

Opposition Leaders Detained As Voter Roll Protests Rise

By SUHASINI RAJ

Protests by Indian opposition leaders were broken up by police in New Delhi for a second day this week, with many lawmakers dragged off the streets, as anger over a revision of voter rolls that dropped more than 130 million names continued to intensify across the country.

Videos show Rahul Gandhi, a leader of the opposition Indian National Congress, being lifted by police and shoved into a bus as he struggled to fight them off on Wednesday. His sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, also a member of Parliament, was seen holding a copy of the Indian Constitution as she lay on the road with other lawmakers before security forces dragged them away, in video posted by the National Congress on social media.

Hundreds of opposition lawmakers, led by Mr. Gandhi, began trying to march on the country's election commission on Tuesday. They accuse Gyanesh Kumar,

Mujib Mashal contributed reporting.

the chief commissioner, of disenfranchising millions of Indians to benefit the ruling party.

But the lawmakers have been blocked by police, who have declared the protests illegal. On both days, columns of security forces surrounded the lawmakers and briefly detained many of them. The police have not commented on the detentions.

The lawmakers joined a broader movement of nationwide demonstrations that began last Friday over the voter-roll revision, called the Special Intensive Revision. While the commission has framed the exercise as an effort to clean up voter lists, critics say the chaotic process has removed legitimate voters and burdened people with confusing document requirements in an attempt to entrench the power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P.

The B.J.P. has denied that it is trying to influence the revision, calling the protests the actions of sore losers who lost to Mr. Modi's party in recent elections.



ADARSH ARJUN/REUTERS

On the first day of the lawmakers' protests, they and their supporters were blocked from reaching the election commission by a large security force. They then made a dash for the state radio broadcaster, where they sat in its yard for hours before the police moved in and bused away many to detention.

On Wednesday, the opposition leaders appeared to use a lunch as a diversion to

fool police, but the ruse failed. After gathering at a restaurant for southern Indian delicacies of idli and dosa, they tried to make their way to the nearby Jantar Mantar, a site in the capital where protesters are normally allowed to gather, but police reacted to detain many of them.

"There is no protest site left in the capital city of India. Do we protest from our

The Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi during a protest on Wednesday demanding the resignation of the chief election commissioner.

homes?" said Harish Chandra Meena, a lawmaker from the Indian National Congress who marched on Wednesday but was not detained. "We were being man-handled like criminals."

Protests have swept across India since last week after an Indian newspaper reported that two members of the election commission lodged objections to moves made by Mr. Kumar during the voter revision process.

Earlier in the week, student protesters who were also trying to reach Jantar Mantar were met by a similar show of force, with many of them rounded up by police and herded into buses. Security around Mr. Kumar's residence has been tightened, Indian media reported.

The issue is boiling toward a possible showdown this weekend. The Cockroach Janta Party, the Gen-Z backed movement that organized mass protests over an exam leak scandal over the summer, and other youth groups are calling for demonstrations in the capital on Saturday to demand the resignation of Mr. Kumar.