when we got infuriated. How can you attack us inside? Especially, when we have disassociated from violence.

**“Tear gas started coming inside the campus.
That's when we got infuriated. How can you attack us inside?
Especially, when we have disassociated from violence.”**

Then we all made it to the central canteen inside Gate no. 7. Most of us were between the canteen and library. One police batch came from the Polytechnic gate; one police batch came from the masjid side gate (gate opposite the masjid), and one from the third gate; all of these are back gates leading to the library. They came from the front gate last. Then we started hearing glass break. Students broke the glass door of the library because they wanted to get inside, after which the police tear-gassed and broke other panes.

I didn't want to go in because I knew we'd get stuck. But we didn't want to go outside because then we knew we wouldn't be able to prove anything. I got separated from my friends and hid in the pump room. Tear gas shells were thrown right next to where I was. I dodged them – one was right next to my face. Some people with stones in hands tried to save me – I tried to disassociate from them because I was still thinking I shouldn't get implicated.

“Glass doors, fully broken. One girl had a piece of glass in her torso. People with glass on their feet were limping and running.”

I ran towards the library around 6:20 PM. Police had entered the campus by 6:00-6:10 pm. I found friends on the ground floor. Few people were bleeding. Glass doors were fully broken. One girl had a piece of glass in her torso. People with glass on their feet were limping and running. Then lights were switched off, it was pitch dark. We could only hear sounds of people being beaten and screams. We could hear everyone saying, *“Humne kuch nahin kiya, kyun maar rahe ho?”* (We haven't done anything, why are you beating us?) Then police said *“Okay okay, hum aapko nikaal rahen hai.* (Okay, we are taking you out of here).” But the minute we stepped out, they started beating anyone who got out or left. Three of us managed to escape but Brijesh ko *detain kar liya* (was detained). They made him sit in a group outside the library, after beating him two-three times. We begged, *“chhod do!”* (let him go!), but they didn't listen. We could only see police in all corners of the library.

Because getting out of the campus was not an option, we decided to simply stand where the central guards near the Old Library, opposite the masjid, stood. It was then that they sent the detained boys, including Brijesh, to “negotiate” with the rest of the protestors inside the masjid and get them out in the open.

In the process, communal, anti-Muslim abuses were used that alienated the protestors inside the mosque and on the street who also retaliated verbally. *“Mulle m*****d, masjid mein chhup gaye jaake!* (Muslim motherf****r, you think that you can hide inside the mosque!).” They then started to make an example of the detainees by beating them with lathis that “come out and surrender, else see what we are doing to your friends”. At this point, they beat me too.

“They sent the detained boys, including Brijesh, to “negotiate” with the rest of the protestors inside the Masjid and get them out in the open... Then they started to make an example of the detainees by beating them with *lathis* that ‘come out and surrender, else see what we are doing to your friends’. At this point, they beat me too.”

I was saved once by another policeman who said to the one with the laathi, *“Jazbaati nahi hona hai* (Don't get carried away).” The second time when the central guard saved

me, he was told, *"Tu peechey hat! Kaise guard kiya hai tum log ne? Jahan ka khaate ho, wahin chhed karte ho. Sharam nahi aati? Sab mile hue ho. Pakistan chale jao na* (You step back! How have you guarded this place? You bite the hand that feeds you. Aren't you ashamed of yourselves. You are all in collusion. You should go to Pakistan)". Then he looked at me as I begged him to let them go and said, *"Jab patthar phenk rahe the tab yaad nahi aaya? Yahan koi parallel government nahi chalti?* (You didn't think of consequences while throwing stones. There is no parallel government here)".

Then they threw tear gas inside the masjid. I was at the gate opposite the masjid. I saw them shooting it inside. People were hiding inside the Guard Room facing the masjid. Police entered the Guard Room, light was off, and realised that people were recording this masjid encounter, so they broke their phones. Then they broke the CCTV camera inside the Guard Room.

"Police entered the Guard Room, light was off, and realised that people were recording this masjid encounter, so they broke their phones. Then they broke the CCTV camera inside the Guard Room."

