

SOUTHASIA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

Update note for CERD on developments concerning Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, India

On 12 May 2025, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) had [written](#) to the Government of India under its early warning and urgent action procedure, expressing grave concern about reports of systematic targeting of Bengali-speaking Muslims in India’s Assam state.

This note provides an update on recent trends and developments, especially those that have occurred since the Committee’s letter was issued. It seeks to inform the Committee’s upcoming deliberations by offering additional factual material relevant to the patterns of discrimination and racial and ethnic profiling previously identified. The developments outlined here raise serious concerns about the Indian government’s acknowledgement of, and response to, the concerns raised by the Committee. Far from meaningfully addressing the Committee’s findings, many recent actions suggest an ongoing deterioration of the rights of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam.

This note is divided into two sections: Table A summarises recent developments directly related to the areas of concern identified in the Committee’s 12 May 2025 letter. Table B highlights some additional developments, including the persistent failure of domestic institutions to provide effective remedy.

A. Updates regarding issues raised by CERD in its letter to India on 12 May, 2025

Item	Issue raised by CERD	Latest update
1. NRC and Bengali-speaking Muslims	<i>Members of the Bengali-speaking Muslims community are subjected to racial discrimination based on their descent, ethno-religious and ethnic origin, particularly arbitrary deprivation of citizenship, in relation to the National Register of Citizens update.</i>	The situation of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam has continued to reflect a broader pattern of racial and ethnic discrimination. Despite the Committee’s May 2025 letter, Indian authorities have failed to take corrective steps, and several of the core concerns—particularly regarding arbitrary exclusion from citizenship and denial of legal remedy—remain unresolved, amid reports of fresh violations.
	<i>In preparing for the National Register of Citizens update, the State of Assam classified the population into</i>	Despite the passage of nearly six years since the publication of the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, the fate of the 1.9 million excluded individuals remains in

<p><i>“original inhabitants” and “non-original inhabitants”. Authorities in Assam State considered members of the Bengali-speaking Muslims as “non-original inhabitants”, while noting the absence of clear definition of “original inhabitants” or the procedure to their identification. The information also indicates that “non-original inhabitants” were subject to more rigorous standards compared to “original inhabitants” by the authorities in relation to the verification process of the National Register of Citizens;</i></p>		<p>limbo. As of July 2025, the NRC has still not been notified by the Registrar General of India, and rejection slips have not been issued. This continued administrative inaction has prevented excluded individuals from initiating appeals before Foreigners Tribunals. In June 2025, civil society groups in Assam urged the Union Home Minister to intervene, highlighting that affected persons remain suspended in legal uncertainty, deprived of a remedy.</p>
	<p><i>Inhabitants declared as “foreigners” and excluded under the National Register of Citizens process are not provided with the “rejection slips” that are required to appeal the decision before the Foreigners Tribunals</i></p>	<p>After a large number of Bengali-speaking Hindus were excluded from the NRC, the Assam government has sought to discredit the 2019 exercise. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reiterated in June 2025 that the NRC had failed to detect all ‘foreigners,’ and pressed for a re-verification of the list. He also argued that the inclusion of a person in the NRC does not shield them from deportation if later declared a foreigner by other means. He also stated that the NRC would be treated as irrelevant to Assam’s ongoing ‘pushback’ efforts targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims. (See Table A, entry #6: Arbitrary arrests and risk of forced deportation, for more.)</p> <p>This stance has raised alarm among human rights groups and opposition leaders, who warned that it strips even those included in the NRC of any protection, undermines previous central government assurances, and keeps millions in a state of vulnerability.</p> <p>Separately, in July 2025, former NRC Coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner proposing the use of the NRC’s ‘family tree verification’ model to ‘clean up’ Assam’s electoral roll. The method had earlier been criticised for its disproportionate impact on Bengali-speaking Muslims during the NRC process. Hitesh Sarma’s letter has prompted concerns that discriminatory standards may now be extended to the voter verification process as well. (An NRC-like process aimed at revising voter rolls, known as ‘special intensive revision’ (SIR), is currently underway in Bihar state. India’s Election Commission has declared its intention to conduct SIRs across the country, including in Assam.)</p>

