

Press Release

Date: April 6, 2026

A Democracy Under Strain: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) as a project of mass exclusion

Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) and Vote for Democracy (VFD) release a comprehensive investigative report titled “*Inside the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)*”—a rigorously documented account of the ongoing SIR (2025–2026) across multiple Indian states.

This report presents compelling evidence that the current SIR process has deviated from a facilitative electoral exercise into a systemic, technology-driven, and procedurally compromised mechanism that risks large-scale disenfranchisement.

What is constitutionally mandated as an exercise to *include* has, in practice, become a process that filters, flags, and excludes.

The handbook may be accessed here:

<https://votefordemocracy.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/260406-INSIDE-THE-SPECIAL-INTENSIVE-REVISION-SIR.pdf>

My Vote, My Right — Democracy demands inclusion, not proof of existence

From Inclusion to Exclusion: A fundamental shift

The Special Intensive Revision was historically designed as a household-level, verification-based exercise grounded in existing electoral rolls. The 2003 SIR, in particular, operated on:

- A six-month timeline
- House-to-house verification
- Acceptance of EPIC (Voter ID) as foundational proof
- A presumption in favour of the elector

In stark contrast, the 2025–2026 SIR reveals:

- Compressed timelines aligned dangerously close to elections
- Exclusion of Voter ID as sufficient proof in initial stages
- Heavy reliance on legacy data from 2002–2004
- Frequent procedural shifts and inconsistent standards across states

This is not merely administrative variation—it is a structural departure from established electoral safeguards.

The reversal of constitutional logic

At the heart of this process lies a profound inversion: The State no longer proves ineligibility—the citizen must now prove existence.

Previously enrolled voters—many of whom have voted in multiple elections—are now required to:

- Trace names in decades-old electoral rolls
- Produce parental or lineage documentation
- Re-establish identity despite holding valid EPIC cards

For those born after 1987, the burden intensifies further, requiring intergenerational proof that is often unavailable, especially among the marginalised.

This fundamentally contradicts the legal presumption of eligibility long recognised in electoral jurisprudence.

Algorithmic Exclusion: When software overrides citizenship

A defining feature of the current SIR is the deployment of opaque, untested, and inconsistently applied technological systems. The report documents:

- Mass flagging of voters as “unmapped” or “logically discrepant”
- Errors caused by faulty transliteration and data mapping
- Arbitrary triggers such as:
 - Minor spelling differences
 - Perceived “age gaps” within families
 - Database mismatches

In some states, crores of voters were flagged overnight, not through human verification, but through automated processes lacking transparency or accountability.

This creates a new and dangerous paradigm: A system where algorithmic suspicion overrides lived identity.

Weaponisation of Process: Notices, hearings, and Form 7

Procedural safeguards have, in many instances, become instruments of exclusion.

Mass Notice Regime

- Notices issued without clear or individualised reasoning
- Compressed timelines for response
- Hearings conducted under administrative pressure

Misuse of Form 7

- Bulk objections filed against legitimate voters
- Forged signatures and fabricated complaints

- Instances where individuals deny ever filing objections in their name
- Documented cases of deceased individuals listed as objectors

These practices convert procedural rights into sites of vulnerability and harassment.

The Human Cost: Beyond data and documentation

The SIR is not merely an administrative exercise—it has exacted a severe human toll.

Ground documentation reveals:

- Widespread fear of losing voting rights
- Anxiety among elderly and first-generation voters
- Disproportionate impact on marginalised communities
- Suicides linked to SIR-induced distress
- Severe psychological and administrative pressure on Booth Level Officers (BLOs), leading to breakdowns and fatalities

This is a rare and troubling moment where an electoral process itself becomes a source of humanitarian concern.

Legal and constitutional faultlines

The current SIR raises serious concerns under:

- Article 326 – Guarantee of universal adult suffrage
- Principles of Natural Justice – Right to notice and fair hearing
- Representation of the People Act, 1950
- Registration of Electors Rules, 1960

The process appears to:

- Shift statutory responsibility away from the Election Commission
- Operate without consistent adherence to procedural safeguards
- Blur the line between electoral verification and citizenship adjudication

A pattern of disproportionate impact

The burdens imposed by the SIR are not evenly distributed. Those most affected include:

- Economically vulnerable populations
- Migrants and tenants
- Women lacking formal documentation
- SC/ST communities
- Elderly citizens without archival records

The insistence on legacy documentation effectively penalises poverty, displacement, and historical marginalisation.

Urgent recommendations

CJP and VFD call for immediate corrective action:

1. Independent review of the SIR process: A transparent, time-bound inquiry into procedural, technological, and administrative failures.

2. Restoration of facilitative principles: Return to:

- House-to-house verification
- Reliance on existing electoral rolls
- Presumption in favour of the voter

3. Transparency and accountability:

- Public access to archival rolls
- Mandatory written reasons for deletion
- Disclosure of technological systems and criteria

4. Voter assistance infrastructure:

- Local facilitation centres
- Document support systems
- Targeted outreach for vulnerable communities

5. Mandatory social audits: Community-based verification through Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas to ensure democratic participation.

6. Regulation of technology use

- Independent audit of all software tools
- Suspension of automated flagging systems lacking due process safeguards

Conclusion: The stakes for Indian democracy

The Special Intensive Revision, in its present form, risks transforming the right to vote into a conditional entitlement—dependent on documentation, algorithmic validation, and administrative discretion.

This is not merely a procedural concern. It is a constitutional moment.

The report calls for an urgent reaffirmation of a foundational democratic principle:

The right to vote is inherent, not contingent. It cannot be diminished by opacity, overreach, or error—human or technological.

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