I went and hid behind the Old Library for about 40 minutes. Then I called one of our teachers. At around 7:45 PM, another teacher got us out of there. They were still beating the detainees ... Brijesh was still there. His specs were broken. When I called his name, *police ne phir lathi dikhayi* (the police showed me the stick again). There were about 15-20 being held by the police that time. Our teacher took us to a classmate's house, whom we met by chance on the road. We spent the night in the classmate's house.



Photo: Twitter

Name: Sumedha Poddar

Age: 24

Profession: Student, MA (2nd year) Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Jharkhand

Current residence: Ghaffar Manzil (living independently)

She is from Jharkhand and came to Delhi five years ago to do her undergraduate studies at JNU. Her parents, staunch RSS supporters, know she is protesting. 'Revolution begins at home', says Sumedha. She is a member of AISA.

December 13: I was at the front line of the protests, with my friends, Gauhar and Akhtarista, on Friday, December 13 from about 2:30 PM until 10:00 at night. I was going to be part of the students and Jamia Teachers Association (JTA) march from Jamia main Gate no. 1 to Parliament. When we reached Gate no. 1 it was barricaded (many rows of barricades) and there was a huge police deployment. We tried to push past. Students were climbing the barricades. There was a lot of resistance from the police. I was at the front. The lathi-charge started. There was a big crowd. There was a lot of media also. The police immediately took dozens of boys into custody.

Then tear gas started to be used and we retreated towards Gate no. 7. We would recover, and then move back towards Gate no. 1, shouting slogans. I was in shock.

It was my first time encounter with tear gas. The itchiness was awful. Even seeing us in that state, the cops were beating students continuously. The cops still weren't hitting girls, so Akhtarista and I were standing and shouting slogans.

'The situation was do or die, we didn't want to remove ourselves, we were here to save our constitution. The movement was historic, and the police were doing everything to control it, that the students shouldn't gather again. They were trying to scare us. But we did collect again.'

When the second wave of students moved towards Gate no. 1, the tear gas shelling became more frequent. Students retreated to the canteen to get salt to recover from tear gas. People from the community came out with salt packets. The cops stood at Gate no. 4 and threw stun grenades inside the gate. What was the logic of this? The students were saving themselves by running inside campus. The situation was do or die, we didn't want to remove ourselves, we were here to save our constitution. The movement was historic, and the police were doing everything to control it, that the students shouldn't gather again. They were trying to scare us. But we did collect again. Some students picked up stones. But my friends and I didn't.

The third time the tear gas hit me, I almost passed out and retreated to Gate 4. Two boys helped me walk, gave me salt and water. But I went back to the protest. The police were still lathi-charging. By about 9:30 or 10:00 PM, I returned to my room, feeling really exhausted. I was vomiting.

December 15: I was at home as I wasn't well. I got a frantic call from my friends Chanda and Akhtarista around 3:30-4:30 PM. They were crying and asking for help. They said they were trapped and being brutally beaten near police barricades somewhere near NFC. [Refer Testimony of Ladeeda Farzana, Aysha Renna and Chanda Yadav] Chanda's literal words were "*main nahi bach paoongi, mujhe please yahan se nikaalon.*" (I won't survive, get me out of here please!). I left immediately and reached Gate no. 7 by 4:30 PM. But when I called Chanda she told me not to come to where she was because the police had barricaded the area and was beating everyone there. I waited with some friends in the central canteen. It must have been 5:00 PM.

There was no police then on campus, but we could hear the stun grenades go off at a distance. We saw hundreds of people were running towards campus, and the police were running behind them with sticks. I saw this from the grill of the canteen. Then a tear gas bomb burst right in front of us. We'd experienced these tear gas bombs before [on December 13]. You feel like your skin is peeling off. We ran towards Dastarkhwan, another canteen. We thought we were safe on campus, the police won't come here. What place can be safer for a student?

Hardly 5 minutes passed and we saw many students running towards us from the polytechnic lawn, to my right. I realised that the police had entered the campus. We moved to the front of the library, which was closed. A stun grenade erupted just in front of us. It was horrifying. Tear gas was fired from the other side. Faraz and I broke the library gate [new library] using a pot and lots of students rushed inside. The cops were coming in groups of four and they were thrashing everyone, whether male or female.