	<p><i>Inhabitants categorized as “doubtful voters” by the Election Commission could not challenge their classification before the Foreigners Tribunal, as the application and determination processes of the Foreigners Tribunal were suspended during the preparation and implementation of the National Register of Citizens update, leading to their de facto exclusion from the National Register of Citizens list;</i></p>	<p>On 8 June 2025, Assam CM Sarma announced that the state would no longer rely on Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) to identify and deport alleged foreigners, but instead use the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Order, 1950—which empowers district-level authorities to issue immediate expulsion orders—to expedite the process. Sarma noted that the new approach would not impact cases where legal proceedings are ongoing.</p> <p>As of July 2025, around 100,000 individuals in Assam remain designated as ‘doubtful voters’ (D-voters), continuing to face disenfranchisement, loss of access to welfare benefits, and legal uncertainty. Field accounts have revealed the implications of this legal limbo on their daily lives. Many D-voters—disproportionately poor, Muslim, and from Bengali-speaking communities—report being denied subsidised food rations and excluded from state welfare schemes such as the Arunodoi income support programme. Accounts have also detailed how D-voter families have been forced to sell livestock, mortgage belongings, or take high-interest loans to pay legal fees and navigate the complex and costly process of proving citizenship. Others reported being denied medical treatment or dropping out of school due to financial strain.</p> <p>Despite longstanding concerns over the discriminatory application of this mechanism, particularly against Bengali-speaking Muslims, recent relief has been selectively granted to non-Muslim groups. In 2021, many D-voter cases against Nepali-origin Hindus (also known as Gorkhas) were reportedly withdrawn by the Assam government. In July 2024, it had been reported that Assam ordered the Border Police not to directly forward cases of non-Muslims to FTs, and asked them to encourage such individuals to instead apply for citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (also see entry #2 in Table A). In April 2025, it was reported that the Assam government had decided to withdraw 28,000 FT cases against members of the Koch-Rajbongshi community, citing their ‘indigenous’ identity. No such relief has been extended to Bengali-speaking or other Muslims, who continue to be disproportionately impacted.</p>
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<p>2. Citizenship Amendment Act</p>	<p><i>The Citizenship Amendment Act, adopted in December 2019, discriminate against Bengali-speaking Muslims on the grounds of descent, ethno-religious and ethnicity, as it expedites citizenship for specific religious minorities, namely Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, who have been resident of India before 2014</i></p>	<p>The rules for the nationwide implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were notified on 11 March 2024, bringing the law into force over four years after its passage. Under these rules, applicants must register online and submit documents proving both religious identity and date of entry into India.</p> <p>In July 2024, it was reported that the Assam government instructed Border Police not to refer eligible non-Muslim individuals to Foreigners Tribunals, and instead advise them to apply for citizenship under the CAA. This effectively operationalised the two-tiered citizenship regime in Assam, offering relief to non-Muslims while continuing to exclude similarly situated individuals, particularly Bengali-speaking Muslims.</p> <p>In March 2025, the Assam government revealed that a total of 39 individuals had applied for citizenship under the CAA, of whom two—both Hindus claiming persecution in Bangladesh—had been granted Indian citizenship.</p>
<p>3. Arbitrary evictions</p>	<p><i>Since 2019, the government in Assam is pursuing a policy of systematic forced evictions almost exclusively targeting Bengali-speaking Muslim families, [...]. The</i></p>	<p>Since mid-June 2025, forced evictions targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims have continued unabated, with authorities displacing over 3100 families. At least two deaths were reported, that of a Muslim man who was shot dead by police, and a Muslim woman</p>

evictions were also accompanied by racist rhetoric, categorizing those displaced as “encroachers” or “illegal settlers”. Families are still left without adequate alternative housing or compensation;

who died of heat stroke. The stated justifications for these evictions varied from clearing forest/government land to enabling industrial projects. As has been the norm, Bengali-speaking Muslims were almost exclusively targeted, and not provided meaningful rehabilitation. Reported instances include:

