

# Report Round Table Discussion on Citizenship Draft Bill, 2016



December - 2016

**C O M**  
COUNCIL OF MINORITIES

[www.com-bd.org](http://www.com-bd.org)

### **Date, Venue & Participants**

On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Council of Minorities (CoM) organized a Round Table Discussion on “Citizen Draft Bill 2016” at Reporter’s Unity in Dhaka. The Round Table Discussion was attended

- Mrs. Taslima Yesmin, assistant professor, department of law university of Dhaka
- Mr. Hafizur Rahman Khan Karzon, associate professor department of law university of Dhaka
- Mr. Riswanul Hoq, professor department of law university of Dhaka
- Barrister Sadia Arman, advocate Supreme Court of Bangladesh
- Md. Hafizur Rahman Khan, advocate Supreme Court of Bangladesh
- Mr. AF Hasan Arrif, Senior advocate Supreme Court of Bangladesh
- Barrister Ummayhani Bintay Arrif, Executive Member of Council of Minorities
- Mr. Zakir Hossain, President of Council of Minorities
- Mr. Sadakat Khan, President Urdu speaking People Youth Rehabilitation Movement
- 92 persons from Mohammadpur & Mirpur Camps also participated
- Nari Pokho, Nagorik Uddyog, SAILS, OBATHELPERs NGOs and participant from UNCA also participated

### **Context of the Press Conference**

The Citizenship Draft Bill 2016 has been approved by the cabinet on 1st February, 2016. If passed in the parliament, the bill will replace the existing Citizenship Act 1951 and the Bangladesh Citizenship Temporary Provisions Order 1972. In August 2016 CoM has hosted a workshop on the critical reflection on draft citizenship bill and generated some recommendations against the draft bill-2016. The contexts of the round table discussion was

critical reflection of the draft bill, recommendations and find the way to knock the concern authority to review the draft bill before enact the bill.

### **Objective of the Round Table Discussion**

The purpose of the round table organised by Council of Minorities was to exposition of critical reflection the draft bill and proposed the recommendations against the draft bill-2016 to inform and raise voice through community, academic and civil society before it is placed in the parliament for enactment.

### **Round Table Discussion**

The round table discussion started with an introductory speech about the CoM, draft bill and objectives of the round table by Mr. Zakir Hossain, President of Council of Minorities. After introductory speech Barrister Ummehani presented the keynote presentation about the draft citizenship bill and said that the bill may violate basic human rights, including the rights of nationality. She recommended purging certain sections of the bill or have those corrected because those underline the best interest of the child and puts Bangladeshi children at risk of the being statelessness.

Taslima Yesmin Dhaka University law department assistant professor, said that the bill did not keep any scope to accommodate any stateless people and she also said that the Urdu Speaking community will be effected if this bill will be enact by parliament and it would not be good idea to create statelessness in Bangladesh.

Md. Hafizur Rahman khan, advocate Supreme Court of Bangladesh, said that the bill has hints of curbing the power of Supreme Court.

Barrister Sadia Arman said, any bill should discuss with the civil society before going to be enacted however we did not see any consultation with civil society so that it is necessary to start talking about the bill.

Hafizur Rahman Khan Karzon associate professor department of law University of Dhaka mentioned some good side of the bill and he also urge to government to review this bill before enact the bill.

Ridwanul Hoque professor department of law University of Dhaka said that, this bill should review because so many articles are problematic and not properly mention the definitions of the enemy, enemy state and also the bill does not contain definition of the direct indirect allegiance.

Urdu Speaking Peoples Youth Rehabilitation Movement president Sadaqat Khan said a section of the draft bill may undermine a Supreme Court judgment which recognised Urdu speaking people as Bangladesh's citizens. Education and occupation of the Urdu speaking people would further turn uncertain if the law is passed as proposed and he also argued that the government should consider certain matters on humanitarian ground so that every citizen of the country can live a decent life with dignity.

AF Hassan Ariff, a senior lawyer and former attorney general, said every individual of the country might be affected, directly or indirectly, by the proposed law. He said there many ambiguities in the bill as it may empower administration to nullify one's citizenship.

Possessing a national identity card or a passport or the both are not enough to protect one's citizenship and he also said that the Citizenship has been described in seven categories in the bill, and that all of them could be affected.

## **Suggestion from the round table discussion**

After the round table discussion the guests and community suggested to do as below Submit memorandum along with a set of recommendations to the home ministry and law ministry

- Organize more discussion in different Bar association in Bangladesh
- Organize TV talk Shown on draft Bill
- A delegation should visit home ministry and law ministry to request them to review the bill

Chief Executive of CoM Khalid Hussain given thanks to all respected guests, civil society, community and media and announced the closing of the discussion

## **Council of Minorities (CoM)**

Council of Minorities (CoM) is a human rights organization with a special focus on establishing the rights of minorities and indigenous people. Established in 2012, CoM envisions a peaceful, poverty-free and xenophobia-free world where people, especially minorities and indigenous people, the powerless and marginalized will have equal opportunities to live with dignity and hope.

CoM is trying to ensure social, cultural, political, constitutional and economic rights of the minorities and indigenous people through partnership, networking, and advocacy and lobbying with the Government. CoM promotes and fosters mass awareness on minority rights and duties; creates social awareness against social stigma, discrimination and xenophobia through performing arts, drama and documentary films; enhances the capacity of minorities and indigenous people to organize training, seminars and workshops on their rights; and organises summits and fellowship programs for minority people.

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