“[Upstairs in the reading room] We put the lights out and our phones on silent, heads down. It was like we were in a detention camp. I called my parents, not knowing if it was my last call to them. We could hear the cops [downstairs] breaking bookshelves, chairs.... Then we heard the cops coming up...”

The police entered, breaking the glass, throwing tear gas. It was suffocating. Dozens of students, maybe half of were girls, went up to the first floor of the reading room. We put the lights out and our phones on silent, heads down. It was like we were in a detention camp. I called my parents, not knowing if it was my last call to them. We could hear the cops breaking bookshelves, chairs. Whatever is important to students, they were attacking that. It was like they were taking out some personal enmity on us – abusing us, saying things like, *‘Tum Muslim ke bacche ho, saale main dikhaata hoon’* (You bloody Muslim kids, I will show you). Personally I think they were given orders to come into campus – otherwise why would they have come? I was very scared. Then we heard the police coming up, people praying to calm themselves. It was horrifying.

It must have been 7:30-8:00 PM when the cops made us leave the reading room in a single line. We were treated like criminals and we had done something wrong – when they had been the one to come into our campus, into our library. I don’t know if they were getting some pleasure out of mocking us, bullying us saying things like, *‘Dekh na saala dar raha hai’* (See, the bastard is scared).



Photo: Sreekanth Sivadasan

Name: Tabassum Nigar

Age: 30

Profession: Student, PhD in Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

Current residence: J&K Hostel, Jamia Campus

Tabassum has been studying in Jamia for seven years. She joined for her MPhil and is now pursuing her PhD. This is her second last year of the course.

I took part in the protest, it was a peaceful protest throughout with no violence. I was not leading it but joined others when the call was given, as I believed in the cause. The CAA is discriminatory and it is not right to entirely exclude one community when talking about citizenship. We are all Indians. We may have all our documents, but why do we have to show it to anyone. We are all Indians....but we have elected you (this government) now you are telling us to prove citizenship, whether it is anyone, why do we have to prove it to anyone.

“We are all Indians....but we have elected you (this government) now you are telling us to prove citizenship, whether it is anyone, why do we have to prove it to anyone?”

December 13: I had attended the public talk organised by the teachers in the afternoon as part of the protest. I was inside the main campus, Gate no. 7, when in the evening around 4:00-4:30 PM, the police lathi-charged the students protesting outside, and fired tear gas shells. I experienced the tear gas shell attack for the first time in my life, my eyes were burning and swelling up. I was constantly coughing, and there was a particular strong smell to that thing. I went inside a building in the campus and later left for my hostel when things had calmed down.

December 15: I had not joined other students as I had some work to finish. Around 12:30 PM when I got to know that some students were going to Batla House to join the community people in the protest, I decided to go to the library and finish some of my dissertation work.

Around 4:30 PM, some of my friends came to the library and informed me about the police was doing lathi-charge against the protestors outside. Just then we could also see the black smoke outside, coming from a distance and I learnt from others that some buses had been set on fire. Although disturbed at this turn of events, I did not go anywhere thinking that police will never come inside the campus.

Around 6:00-6:30 PM (post *maghrib*) we saw a big crowd coming inside the campus – it was a lot of chaos. When the crowd of students were coming, I felt the same smell in that moment, of the tear gas which I had found very disturbing a day before. I went inside the library, to the research section. At that time only 12 students were there, but a lot of students rushed to that hall to hide out of fear when they saw police entering into the campus. There must have been 50-100 or more students in that hall. They even switched off the lights of the room and sat silently so as to not attract any attention from the police. They also moved the students lockers against the door as protection from anyone entering inside, and shut all the windows to escape the smoke of the tear gas shells being fired by the police. We kept hiding inside in silence.

At around 7:30 PM, the policemen found the room and must have realised that students were there and they came inside. Maybe they saw some flashlight of someone's phone or camera through the window which made them aware of this section. The police banged at the doors and broke it down to enter inside. All the students inside were very terrified at this moment, and we kept sitting wherever we were in a frozen position. Some of them were so frightened that they were crying. Two of the girl students who are juniors were also very frightened and panicked.