- **Dhubri district:** On 8 July, one of the state’s largest recent eviction drives was conducted in Dhubri district, displacing around 1400 families. Officials said the land had been allotted for a proposed thermal power plant. Though at least [197 families](#) held legal documentation and were promised land or financial compensation, the majority were deemed ‘encroachers’ and reportedly offered a meagre ex-gratia amount. The drive [reportedly](#) saw stone pelting by residents and baton charge by police.
- **Goalpara district:** In late June, over 700 homes in the [Hasila Bill](#) locality were demolished by the district administration, reportedly without advance notice. The campaign left hundreds homeless amid intense heat and monsoon rains. Local activists alleged that most evictees were Bengali-speaking Muslims with official citizenship documentation, and that an elderly woman reportedly died from heatstroke following the evictions. Authorities claimed that the action targeted illegal settlements, while residents said they had lived in the area for decades.

On 12 July, another large-scale drive was launched in the [Paikan forest area](#) of Goalpara, evicting over 1080 families said to be residing on forest land. Authorities cited a High Court directive to clear forest encroachments. Residents said they had purchased the land from previous inhabitants and had no alternative housing. One man reportedly attempted suicide as the demolitions began, and media reports described widespread fear and silent compliance among residents.

		<p>On 17 July, amid the continuing eviction drive in Goalpara, it was reported that police had opened fire at protesters at the site of an eviction drive in Goalpara’s Betbari area, killing one Muslim man (19-year-old Shakaur Ali) and injuring several others.</p> <p>Goalpara and Dhubri are border districts, among those worst affected by a parallel, large-scale push by Assam authorities to forcibly deport Bengali-speaking Muslim state residents (including many Indian citizens) to Bangladesh. (See entry #6 in Table A)</p> <p>The recent eviction drives in Assam have coincided with CM Sarma’s recent remarks that the government was ‘restoring the demography’ of the region, widely interpreted as a reference to reducing the presence of Bengali-speaking Muslims.</p>
<p>4. Racist hate speech, threats and physical violence</p>	<p><i>Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam are constantly the target of racist hate speech, [...] often resulting in physical violence and threats against them. With the local elections in Assam scheduled for Spring of 2026, it is likely that the rhetoric against Muslims by political figures will rise further;</i></p>	<p>Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam have been subjected to virulent, targeted racist hate speech by state officials, most notably CM Sarma, often portraying them as foreigners, encroachers, or demographic threats. This rhetoric has contributed to a broader climate of Islamophobia, frequently inciting and accompanying physical violence by non-state actors.</p> <p>In its 2024 annual report, India Hate Lab documented 13 public hate speech events in Assam and at least 36 instances of hate speech by CM Sarma across India—nearly all targeting Bengali-speaking or other Muslims. Since March 2025, the situation has deteriorated further in the run-up to the 2026 Assam state elections, with Sarma escalating his anti-Muslim rhetoric through speeches, official statements, and social media posts.</p> <p>In March 2025, CM Sarma urged tribal villagers to rear pigs to create distance from Bengali-origin Muslims and accused the opposition Congress Party of conspiring to ‘relinquish Goalpara district to foreigners’.</p>

