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**TOGETHER WE STAND  
PRESS STATEMENT**

**Rollback SIR, hold Gyanesh Kumar accountable: Citizens come together to reclaim  
India's democracy**

Noting the systematic and mass disenfranchisement through the ongoing Special Intensive Revision exercise, through which an estimated 13 crore Indian voters have been struck off the voter list, former judges, senior advocates and activists came together in Delhi today to demand action against Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar. Presenting a list of demands, they announced it is not possible to stay silent anymore and that further actions will be taken, in exercise of the fundamental right to protest and dissent, if these demands are not met.

**Demands range from restoration of deleted voters to independent inquiry into SIR**

Speaking at the Press Conference, political activist Yogendra Yadav, read out a list of joint demands on behalf of everyone present:

1. **The ECI must roll back the Special Intensive Revision**, across the country, and restore every elector removed from the rolls as they existed prior to the SIR.
2. **All forthcoming elections must happen on the basis of pre-SIR voter rolls**, after a summary revision, if required, as was the practice prior to SIR.
3. **Public social audit of the electoral roll as provided for in the Manual on Electoral Rolls (December 2023)** No voter must be removed without an open and public verification process at the level of gram sabha / ward sabha / booth, in the presence of BLO and ERO with facilities for immediate corrections of wrongful deletions. This process must be carried out not just for SIR related deletions but in future revisions as well, as per the procedure provided in existing ECI manual and past ECI orders.
4. **The Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, must resign** forthwith failing which impeachment proceedings against him must commence immediately.
5. **The parliament must repeal the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023**; replace it with an appointment mechanism free of executive control and remove the immunity from civil or criminal proceedings granted to current or former CEC and ECs.
6. **The ECI must place every SIR related document in the public domain**, including the original files of the decision to conduct SIR in each phase, all the minutes of Commission meetings, any objections by ECs or DECAs, the complete log and source code of ECInet, criteria for categorisation ("logical discrepancy" or "VIP" etc) changes to the BLO App and communication of the Commission with CEOs and that of CEOs with the EROs, including whatsapp communication and the decision to file appeals against the inclusion of over 16 lakh names in West Bengal.
7. **Restore welfare benefits of all Indians who were wrongfully denied** the same on the basis of deletion of their names in voter rolls.
8. **An independent and credible inquiry and review** of the constitutionality and legality of all decisions taken under Gyanesh Kumar as well as of the design, processes,

implementation and the consequences of SIR so as to fix responsibility of the CEC, other ECs, officers and any third party for misconduct, breach of official duty and criminal liability for any act of commission or omission leading to wrongful disenfranchisement.

**Speakers call for accountability of all actors to be fixed and urged every conscientious citizen to stand against SIR!**

Initiating the press conference, **senior advocate Kapil Sibal remarked** that “enough is enough” and highlighted the need for urgent steps to be taken. He said that many of the problems associated with SIR that are now coming to light were repeatedly raised before the Supreme Court and now stand proven. He demanded that all decisions with respect to SIR should be withdrawn because they were not taken by ECI as a body, but only by the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and therefore lack legitimacy or sanctity. He urged for immediate action so that democracy in India not just survives, but thrives. When asked if SIR was aimed at disenfranchising Muslims and non-BJP voters, he agreed and said that the criteria of logical discrepancies was devised for this very purpose.

Noting the distress caused to voters due to SIR, **senior advocate Prashant Bhushan argued** that the exercise is happening in violation of the Representation of People’s Act and Rules. He noted how the ECI refused to reveal the names of voters in Delhi who had been served notice but when this matter came before the Supreme Court, the list was published the very next day. Pointing to the serious lack of transparency, he said that ECI has replied to RTI requests that they have not taken decision to undertake SIR and the Indian Express investigation has revealed that agenda and minutes of meetings were not shared with Elections Commissioners. Questioning the logic of requiring existing voters to fill Form 6, even if their name has been removed for shifting residence, for which earlier Form 8 was to be filled, he asked why existing rules have been suspended during SIR. He also mentioned that the Supreme Court let our democracy be violated by not putting a stop to the SIR exercise.

Asking who ‘We the people’ are, **senior advocate Sanjay Hegde questioned** whether to be a citizen of India one now needs to have documents and be mapped to the 2002 voter list. He said that in 2024, BJP realized that they came very close to losing the elections and so have now indulged in manipulation of voter rolls. When these concerns were raised before the Supreme Court, it was argued that ECI has powers to revise rolls under Article 324, but he said that this power must be exercised to enable free and fair elections, in an inclusive and transparent manner. However, now ECI is saying – you can vote, only if we want and let you. If someone’s name is wrongly deleted, Court is saying that you can vote the next time, but in the meanwhile, people are being divested of their rights, they are being forcefully pushed into Bangladesh. It is no longer possible to stay quiet and we must come together to restore the right to vote of all Indians.