“Some of them [police] were standing very close to me, that is when I noticed this one particular guy in ‘a shirt and blue jeans’. His shoes were informal. I don’t believe he was a policeman.”

After entering inside, the police first of all switched on the lights and shouted “*koi*

video nahi banayega (no one will make any video)". They spread across the room; there were, I'm not sure how many as I didn't count, but seemed like maybe 20 police personnel – all male police. Some of them were standing very close to me, that is when I noticed this one particular guy in 'a shirt and blue jeans' who I believe was not a policeman. He was not wearing a uniform. At first I thought maybe he is in civilian clothes, then I checked his shoes, which were also informal. My father is also in police and I know that the police is required to wear their formal shoes all the time, but this guy was not even wearing those. That is when I realised that this person was also accompanying the police force.

I think that we were one of the last rooms being checked out by police as they had been inside the campus for over an hour. The girls were begging them to let them go to their hostel. Police told them to just sit down and keep aside all their phones. Next they asked everyone to leave the room and walk outside with their hands up. I resisted at this point and said that why should we be raising our hands when we have done nothing wrong. The police replied that if we did not raise our hands, we will be beaten with lathis. The police were mocking us – "*ab azaadi nahi chahiye?*" (you don't want freedom now?" We were then allowed to go from the back gate of the campus.

**"The police were mocking us – *ab azaadi nahi chahiye?*
(you don't want freedom now?)"**

As soon as I reached the hostel building, I broke down and cried out loud for long. I was terrified by the ordeal I went through. I am very affected. I keep having nightmares, difficulty in sleeping and hear crying sounds and screams from the incident echoing in my head.

I went to the library on the third day after the December 15 incident to get my study materials from my locker and noticed how the police had vandalised the entire library.

**"Even now I can hear the screams.... even a minor sound, scares me.
I still have that trauma. During the incident in the library I felt that
this is the end and don't know what is going to happen."**

I left for my home in Allahabad on December 17 night; I had no plans to leave the campus as I had pending work to finish. *Abhi bhi cheekhein sunayein de rahi hain mujhe* (even now I can hear the screams).... even a minor sound, I am getting scared, I still have that trauma. During the incident in the library, *mujhe laga ye hamara last time hai, pata nahi, hamare saath kya hone wala hai* (I felt that this is the end and don't know what is going to happen with us).

I also felt that it might actually be unsafe in the hostel, more when I heard the news of police setting the hostel rooms in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on fire.

When I enquired [to an administrative staff at the hostel] about ensuring our safety in coming days, I did not get a clear answer and was told they were uncertain about how things were going to be in following days.

I am not able to focus on anything now and it feels very uncertain but I hope to plan on getting back to focus on my studies in the following days.



Photo: REUTERS

Name: Vasundhara Gautam

Age: 31

Profession: Student, PhD in Literature, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Hometown: Delhi

Residence: North Campus, Delhi

Vasundhara did her MA and MPhil at Jamia. After working for a few years she came right back here for her PhD. She called Jamia her second home.

December 15: I went to the Jamia campus at around 10:30 AM because students had called for a peaceful protest. After the march, which was a normal one in which we shouted slogans, we sat outside Gate no. 8. The student leaders (an informal leadership since students unions are not allowed in Jamia) told us that we should not go beyond this gate because we have permission only till here. By about 3:30 PM, my friends and I were cold and hungry so we went inside the campus to the canteen. After about an hour I heard loud noises from the road and saw people being chased by police. When tear gas started being used my friends told me to go to the reading room and wait there because I have asthma.

I went to the first floor of the reading room, the research floor, which is reserved for MPhil and PhD students, in the Zakir Husain Library. There were a large number of students there including several female students. Within approximately half an hour

of being there we heard that the police had entered the campus. From the window I saw many students running into the building. I also saw the police dragging and beating students. Someone sent a photo of a student lying on the ground and we did not know if he was alive. Obviously we got scared, we are students. I saw tear gas shells falling in the library courtyard.