		<p>In May, Sarma announced a special scheme to provide arms licenses to indigenous Assamese communities living in ‘vulnerable and remote areas’, to protect them from threats ‘from the Bangladesh side and even in their own villages’.</p> <p>In June, during Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, Sarma claimed that beef was being ‘weaponised’ by Muslims to drive Hindus from their neighbourhoods, statements that coincided with communal tensions and a mob attack in Dhubri. (Also see entry #8 in Table A.)</p> <p>In July, Sarma falsely claimed that Muslims were ‘projected to equal Hindus’ in Assam by 2041, further fuelling unfounded fears over demographic overhaul by Bengali-speaking Muslims. He also suggested that declaring Bengali as one’s mother tongue in the upcoming national Census would help identify ‘illegal’ Bangladeshis.</p> <p>This consistent incitement by senior officials, often amplified via social media, has fuelled a climate of hostility against Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, heightening the risk of violence in the lead-up to the state Assembly elections, scheduled for March 2026.</p>
<p>5. Excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings by law enforcement</p>	<p><i>The excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against members of Bengali speaking Muslims frequently results in disproportionately recurrent killings and injuries with impunity</i></p>	<p>Bengali-speaking Muslims have continued to be subjected to excessive and often fatal force by law enforcement officials, especially during forced evictions or public protests. Alongside, as previously documented, police officials have also been accused of carrying out staged ‘encounter’ shootings—at least 171 between May 2021 and August 2022—as part of crime control measures.</p> <p>On 17 July 2025, 19-year-old Shakaur Ali was shot dead and several others injured after police opened fire on protesters in the Betpari area of Goalpara district, amid a forced eviction drive that had evicted over 1080 Bengali-speaking Muslim families from the area. (See entry #3 in Table A.) According to a news report, this marked at least the eighth fatal police shooting of Bengali-speaking Muslims during eviction drives in Assam since 2016.</p>

		<p>Separately, in May 2025, India’s Supreme Court ordered the Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) to reopen and independently investigate longstanding allegations of staged police ‘encounters’ in the state. The SC was responding to a petition citing 171 such incidents and set aside an earlier 2022 AHRC order that had dismissed the matter. While the SC found that not all cases necessarily reflected a breakdown of due process, it acknowledged that multiple cases warranted deeper scrutiny for compliance with the SC’s guidelines regarding extrajudicial killings by police.</p> <p>No updates have been reported on the judicial status of killings previously highlighted, including the September 2024 shooting of two Bengali-speaking men during an eviction drive in Kamrup district, and the June 2024 killing of two Muslim youths by forest guards in Nagaon district.</p>
<p>6. Arbitrary arrests and risk of forced deportation</p>	<p><i>Bengali-speaking Muslims continue to be the target of arbitrary arrests by the Assam police, facing a risk of forced deportation, particularly for alleged child marriages;</i></p>	<p>In the days and weeks following the 22 April 2025 militant attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, authorities across multiple states—particularly Assam—launched a sweeping crackdown targeting Muslim communities, particularly Bengali-speaking Muslims and Rohingya refugees, accused of being ‘illegal migrants’. At least 2000 of those detained from across the country, including Indian citizens, were later forcibly deported to Bangladesh as part of a new ‘pushback’ policy’. An unknown number remain in custody across multiple states, at the time of writing.</p> <p>In Assam, police are reported to have arbitrarily detained hundreds (if not thousands) of Bengali-speaking Muslims across districts bordering Bangladesh. Families reported night raids, disappearances, and the use of force during arrests. Legal aid groups reported repeated denial of access to lawyers and widespread procedural violations. As of end-June, around 100 people (almost all of whom are likely to be Bengali-speaking Muslims) who were detained across the state were still missing, according to media reports.</p>

