

NWMI stands in solidarity with trans and queer persons, demands repeal of amendments to Trans Bill

The Network of Women in Media, India, condemns [THE TRANSGENDER PERSONS \(PROTECTION OF RIGHTS\) AMENDMENT BILL, 2026](#), which was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr Virendra Kumar on 13 March, 2026. Far from protecting the rights of transgender persons, the amendments seek to persecute trans persons across India. The underlying message that the Union Government seems keen on sending out is that the state will only recognise a transgender person if they remain within the bounds of religio-cultural structures and on the edges of society. Other sections of the Bill persecute and criminalise even the few who it recognises as transgender. There is no word meanwhile on provisions the communities have been demanding for years, including horizontal reservations in education and employment.

The stated aim of the amendment Bill is to undo the right to self identification that transgender persons currently have in India, thanks to the Supreme Court of India's judgement in the NALSA vs Union of India judgement of 2014 – which was later codified in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The government now says it will only recognise socio-cultural trans identities like Hijra, Kinner, Aravani, Jogta, etc. This negates decades of activism/advocacy in trans rights rooted in ground work, and there should be no going back.

There are many problems with this. Firstly, these socio-cultural identities came about as a result of the discrimination that transgender persons face in society; the aforementioned communities collectively protect those who are shunned by society and have their own structures as a means of survival. They depend on 'traditional' sources of income – begging, sex work, select cultural practices – because 'traditionally', that's all they have been allowed to do by society. For the state to insist that these are the only trans identities it will recognise is nothing but codification of discrimination.

Second, these socio-cultural identities mainly comprise transgender women and some intersex persons belonging to a limited set of communities. Historically, transgender men and non-binary persons have not been able to organise or exist in socio-cultural identities due to heavy discrimination and oppression. By insisting that only socio-cultural identities will be recognised, the state wants to erase the reality of trans masculine persons, trans feminine persons who do not belong to socio-cultural identities, as well as those who don't fit the binary gender expectations of patriarchy. Different states in India have different levels of and communities of trans femme and trans masc persons. Even a traditional trans woman - thirunangai of Tamil Nadu - will be outside the scope of the bill. It also does not include socially marginalised yet traditionally accepted identities from different parts of North East India, including the Nupa Manba and Nupi Manba communities from Manipur, Sumanglik communities in Manipur, cross dressing and queer performers in Bhaona and Baul communities in Assam and Tripura. Transmasculine, agender and gender queer identities are included within the tribes of other North East states. For instance, the Lamgingshai community in Meghalaya have traditionally supported the queer community, and Adivasi communities in tea garden areas support trans masculine persons.

Third, the Bill makes it clear that the government wants to enforce these amendments

retrospectively, which means that thousands of people who have been able to accrue some societal and legal dignity for themselves between 2014 and now will be stripped of their identification cards and legitimacy.

In sum, the amendments affect people across the country, across the lines of caste, religion, race, language, geography, age, ability, educational qualification, profession – that is, across every line one can imagine that can be drawn between human beings. The fact is that LGBTQIA+ persons are present in all families, all educational institutions, all workplaces, all neighbourhoods, all villages and all cities.

Only a law that ensures that marginalised people can fight for their rights when these are denied enables them to live authentically – visibly – in society. With the regression that this amendment Bill proposes, the NWMI is worried that thousands of fellow citizens who have come out in their families and workplaces, trusting the state's promise of protection, will be forced out of work and denied financial security as the state reneges on its promise.

Mainstream media coverage has been limited, with a few notable exceptions. This is despite strong advocacy from trans journalists to educate newsrooms about inclusive terminology through the Inclusive Newsrooms project.

We stand in solidarity with all trans persons, especially colleagues from the media field, who are understandably in personal distress due to these amendments, and request all news organisations to be supportive to employees and colleagues who are likely to be legally affected if the Bill is passed. We condemn the fact that this amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament without any consultations with transgender communities anywhere in India, and stand strongly against the state-sanctioned discrimination that such a law will reintroduce. We demand that the Bill be repealed with immediate effect.