We decided to switch off the lights. One of my friends who was stuck on the ground floor sent a video in which we saw that the police was smashing furniture and that students were crying. One policeman said, “stay where you are”. We sat on the floor so that the police would not know that we were there. I really wanted to use the toilet, but could not move.

After about an hour and a half, the police came upstairs and started banging on the door. To protect themselves, the women students tried to take shelter under the desks. The police broke down the door, pushing to the ground all the furniture that had been used to barricade the door, and stormed in hurling abuses.

“To protect themselves the women students tried to take shelter under the desks. The police broke down the door, pushing to the ground, all the furniture that we had used to barricade the door, and stormed in hurling abuses.”

There were two male students whom they brought up, maybe to find us. One of the students whose hand was bleeding from the knuckles was crying in pain and the other looked like he was about to faint. The police were stamping their *lathis* on the floor and ordering the students to get out. We were all standing there holding hands in fear but we had to move. While coming down the stairs there was a lot of pushing. We were panicking! When I came down I saw that the gate of the reading room had been broken. I also saw about 20 students kneeling in front of the police near the masjid gate. They were bleeding. That was pretty terrifying. The police told us that our phones must remain inside our bags. We were told to raise our hands while walking out of the campus. They made us feel like we were criminals not students.

“We were told to raise our hands while walking out of the campus. They made us feel like we were criminals not students.”

Outside the campus gate, bikes had been broken. There were police and media all around. Shots of me and other students walking out of campus with our hands up in the air were flashed live in many TV news reports. Friends and family started calling my father frantically, who was not in Delhi. Since the Sukhdev Vihar Metro Station had been shut down and it was very difficult to find an auto, I went to a friend’s room in Sukhdev Vihar. There were 8 of us in that single room.

At 11:00 PM we stepped out. It was scary because there was only police on the roads. We got into the only auto there and went to a friend's home in Zakir Nagar. We kept watching the news, including about police attacks on students in AMU where I also have friends. It was very disturbing. Although I now had access to a toilet, it was only at 3:00 AM, in the middle of the night that I was able to pass urine, because of the stress. Since I had not being able to pass urine I had such bad pain... I still have pain. I am finding it difficult to eat anything since the 15th. I have trouble sleeping. I wake up with a start and don't know in that moment whether I am dead or alive. I will go to a doctor or therapist later. Right now I would rather come for the protests.

**“I have trouble sleeping.
I wake up with a start and don't know in that moment
whether I am dead or alive. I will go to a doctor or therapist later.
Right now I would rather come for the protests.”**

I have been talking a lot to the media. I feel I must because students are not being treated like human beings. I don't understand why is the government so scared of students.

“I don't understand why the government is so scared of students.”

I feel so safe here in Jamia. I'm a peace loving person. *Agar humko ladna hota to hum lathi le aate na, hum kalam thodi na uthate* (If we wanted to fight we would have been wielding sticks instead of pens). We would be in another profession if that is what we are like.

Key observations

All the women we met spoke of their sense of outrage at being stopped from a march that was peaceful. Students were unarmed and did not pose a threat. Why was Section 144 imposed and the campus barricaded on December 13 and December 15, 2019, preventing students from going to Parliament or from protesting at Jantar Mantar? There is no answer to this basic question, which is the starting point of this entire episode. The events of December 13 and December 15 at the Jamia Millia Islamia University (henceforth Jamia) have had far reaching consequences for the students and others who were involved in the protests. Despite the trauma of these events, in each of the accounts there, the students and women from the local community, continue to reiterate their basic constitutional right to express their opinion and dissent.

