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from Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2020_Indian_farmers%27_protest_-_sitting_protest.jpg

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Photo of March To Delhi, [from Wikimedia Commons](#) by Randeep Maddoke

By Shruti Rajkumar, AsAmNews Intern

▼ Jot Hansra has been speaking out on the new farming laws in

out, 24/7. It's not fair that with all that labor, they were not given...what they deserved," said Hansra. "For us, farming is our culture. It just sucks to see that being stripped away."

Over the past few months, Indian Americans in Cleveland, Seattle and New York have held protests to help raise awareness and show support for the protesting farmers in India.

In September 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government passed three new farming laws that loosened the requirement that farmers sell their crops to government-sanctioned markets called mandis.

Doctor Jasmit Singh of Seattle said that although the laws appear farmer-friendly, they will reduce the farmers to bonded laborers and prevent them from raising enough revenue for their crops. This fear has prompted farmers to speak out through peaceful protests, which is now known as the Farmers' Revolution.

Since November 2020, tens of thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several border points to protest the laws and demand a guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP), according to [Business Today](#).

As the protests continue in India, Singh said farmers have been met with contempt and active repression, including arrests and violence. According to [Amnesty International](#), authorities in India have also hindered access to protest sites and censored social media.

Tandeep Kaur, a first generation Punjabi and Sikh student at CUNY, is one of the many raising awareness about the issue and joining in solidarity with the farmers.

new laws would cut off the MSP system completely.

“The more you go in-depth, the more you realize that this is a humanitarian issue [and] people will be losing their lives,” Kaur said.

“The suicide epidemic happening in India right now, specifically in Punjab, the numbers have been on a rise for the last few years, and they show no sign of stopping. And now, you add this on top of that — the threat to their livelihood is horrifying.”

Hansra said protesters in Ohio have been utilizing car rallies as a way to spread the word about what is happening in India and what the farmers' demands are.

Multiple protests have also been held in Seattle, according to Singh. He and others have been vocalizing their support for the farmers by attending these protests and making sure the right information is being put out to the public.

“There’s a lot of disinformation that is there, so working through different channels, whether it be just through social media...through engagement with our own community or outside communities, kind of explaining what is going on, what are the issues, what are the laws, what are the implications of the laws long term and why is it that the farmers feel so strongly that these are not the right things from their perspective,” Singh said.

While many support the farmers' protest, others have shown support for the new farming laws. Physician and activist Nathan Punwani said that he supports the Modi government's farm reforms because India's pre-reform status quo is non-viable. Thus, farmers should be able to sell to anyone, rather than just the mandis.



market-oriented reforms, which will culminate in development and, in the long run, benefit all.”

Punwani said that he hopes the Modi government stays true to the spirit of the new farming laws. As the farming economy improves, he hopes that the appeal for protests will subside. Meanwhile, he is showing support for the laws by writing letters to the editor, as well as calling his local elected representatives.

In February 2021, 100 cars joined together in San Francisco, California for a car rally to express support of the Modi government’s new farming laws, according to [Republic World](#). Several participants were seen holding signs and car stickers that read “NRI of San Francisco support Farm Bills 2020.”

In 2019, the Texas India Forum held an event called “Howdy, Modi,” drawing more than 50,000 people to show their support for Modi and his government, according to [The Intercept](#). The Texas India Forum declined to comment on the new farming laws.

Hansra said that younger generations have been at the forefront of the pro-farmer protest car rallies in Ohio, as well as the protests in other states such as California, while older generations have attended in support. Kaur said that the movement has formed a sense of unity between farmers in India, as well as between international South Asian communities.

Kaur was one of the organizers of #AskIndiaWhy Global Campaign, which included a protest and rally at the United Nations Headquarters on January 26, 2021 to stand in solidarity with Indian farmers. The global campaign was held on India’s Republic Day to emphasize how
▼ world’s largest democracy has failed to protect the basic human

highlight that such behavior in a country that represents the largest democracy in the world is unacceptable.

Hansra said that the short-term goals of the United States protests are to raise awareness about the Farmers' Revolution, while the long-term goals are to get other countries involved in stopping what is happening in India. For Hansra, raising awareness in the United States and through social media is integral to the push for change in India.

“We need that outside help because India is not doing anything for its people,” Hansra said. “The world is watching through these platforms. We see the injustice that human rights violations that are occurring in India right now. We don’t want to scare [the government], but we just want them to be aware. That is another long-term goal: to just have them understand.”

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