

A recent wave of student resistance is spreading across Indian campuses, as universities, with their liberal orientation, and the priorities of the Modi government, with its majoritarian and neoliberal agenda, clash against each other. The reaction of the government to university unrest is a cause for serious concern. In December 2019, the Delhi police force, which is under the jurisdiction of the central government of prime minister Modi, beat up students protesting at Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI), a public institution in Delhi. JMI students were protesting against the government's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act. This act offers citizenship to immigrants belonging to Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Parsi, and Sikh communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, but does not include Muslims. It is a clear violation of the right to equality enshrined in the Indian constitution and the secular foundations of the country. This episode was followed by violence unleashed by masked miscreants, allegedly associated with the student organization affiliated with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at JNU. Armed with sticks, the mob attacked students and faculty in January 2020. The stand taken by the JNU administration and the police after this attack provoked sharp criticism and demonstrations across the country. These events at JNU could be viewed as an example of the contradiction between the traditionally liberal orientation of universities and the rapid changes currently taking place under Modi's Hindu nationalist administration. (F: International Higher Education, number 101, spring 2020)