Police overreach and excesses

- The violence perpetrated on December 13 and December 15 by the Delhi Police against protestors, comprising largely students, was without any warning and unprovoked.
- The police used *lathis*, tear gas and stun grenades on unarmed students.
- The accounts here point to police action as being an overreach of power and aggression. The unrestrained use of *lathis*, teargas and stun guns seemed motivated to cause harm and injure, to restrict and corner students, rather than to disperse a peaceful demonstration.
- Women students and protestors were physically assaulted by male police officers, manhandled, and harmed with the use of *lathis* and tear gas. Women students reported that female police was not present in many of the incidents.
- Students were picked up and detained on both December 13 and December 15. On December 15 they were kept in police stations (including in Badarpur, Kalkaji and New Friends Colony police stations) through the night, and denied access to lawyers or immediate medical treatment, despite visible injuries.
- The police treated unarmed students like criminals and used humiliation and intimidation as tactics to cause fear amongst the student body. The accounts speak of the students, often just in small groups of two or three, trapped by the police presence, begging the police to let them go, to not hit them, and yet being beaten mercilessly. On December 15, students were made to leave the library with their hands in the air, like common criminals.

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- Verbal abuse, and the use of communal slurs to intimidate and humiliate, were adopted by a number of police personnel, along with physical attack on the students.
- Several of the accounts describe men who were not in uniform but accompanied the police, and were wielding *lathis* particularly savagely. We were provided video and photographic evidence of this.
- The police unlawfully entered the University campus, without permission, as has been asserted by the Vice Chancellor. They entered the library, washrooms, the reading rooms and even the masjid on campus. Many students in these testimonies witnessed or heard (as they hid within earshot) the criminal vandalism and destruction of property by the police – library windows were smashed, glass panels were broken, and furniture was broken.

Grave injuries, medical negligence and mental trauma

- Students suffered a range of injuries – minor as well as grievous injuries, including loss of vision, fractures, head injuries, bruises, abrasions, cuts, etc. In most instances of injuries, medico legal case (MLC) were not done in the hospitals where the students were taken or had to go on their own in the absence of immediate first aid and ambulance facilities. This has resulted in loss of vital evidence of the physical violence that they suffered during this assault at the hands of the police.
- In addition, deep psychological trauma was reported. Several of the testimonies speak of insomnia, nightmares, loss of appetite, experiencing shock and feeling startled by ordinary everyday sounds.
- The indiscriminate use of tear gas in enclosed spaces where the students were hiding inside the campus, such as the library, pump room, etc. caused immediate as well as longer term health problems to the students, including difficulty in breathing, skin irritation and burning, constant irritation of the eyes and tearing lasting several days.

Violation of a university campus as a safe space

- This idea of a campus, imagined as a “safe space” and “their space” by students, was shattered by the police entry. In many accounts, students spoke of having run back into the campus to save themselves from the brutal police attack on the streets outside Jamia. But even inside the campus they found themselves under a siege that continued over many hours.
- The attack on the library, an important symbolic space of learning, has been particularly violative. The library is considered to be the safest and most peaceful

place in any university or institution of learning.

- Students who were in the library and reading rooms described feeling terrorised and helpless as they were constrained from connecting with others outside. They were ordered by the police to not use their phones; some were fearful of using their mobiles to communicate with friends, officials and family about the situation. They were scared that using phones may lead the police to where they were hidden, seizure of their phones, and further violence. There were instances where the police seized or broke students' phones while they were recording the violence.
- The loss of trust in the capacity of the University to protect its students and the expectation that it should have responded with more assertion against the aggression of the police, was a recurring theme in these accounts – for the attack of December 13 was followed by an even more brutal attack, both on and off campus, on December 15.
- The entry of the police into the campus and attack on students is seen as an unpardonable transgression on the student body. Students shared their fears and those of their families about returning and staying on a campus that was not seen as safe anymore. This has grave consequences for the educational future of these young people, in particular women students. Many women students come from far off places, and the possibility of their continued access to higher education in general has been compromised.

Support and resolve

- The accounts at the same time iterate the supportive role played by many faculty, workers and staff of Jamia. They also speak of the solidarity shown by the local community, which opened their doors and homes to students. The many acts of kindness and humaneness shown by local clinics and hospitals, which provided treatment free of cost to students, are also expressed in these accounts.
- The attack on Jamia, and on peacefully protesting students and citizens, has led to the rise of a new generation of women student activists and galvanised women from the community, who despite all odds, have resolved to continue this struggle.