		<p>These actions, described by government officials as ‘pushbacks’ across the India-Bangladesh border, have been carried out by the police and local authorities, bypassing established judicial procedures and affecting even those with pending legal claims or disputed citizenship status. In many reported instances, deportees were allegedly removed from detention or picked up by police from their homes and transported to the border, with families receiving no prior notice or legal explanation of their removal. Several families alleged that Indian citizens were among those forcibly expelled, often at gunpoint. All of those ‘pushed back’ are reported to be Muslims.</p> <p>Assam CM Himanta Sarma took a belligerent stance, confirming and celebrating the ‘pushback’ policy and citing a February 2025 Supreme Court order—which had ordered expediting deportation proceedings of 63 individuals declared foreigners by the state’s Foreigners Tribunals (FT)—as well as the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, as justification for district authorities to issue deportation orders without judicial oversight. Further, Sarma announced plans to issue arms licenses to ‘indigenous’ Assamese communities residing along the border, a move widely seen as encouraging vigilante violence against Bengali-speaking Muslims.</p> <p>Media reports revealed the impacts on families. Many reported disappearances of their relatives, and some identified their relatives—including those who held Indian documentation—in video footage from Bangladesh, leaving them unable to trace loved ones or seek timely legal recourse. Many victims found themselves in the no-man’s-land between India and Bangladesh.</p> <p>It has been reported that some 200 individuals who had been ‘pushed back’ were subsequently returned to India by Bangladeshi border guards after it became apparent that they may have been Indian citizens and their documentation inadequately verified. One example is Khairul Islam, a former teacher from Assam’s Morigaon district, who had</p>
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		<p>previously been declared a foreigner by a FT and detained in 2018 before securing release in 2020 under a Supreme Court general order. On 24 May, he and eight others were picked up by India’s Border Security Force from various locations, with their families kept in the dark about their whereabouts. Between 27 and 31 May, they were reportedly stranded in ‘no man’s land’ between India and Pakistan, without access to basic necessities, before being taken to a Bangladeshi Border Guard camp. Khairul and his companions were subsequently returned to Indian authorities on 31 May.</p> <p>Similar accounts were revealed also by several women who were repatriated after being ‘pushed back’ by Assam police. 60+-year-old Hazera Khatun, from Assam’s Barpeta district, was picked up by police on 25 May despite her claim before the Gauhati High Court still being adjudicated. She described being taken without explanation to the Matia detention camp for foreigners in Assam’s Goalpara district, denied food, and then forcibly herded with others into a bus and taken to the border. There, police allegedly handed out Bangladeshi currency and ordered them to cross over. The group spent the night in the rain, stranded in ‘no man’s land’, before Bangladeshi officials pushed them back toward India. Khatun was eventually found on a highway and rescued by locals on 31 May. Others in the same group included Sona Bhanu, a 59-year-old widow with a long-standing citizenship dispute, and Rahima Begum, who reported being picked up by police under false pretences and forced to walk through paddy fields in Bangladesh before being beaten by local authorities there and pushed back into India. Other women—Jahanara Begum, Ashifa Begum, and Sahera Khatun—also alleged similar treatment. Survivors described widespread physical and psychological abuse, lack of access to food or medication, and the use of intimidation and force throughout their ordeal. None were issued formal deportation orders or given access to legal counsel before being expelled.</p> <p>India’s Supreme Court refused to intervene to stop these ‘pushbacks’, dismissing a plea that had challenged Assam’s ‘pushback’ deportations as arbitrary and unconstitutional,</p>
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		<p>and suggesting that the petitioner approach the state High Court for relief. The Gauhati HC directed the petitioners—the All BTC Minority Students Union—to file a detailed affidavit by 14 July, with details of the individuals impacted by the ‘pushback’ policy. Those proceedings are ongoing, with the HC not ordering any relief so far.</p> <p>In a tweet on 19 July, CM Sarma acknowledged that many of those recently forcibly deported from Assam ‘legally... may not be foreigners’, but defended the ongoing ‘pushbacks’ from the state as part of Assamese Hindus’ ‘last battle of survival’.</p> <p>Separately, the Assam government continued to conduct arbitrary arrests and detentions of Bengali-speaking (and other) Muslims in other contexts: in June and July 2025, over 300 individuals (nearly all Muslims) were arrested across the state under the state’s cow protection law (see entry #2 in Table B), and at least 92 other individuals (nearly all Muslims) were separately arrested for alleged ‘anti-India’ social media activity.</p>
<p>7. New discriminatory laws and policies</p>	<p><i>The Assam government has emphasized its control over the population, notably following hateful rhetoric around alleged demographic changes due to population growth of the Bengali-speaking Muslim community. The government intends to introduce new discriminatory laws and policies that would affect Bengali-speaking Muslims, particularly with regard to marriage and land ownership, among others;</i></p>	<p>In 2025, the Assam government has continued to advance discriminatory policies targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims. As highlighted in other sections in Table A and Table B, these have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The withdrawal, in April 2025, of 28000 pending Foreigners Tribunal (FT) cases involving non-Muslim individuals (see entry #1 in Table A), while refusing similar relief to Bengali-speaking Muslims, who have instead faced arbitrary detention and forced deportations under the new ‘pushback policy’ (see entry #6 in Table A). • CM Sarma’s announcement of a new scheme in June 2025, to provide arms licenses to ‘indigenous’ Assamese communities in ‘vulnerable and remote areas’, a move widely criticised as legitimising vigilantism and potentially endangering

