

U.S., BELGIUM TO QUESTION INDIA ON CAA, MINORITY RIGHTS, HATE SPEECH AT HRC

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

Treatment of journalists and human rights defenders, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and custodial torture are expected to dominate the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of India at the Human Rights Council in Geneva that will take place on Thursday.

In “Advance Questions” submitted to the council, Belgium has called the CAA “anti-minority”, and asked India if the law would be repealed. Similar concerns have been raised by the United States, which has highlighted “hate speech”, “internet shut downs” and the issue of hijab in Karnataka.

“Will the government of India review and repeal anti-minority laws such as the CAA and anti-conversion laws which target religious minorities, and introduce measures and legislation to prevent and respond to communal and targeted religious violence?” Belgium asked.

The country further asked about the steps that the Government of India will take to ensure that “human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations can exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, free from threats, harassment, intimidation and attacks”.

Till Tuesday, the U.S., the U.K., Belgium, Spain, Panama, Canada, Germany, Liechtenstein and Slovenia have submitted “Advance Questions” for the Indian-centric session on Thursday. The U.S. has also asked the Government of India about how the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the National Security Act, Public Safety Act and Sections 124A, 499, and 500 of the IPC comply with India’s international human rights obligations and commitments. The UPR will be conducted on the basis of the national report provided by India, information provided by independent human rights experts and groups, and international human rights groups.

In the report submitted in August, India informed the Council that laws were consistently enforced to ensure protection of the minority communities.

The national position on the issue of human rights gives an indication of the line that India is expected to take during the upcoming deliberation which has drawn curiosity because of the negative observations that several human rights organisations have submitted to the world body.

The Universal Periodic Review will be conducted on the basis of the national report provided by India

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