



Human Rights Defenders Alert- India

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25 March, 2016

Shri A. K. Parashar

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Joint Registrar

National Human Rights Commission

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New Delhi – 110 023

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Sub: HRD Alert - India – Urgent Appeal for Action - Seeking Hon’ble National Human Rights Commission’s intervention in the case of brutal physical assault, arrest and illegal detention of students and professors of the Hyderabad Central University (HCU), Telengana –Regarding

Dear Sir,

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

On behalf of HRDA, we express our grave concern over the situation in Hyderabad central university in Telengana where students and professors were brutally beaten and assaulted by the police, Rapid Action Force (RAF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other security personnel on March 22, 2016 in the university campus. It is learnt that

more than thirty students and faculty members were arrested, beaten and taken to an undisclosed location.

The students of Hyderabad Central University (HCU), Telengana were protesting over the return of controversial Vice Chancellor Mr. Podili Appa Rao from two-month long leave. On a direction by the HRD ministry, Vice-Chancellor Mr. Podili Appa Rao had gone on long leave on January 24, 2016, amid protests following a Dalit research scholar Mr. Rohit Vemula's death. The Madhapur police had registered a First Information Report (FIR) against him, Union minister Bandaru Dattatreya, ABVP leader Sushil Kumar and several others on a complaint by the Ambedkar Students' Association (ASA) alleging that these people were responsible for Rohit's suicide on January 17, 2016, following the expulsion of five dalit students from accessing the hostel facilities after a rift between ASA and ABVP members.

It has been informed that there are around 34 to 36 students and two Professors Mr. K.Y.Ratnam and Mr. Tathagat Sengupta, who were picked up around 5 pm on March 22, 2016, and brutally beaten in a police van, and detained in unknown location all night. One of the arrested students is Mr. Prashanth, one amongst the five suspended students with Mr. Rohith who has been very articulate in the struggles after Rohith's death. Based on information received they were reportedly detained in Miyapur and Narsing police stations but police denied of holding any people there and their fate not known.

The CRPF and RAF have badly beaten hundreds of protesting students in the campus and abused them as "anti-nationals". Videos show students were crying in pain, women were beaten and grabbed by male police officers. Several students suffered grievous injuries and were taken to hospitals. The phones of several students were confiscated while they were recording the video of police brutality. Hostels were searched as police appeared to have a pre-determined list of students and faculty they were trying to pick up. According to sources, the list was directly supplied by the Vice Chancellor and meanwhile a letter emerged which showed a detailed coordination between Vice Chancellor Mr. Podili Appa Rao, sections of faculty, non-teaching staff and ABVP students. It is alleged that the students pelted stones, ransacked VC's office etc. but the

Students Joint Action Committee spokesperson Mr. Venkatesh Chouhan clarified that the attacks were planned and carried out by the VC's private goons and not students. It is learnt that since the situation went out of control within no time, the registrar of the university summoned the police to tame the protestors.

According to reports, water, electricity, internet and access to dining halls were cut off in the campus after the students started protesting the return of the VC. It is being alleged that the VC has disrupted the peaceful academic semester with his unannounced and forceful return and encouraging non-teaching staff to go on strike leading to halting of food supply in the messes. According to the Joint Action Committee (JAC) for Social Justice, an umbrella group of 14 bodies, an emergency-like situation had been imposed on the university campus and the authorities had closed the hostel mess, water and internet connection. Unrest continued at the Hyderabad Central University after the university authorities also prevented JNUSU President Mr. Kanhaiya Kumar from entering the campus on March 24, 2016, to address the students agitating over the death of Dalit researcher scholar Mr. Rohith Vemula. Therefore, in the light of above mentioned facts and circumstances, HRDA most respectfully appeals that this Hon'ble Commission to urgently:

- Orders an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation by the NHRC investigative wing into the above-mentioned events of brutal physical assault, illegal arrest and detention of students and professors of Hyderabad Central University (HCU);
- Takes necessary steps to ensure that the students and professors are released unconditionally, the cases filed against them are withdrawn and the complaint is entrusted to the Special Rapporteurs to handle as an investigator on behalf of the Hon'ble Commission;
- The immediate appointment of a competent senior lawyer practicing on the criminal side in Hyderabad in the state of Telangana to defend the students and professors in all the criminal cases registered against them at state cost with the

counsel so appointed reporting to this Hon'ble Commission in periodic intervals as determined by the Hon'ble Commission on the development in these cases;

- Take steps to ensure the provisions contained in the Code of Conduct for Police In India under Sec 4 which says, 'In securing the observance of law or in maintaining order, the police should as far as practicable, use the methods of persuasion, advice and warning. When the application of force becomes inevitable, only the irreducible minimum of force required in the circumstances should be used.' The provisions should also be ensured in conformity with Art 4 and 5 of the UN Basic Principles on the use of force and firearms;
- Take all other appropriate and necessary actions to provide justice to all the students and professors who were brutally assaulted and arrested and were kept in illegal police custody, as per international and national human rights obligations.
- More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by India is strictly adhered to in the state of Telangana.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary

Copies to:

Justice H L Dattu,

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