

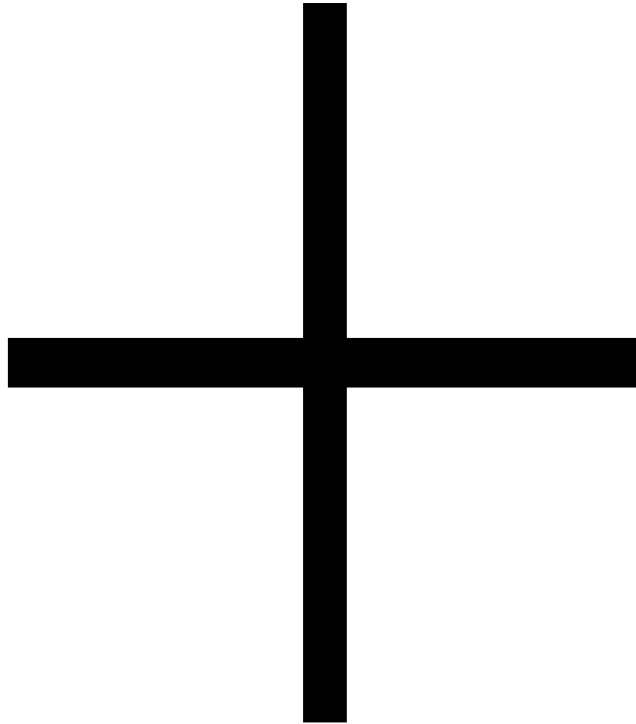
Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder - Political Protest

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Why in news?

Actor Imran Khan, a US citizen and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, has been asked by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) to leave India, days after he joined a protest in Mumbai.

- **OCI** - It is a permanent residency status for foreign nationals of Indian origin - lets them live, work, and study in India indefinitely, serving as an alternative to dual citizenship.
- The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 for certain categories of foreign nationals of Indian origin.
- **OCI is not dual citizenship** - India does not permit dual citizenship, and an OCI remains a foreign national holding the passport of another country.
- **Key Benefits** - The status nevertheless gives privileges unavailable to ordinary foreign nationals, most importantly a
 - Multiple-entry lifelong visa and
 - Exemption from registration with the foreigners regional registration office (FRRO) irrespective of the duration of stay.
 - Receive parity with indian citizens or NRIs in certain areas, including some property, educational and professional rights.



- **Activities requiring prior permission** - OCI cardholders are required to obtain special permission before undertaking
 - Research;
 - Missionary or tabligh work;
 - Mountaineering;
 - Journalistic activity;
 - Certain employment or internships in foreign diplomatic establishments; or
 - Entering protected, restricted or prohibited areas.
- **Political & Constitutional restriction** - OCIs also do not possess the political rights of Indian citizens.
- Under *Section 7B of the Citizenship Act*, they cannot vote or contest elections, and *Article 19 rights* — including the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and peaceful assembly — are guaranteed specifically to citizens.
- **Can an OCI be asked to leave India for joining a protest?** - The ***Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025***, gives the government wide powers over foreign nationals — and an *OCI remains a foreign national for this purpose*.
- There is no provision in the Act that expressly says that a foreign national cannot attend a political rally or demonstration.
- However, the law gives the government considerable discretion to regulate the presence, activities and conduct of foreigners in India.
- **Section 7 of the Act** - Empowers the Central Government to regulate or restrict the entry, departure, movement, residence, or continued presence of foreign nationals in India.
- **Section 7 (c) (2)** - Allows the government to direct that a foreigner “shall not remain in India or in any specified area therein.

- **Section 29** - Allows the government to order the removal of a foreign national for violating provisions of the Act, related rules, orders, or on the basis of adverse security inputs.
- The significance is that the statute itself *does not designate “political protest”* as prohibited conduct. But it gives the executive latitude to prohibit particular categories of activity through an order or direction.

Reference

[Indian Express | What powers does govt have over OCI cardholders?](#)