The police action of December 13 and December 15 has caused deep scars and the loss of trust in the police and other authorities. This attack on Jamia has left the student body, the women of Jamia, their families as well as the local community, with a sense of shock and anguish. It has also reinforced their resolve to continue to express their opposition to the CAA and NRC through all available democratic means, and to uphold accountability of all those responsible for this violent attack on them.

Epilogue

We write this not as a conclusion, because it is not. As we put together this account, we get news of over two dozen deaths in state action against protestors from other parts of India. We get reports of power outages followed by midnight knocks in Uttar Pradesh. People picked up. Detentions. Arrests. Families in the dark. Lawyers cordoned off. Media unable or unwilling to reach in time to tell us what happened. There are many reports yet to be written, many more episodes of excessive state power yet to be investigated, and many perpetrators to be brought to justice.

What took place at the Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, the national capital of the world's largest democracy, can never be acceptable in any country that claims to be a functioning constitutional republic.

Why is this report about women? Because they were there in numbers that belie their social and political power. Because the timbre of their voices soared above the norm. Because they struggle against immense inner and outer odds to be there. Because women's voices matter in any resistance. Because each time they climb a barricade, they climb a mountain, and are therefore much the stronger for it. Because they have earned a place in the frontlines. Because they belong there. And because the future, too, belongs to them. Democracy is half full without women.

If you believe in anything, believe in these voices. There was an attack led by state institutions, on unarmed students at a Central University of the sovereign, secular democratic Republic of India. Accountability, not just for its own sake, but to secure our collective future as a people and as citizens, is what this report asks for. This report asks for justice, not as mere retribution, but as justice that can restore to the Jamia Millia Islamia University its peace, and to India, its democracy.

Members of the Independent Women's Initiative on the attack on
Jamia Millia Islamia University on December 13 and 15, 2019

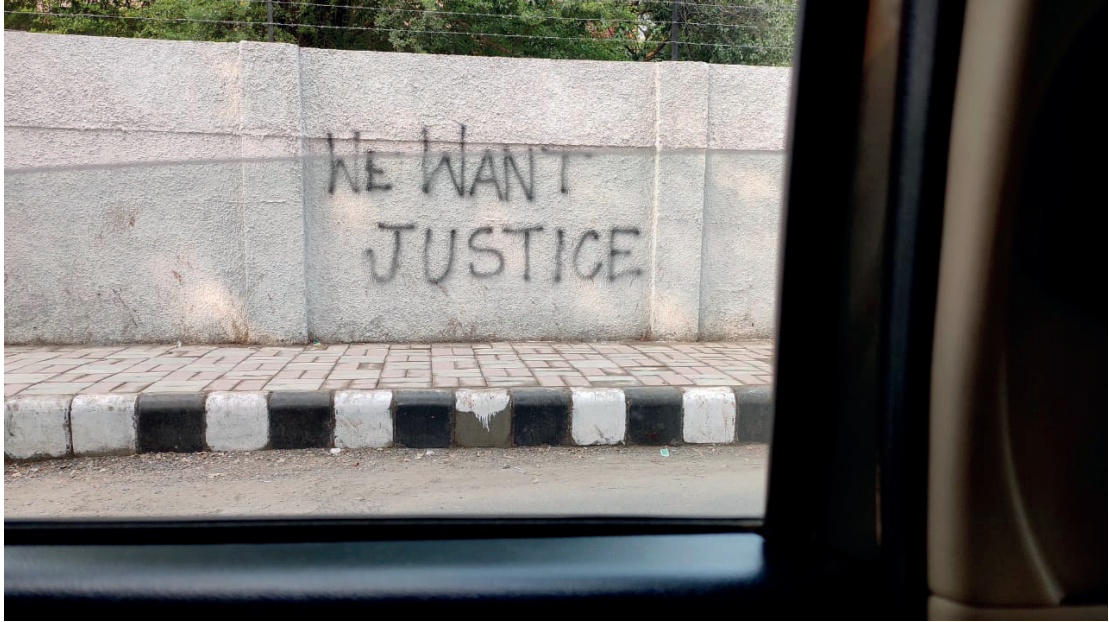


Photo: Sarojini N