**Feminist activist Syeda Hameed**, President of the National Federation of Indian Women, recalled her experience of attending a public hearing in Mangolpuri, Delhi where she met Kamta Prasad who has been declared dead in voter rolls. She recalled speaking with Neelam, who is polio affected and with limited mobility and literacy found her name struck off the voter rolls. Mentioning several other such cases, she questioned whether Indian citizens even have

the right anymore to raise their heads and walk with pride in their country. She said that as a Muslim, she knows that the exercise is designed to target her community, but many others also not spared.

Urging everyone to pay attention to these numbers, **political activist Yogendra Yadav** said that at the time of 2024 Lok Sabha elections, there were 99 crore adults in India and 98 crore electors. SIR's achievement is that by the time it will end, there will be 103 crore adults but only 88 crore electors in India. He argued that the Press Release by ECI is an admission of guilt and has converted all allegations of misconduct into evidence. ECI in its press release said that from now all meetings will be conducted with agenda and minutes. Why was this not done earlier? Gyanesh Kumar has reduced the institution of ECI to a joke. Now ECInet will be reviewed to see if it complied with act and rules, but if it is found that it does now, then what will happen? 13 crore names already struck off. Requiring existing voters to fill Form 6 despite knowing that they will have to make a false declaration, ECI is not only itself committing an illegality but making crores of citizens also do the same. Responding to a question related to Gen Z voters, he pointed out that the legacy requirement in Form 6 is making it difficult for first time Gen Z voters to register and hence SIR is only seeing deletions and no additions.

**Former Judge of Bombay High Court, Justice Marlapalle** recounted his own experience of a BLO visiting him and said that he was told that if he chooses not to submit the form or if for any reason the form doesn't get uploaded, then his name can be removed the voter list despite being consistently voting from 1980 onwards. He urged everyone to come together to restore our right to vote.

**Social activist Teesta Setalvad** demanded wide-ranging reforms in electoral processes. She said that ECI has stopped answering and responding to people since 2023-24 and must be held accountable. She pointed out that it was under former CEC, Rajiv Kumar who is now chairing HDFC Bank, that ECI stopped giving actual numbers of voter counts and only provided percentage of voting. Adding to the joint demands, she said that Form 7 must also be reviewed and reformed as there are a lot of problems and it has become an instrument for mass deletions without any investigation or transparency. She also demanded for proactive uploading of Forms 9, 10, 11, 11A, 11B and 17C, which has in the past been denied to political parties. She also pointed to concerns with over-digitalisation and ECI making available non-searchable lists. She also said that we must debate the validity of elections in states where elections happened on the basis of faulty voter rolls.

Criticising the ECI for being non-transparent and misrepresenting facts, **transparency activist Nikhil Dey**, said that an open letter has been sent to the ECI today on the public audit process which was carried out in Mangolpuri, Delhi (letter is attached to this press release). He said that ECI told the Supreme Court that last SIR happened in 2001-02 and it was following the same process. But he pointed out that first ECI refused to provide details of 2001 exercise in response to RTI requests but when they finally got it, they found that the 2001 process was completely different, it required house to house verification of existing list and did not require citizens to fill any forms and no new lists were created. When problems were faced in house to house verification, then CEC JM Lyngdoh ordered for public audit of voter rolls to be carried out. He also pointed out that logical discrepancies were completely illogical and subjected a citizen's fate to errors by data entry operators. He argued that now right to vote is equivalent

to right to live and those whose names get deleted risk being excluded from welfare schemes like ration without which their survival is at risk.

Urging that Supreme Court's SIR decision should be reconsidered, **senior advocate Pallav Shishodia** argued that the Court approved the shifting of burden of proving citizenship under SIR to the people. Earlier, if someone's name was on the list, it would be presumed that they are a citizen, as was also held in Lal Babu Husain case of 2003, and they couldn't be removed without a show cause notice and proper process. Now with the reversal of burden of proof, the aim of SIR is mass exclusion. Calling the removal of names on grounds of logical discrepancy as arbitrary, he argued that no public debate happened on the same. Cautioning that there is no document currently that conclusively proves citizenship, he said that SIR has become the first test of citizenship as the government will now determine citizenship of those who are ultimately excluded, putting people in a vicious cycle.

Former Judge of Supreme Court, Justice Madan Lokur, Former Chief Election Commissioner, S.Y. Quraishi and Former Lieutenant General of Delhi, Najeeb Jung were present in the audience.

**Speakers declared that if their demands are not met, they will exercise their democratic right to protest and dissent and take further suitable actions.**