

EDITORIAL

## Passport Stalled, Vote Deleted: R. Rajagopal's Case Sparks National Concern

*Editors Guild says veteran journalist's ordeal raises larger questions about citizens' rights under electoral roll revision*



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The case of veteran journalist and former *The Telegraph* editor R. Rajagopal has triggered a nationwide debate on the consequences of electoral roll deletions after his passport renewal was reportedly withheld following the removal of his name from the West Bengal voters' list.

Rajagopal, who edited *The Telegraph* between 2016 and 2023, has alleged that his passport renewal has remained pending for over 100 days after police verification was denied because his name no longer appeared on the electoral roll following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter lists.

The incident has drawn sharp criticism from journalists' organisations, opposition leaders and civil society, with many questioning whether deletion from the electoral roll should affect a citizen's access to other essential government services.

## **Passport renewal hits bureaucratic hurdle**

According to Rajagopal, he applied for passport renewal in February and completed the required formalities. During police verification, however, he was reportedly informed that his application could not be cleared because his voter registration had been deleted.

Although he submitted alternative identity documents—including his Aadhaar card, PAN card and property records—the verification reportedly remained pending.

Rajagopal has challenged the deletion of his name from the electoral roll before the courts. He maintains that the Election Commission's decision was based on an incorrect finding that neither his name nor that of his late father appeared in the 2002 electoral rolls.

The prolonged delay has reportedly prevented him from undertaking international travel, including attending his daughter's wedding abroad.

## **Editors Guild issues strong statement**

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) has strongly condemned the treatment meted out to the veteran editor, describing the episode as an alarming example of bureaucratic overreach.

In a statement issued on June 28, the Guild said:

"The Editors Guild of India condemns the manner in which Mr. R. Rajagopal... is being treated by the bureaucracy that gets to decide who is an Indian citizen and who is not."

The Guild noted that Rajagopal, despite decades of public service as a journalist and editor, had become "not only disenfranchised as a voter due to the deletion of his name from the electoral rolls, but also unable to renew his passport since more than 100 days," allegedly because of an adverse police verification linked to the voter list deletion.

## **A warning beyond one individual**

The Editors Guild said Rajagopal's case reflects a much wider concern arising from the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

"Mr. Rajagopal's plight highlights the misery that millions of Indians are being put through due to the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls being carried out by the Election Commission of India."

The Guild further observed:

"If it could happen to someone like Mr. Rajagopal, a known public figure, the fate of others who have similarly been disenfranchised by a bureaucratic stroke of the pen, and lacking the voice to seek redressal, can only be imagined."

Calling for immediate corrective action, the Guild appealed to the Election Commission:

"The EGI calls on the EC to display common sense — and sympathy — and restore Mr. Rajagopal's identity as a voter at the earliest — and extend similar consideration to all those who have suffered a similar fate."

The statement was signed by **Sanjay Kapoor**, President; **Raghavan Srinivasan**, General Secretary; and **Teresa Rehman**, Treasurer of the Editors Guild of India.

## **Larger questions on citizens' rights**

Rajagopal's case has reignited concerns over whether electoral roll deletions can have unintended consequences beyond voting rights.

Legal experts and civil society groups have questioned whether passport verification should depend on a person's inclusion in the electoral roll when multiple other government-issued identity documents establish citizenship and identity.

The controversy has also renewed scrutiny of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision process, with critics warning that administrative errors could affect not only electoral participation but also access to essential public services.

## **More than a personal ordeal**

While the legal challenge over Rajagopal's electoral status continues, his experience has become emblematic of a broader issue confronting India's democratic institutions.

The Editors Guild's intervention underscores the concern that if a prominent editor with decades of public visibility can face such difficulties, ordinary citizens with fewer resources may find it even harder to seek redress.

As the Guild observed, if such a situation can happen to "a known public figure," the predicament of countless ordinary citizens "can only be imagined."



### Statement on the Denial of Electoral and Passport Rights to R. Rajagopal

**June 28, 2026 | New Delhi:** The Editors Guild of India condemns the manner in which Mr. R. Rajagopal, a former Editor of *The Telegraph*, a leading Kolkata-based daily, is being treated by the bureaucracy that gets to decide who is an Indian citizen and who is not. Mr. Rajagopal, despite decades of work in the public domain as a journalist and editor, today finds himself not only disenfranchised as a voter due to the deletion of his name from the electoral rolls, but also unable to renew his passport since more than 100 days, allegedly due to an 'adverse report' from the Kolkata Police, who must have been very familiar with Mr. Rajagopal as the Editor of one of the city's leading dailies. The police verification appears to have been denied on the basis that Mr. Rajagopal's name no longer figured on the electoral rolls!

Mr. Rajagopal's plight highlights the misery that millions of Indians are being put through due to the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls being carried out by the Election Commission of India.

If it could happen to someone like Mr. Rajagopal, a known public figure, the fate of others who have similarly been disenfranchised by a bureaucratic stroke of the pen, and lacking the voice to seek redressal can only be imagined.

The EGI calls on the EC to display common sense – and sympathy -- and restore Mr. Rajagopal's identity as a voter at the earliest -- and extend similar consideration to all those who have suffered a similar fate.

Sincerely,

**Sanjay Kapoor**

President

**Raghavan Srinivasan**

General Secretary

**Teresa Rehman**

Treasurer



**AT News**

Assam Times Staff. [editor@assamtimes.org](mailto:editor@assamtimes.org)

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