		<p>Bengali-speaking Muslims living in mixed-population border district. (see entry #4 in Table A)</p> <p>In recent years, as documented previously, the government had also signalled its intent to implement further laws that would disproportionately affect Bengali-speaking Muslims. These included plans to restrict land ownership and interfaith land deals, expand prohibitions on inter-faith marriages, and enforce rules linking reproductive choices to access to state welfare. There are no recent reports on the status of operationalisation of these plans.</p> <p>Separately, the delimitation exercise carried out in Assam prior to the 2024 General Election had reduced the number of assembly constituencies in Muslim-majority areas, while increasing representation in districts dominated by communities considered 'indigenous' to Assam. The continuing impacts of this delimitation on reduced representation for Bengali-speaking Muslims are likely to be reported during the upcoming state assembly elections scheduled for March 2026.</p>
<p>8. Physical integrity violations by non-state actors</p>	<p><i>Incidents of violent attacks perpetrated by civilians and organized groups against members of Bengali-speaking Muslims in August and September 2024, leading to abuses and violations of their right to life and physical integrity;</i></p>	<p>Incidents of physical integrity violations against Muslims have continued to be reported since May 2025.</p> <p>In Dhubri, a Muslim-majority border district in Assam, communal tensions flared on 8 and 9 June after cattle remains were allegedly found in a Hindu temple compound. The incident triggered stone-pelting, resulting in prohibitory orders being imposed across the town.</p> <p>Authorities initially registered five FIRs and arrested 22 individuals, followed by a further 38 arrests after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's visit, during which he controversially threatened night-time 'shoot-at-sight' orders. Civil society and opposition</p>

		leaders raised concerns over excessive policing and religious bias, noting that all those arrested were Muslim despite reports of violence from both communities.
9. Closure of Bengali-speaking Muslim religious schools	<i>The Assam government is closing Bengali-speaking Muslim religious schools, which could have a significant impact on Assam's female Bengali-speaking Muslim students.</i>	The Assam government's recent crackdown on Islamic <i>madrassas</i> —first against government-run seminaries and then against those run privately—has virtually paralysed the operation of Muslim religious schools. No further updates are available. (Also see entry #2 in Table B.)

B. Updates regarding other issues not specifically highlighted in CERD's letter to India

Issue	Description
1. Denial of cultural rights (as Miya Muslims)	<p>Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, often referred to as 'Miyas' and have distinct cultural traditions, have long faced hostility for expressing their cultural identity. Assam's political leadership, including CM Sarma, have repeatedly denied the community's distinct heritage, framing them as 'illegal Bangladeshis'. This has created an atmosphere where cultural expression by the community is routinely criminalised.</p> <p>In 2019, police in Guwahati filed criminal cases against ten Miya poets for writing about their experiences in the Miya dialect, accusing them of inciting communal disharmony ahead of the NRC update. In October 2022, authorities sealed a privately established Miya Museum in Goalpara within days of its opening and arrested its organisers under anti-terror laws.</p> <p>The incidents reflect a broader pattern of denial of cultural rights. Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam are being systematically prevented from exercising their right, as a minority, to enjoy their own culture, use their language, and preserve their heritage. This consistent suppression of their language, artistic expression, and cultural institutions, along with the stigmatisation and criminalisation of identity-based expression, amounts to a serious and ongoing violation of their cultural rights.</p>
2. Denial of FoRB rights (as Muslims)	In recent years, the Assam government's policies have significantly curtailed freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for Bengali-speaking Muslims, undermining their ability to practice and manifest their faith.

