

An Open Letter to the People of India

In Defence of Our Constitutional Institutions

Oct 7, 2026

To the People of India,

We write as former judges and retired veterans of constitutional office. We hold no brief for any political party. We write because, in moments like these, silence is no longer a neutral choice.

Our concern is grave. India's constitutional bodies are under sustained attack. The Election Commission of India stands at the centre of this assault. Even the higher judiciary which we hold in high esteem, and statutory agencies have not been spared.

These attacks are not reasoned critique. This appears to be a calculated campaign driven by vested political interests, with little regard for the potentially devastating consequences of destabilising the world's largest democracy.

A Campaign Without Evidence

Criticism of institutions is a democratic right. Denigration is not. Constitutional authorities are now branded "thieves", "puppets" and "compromised" from public platforms. Officers who conduct our elections are named, shamed and openly warned of reprisal once power changes hands. No court of law has found any of these charges proven.

Allegations of "vote theft" are made at press conferences, not before courts. When the Commission seeks a sworn declaration, none is filed. Electronic Voting Machines are blamed only after defeat. Victories won on the same machines go unquestioned. A party that governed this nation for over five decades now claims that the very system which elected it is rigged.

It does not act alone. Activist outfits with a long record of selective litigation lend these claims a veneer of legality. They file petition, one after the other. They seldom file proof. The courtroom becomes a stage, and when the judgment is delivered, it is criticised whenever it does not serve their interests. Vitriol is then amplified and disseminated on an industrial scale, with the deliberate aim of eroding public confidence in a well-established and widely trusted judicial system.

A System That Has Earned Trust

India conducts the largest democratic exercise in human history. Nearly a billion electors vote at over a million polling stations. The Commission draws its authority from Article 324 of the Constitution. The framers deliberately placed the electoral roll beyond the reach of the executive. They entrusted it to an independent Commission.

That design was debated and settled in the Constituent Assembly. No single party can now rewrite it to suit its electoral arithmetic.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is part of that very design. Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 empowers the Commission to revise the rolls at any time. Intensive revisions have been carried out repeatedly since the first general elections. The last SIR was completed about two decades back. No one called those revisions a conspiracy.

The purpose is simple. Remove the names of the dead, the duplicate entries of the same name, the names of those who have shifted their residence to another place and to include the names of every eligible citizen. Two decades of migration and urbanisation have left the rolls in need of correction. A clean roll protects every genuine vote.

The highest court in the land has spoken. The Supreme Court upheld the SIR as lawful and within the Commission's powers. It held that the exercise was founded on a legitimate purpose. It found adequate safeguards of notice, hearing, objection and appeal. It held that the SIR advances the constitutional imperative of free and fair elections.

“The campaign of casting suspicion continues unabated, regardless of facts or consequences.”

This framework has delivered peaceful transfer of power, time and again. Governments have changed at the Centre and in the States. Opposition parties have won ny of these contests. They accepted those verdicts without complaint, setting a powerful example of democratic conduct—one that has been widely admired around the world.

The protocols have not changed. The rules were not written in 2025. They were written in 1950. The uproar over SIR appears both sudden and remarkably convenient.

Trust is the currency of democracy. Tell citizens often enough that their vote does not count, and they stop believing in the ballot. When the ballot loses meaning, the street gains it. Unrest begins with a narrative. Anarchic and fringe elements then occupy the vacuum. Some are homegrown. Some take their cues from beyond our borders.

The responsibility to sustain public confidence in democracy is therefore shared. Institutions earn that confidence through transparency, political parties pursue their grievances through evidence and due process, and the media help citizens distinguish

verified facts from conjecture. Citizens must examine claims before accepting or sharing them, and protesters must exercise their rights peacefully and within the framework of the law. Democratic accountability depends on scrutiny that seeks answers and reform that strengthens the system. It is in that spirit that we make the following appeal.

Our Appeal

To political parties: Contest elections. Do not delegitimise them. Take your grievances to the Commission and the courts, with evidence.

To the media: Do not amplify conjecture and speculation without first scrutinising and verifying the claims you report. A headline is not evidence, and repetition does not make an allegation the truth.

To constitutional bodies: Stand firm, remain transparent, address legitimate concerns with clarity, and stay above the political fray.

To our fellow citizens: Verify the facts before acting on them. Do not let anyone convince you that your vote is meaningless. Your vote is your voice, and it matters.

Constitutional bodies do not belong to any government; they belong to the people of India. An attack on their credibility is, ultimately, an attack on the institutions that safeguard the citizens' democratic rights. We call upon every Indian to stand up for and defend these institutions.

We remain, in service of the Constitution,

Concerned Citizens of India

(Signatories)