In December 2020, the state passed a law abolishing all government-run *madrassas*, [converting](#) over 700 institutions into regular public schools and removing Islamic studies from the curriculum. By April 2021, the publicly-funded *madrassa* system in the state had reportedly been completely dismantled. The Gauhati High Court upheld the law in 2022. Since then, authorities have targeted private *madrassas* as well. In 2023, CM Sarma publicly [announced](#) the closure of 600 such schools, declaring his intention to shut down all *madrassas* operating in the state. By mid-2023, another 300 had [reportedly](#) closed. In January 2024, CM Sarma [announced](#) that the government was working towards 1000 more privately-run *madrassas*. These actions have disproportionately affected Miya Muslim children, especially girls, who depended on *madrassas* for basic (religious and non-religious) education.

Beyond education, the Assam Cattle Preservation Act (2021) imposed sweeping restrictions on the sale, slaughter, and consumption of cattle. Such laws effectively criminalise traditional Islamic practices during religious festivals like Eid al-Adha. In June and July 2025, CM Sarma alleged that Muslims were '[weaponising beef](#)' to provoke communal unrest during Eid al-Adha, and [ordered](#) the strict implementation of the Cattle Preservation Act, leading to the arrests of over 300 Muslims. (**See entry #6: Arbitrary Arrests in Table A for more details.**)

The state has also advanced policies targeting Muslims' personal and religious practices: In February 2024, CM Sarma asserted that Assam would repeal religion-based family laws and enact a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). In August 2024, Assam [passed](#) the Muslim Marriage Registration Bill, mandating that the registration of marriage with a minor would be considered a legal offence, and that the registration of Muslim marriages would be done by the government and not a *qazi* (Islamic judge). Also in August 2024, Sarma [announced](#) that it would introduce legislation to ban polygamy (a practice allowed under Islamic personal law) and a separate legislation to impose life imprisonment for 'love jihad' (a debunked and baseless conspiracy theory alleging that Muslim men seduce and coerce Hindu women into marrying them and joining terror outfits). In January 2025, it was [reported](#) that Assam would 'hold off' on its previously-announced UCC and instead wait for a nationwide UCC. There has been no further updates on the proposed laws against polygamy and 'love jihad'. 'Love jihad' laws have, in other BJP governed states, effectively criminalised inter-faith marriages between Muslim men and Hindu women.

Read together, these developments indicate a systematic effort to restrict the religious life of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam. The state's actions have increasingly denied the community the freedom to manifest their religion in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

<p>3. Failure of domestic remedy over the board</p>	<p>Despite repeated allegations of grave violations against Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assams, as documented earlier and in other entries in Table A and Table B, domestic institutions have consistently failed to ensure meaningful accountability or redress.</p> <p>The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has routinely dismissed serious complaints without proper inquiry, while also refusing to exercise its considerable <i>suo motu</i> powers. Most notably, in 2022, the AHRC closed a petition regarding the 171 alleged extrajudicial killings by police between May 2021 and August 2022, without conducting a meaningful investigation. While the Indian Supreme Court ordered the AHRC to reopen the investigation in May 2025, the AHRC is not known to have conducted meaningful outreach to victim families, at the time of writing.</p> <p>The Gauhati High Court has also shown reluctance to intervene meaningfully in cases involving the targeting of Bengali-speaking Muslims, most recently regarding the forced deportations ('pushbacks') of Bengali-speaking Muslims, including those with pending legal claims. In June 2025, the HC declined to halt the new 'pushback' policy and instead directed petitioners to file individual affidavits listing affected persons, effectively denying urgent relief. This reflects a pattern in recent years, where the GHC has upheld or tacitly enabled state-led actions targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims, including mass arrests and forced evictions, among others.</p> <p>India's Supreme Court too has declined to meaningfully intervene in many cases. In May 2025, it dismissed a plea challenging the constitutionality of recent 'pushbacks', instead directing the petitioners to approach the GHC. This is in line with a broader trend of judicial deference to executive actions in Assam and other BJP-governed states, especially those impacting Muslims.</p> <p>Together, these examples reflect a systemic failure of domestic remedy.</p>
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