



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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HRDA/UA/South/TLG/02/04/2025

April 10, 2025

To,

1. Justice Mr. V. Ramasubramanian (Retd),
Chairperson,
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,
New Delhi –110 023
Email: chairnhrc@nic.in
2. Mr. Indrajeet Kumar,
National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Deputy Registrar,
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi –110 023
Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: Urgent Appeal for Action in case of detention of 20 students from Osmania University for staging a sit in protest on 17 March 2025.

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert!

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.

We are writing to express our concern regarding .

About the Human Rights Defenders:

Student of Osmania University and student leader from tribal student unions, BC Welfare union, Osmania University Join Action Committee, All India Students Federation (AISF), Student Federation of India (SFI), Progressive Democratic Student Union (PDSU) and 20 other student organisations from Osmania University collectively organised and participated in a sit in protest at Arts College Building, Osmania University on 17 March 2025.

Source of Information:

- In Communication with the other HRDs in the region
- Media Reports

Perpetrators:

Police officials of Osmania University Police Station, Cyberabad Commissionerate, Hyderabad.

Date of Incident:

17 March 2025

Place of Incident:

Arts College Building, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana.

Background:

The administration of Osmania University on 13 March 2025 issued a circular banning protest on campus stating that frequent protest is disrupting academic and administrative activities of the university. The university administration raised security concerns and decided to prohibit standing dharanas, agitations and raising slogans in the university premises. The circular warned the students that “*serious action will be initiated against such person as per law*”.

Details of the Incident:

The Students of Osmania University opposed the circular, more than 25 student unions staged a staged a protest on 17 March 2025 outside the iconic Arts college building of Osmania University, Hyderabad. The students allege that the university administration is attempting to suppress the voices, which is a direct attack on freedom of speech and expression. Several police were deployed in the university in anticipation of student’s agitation, the police disturbed the sit in protest and detained student leaders Nageshwar Rao, Jogili Dharshan, L. Nagaradu, G.D Anil, Sumanth, Swathi, Naveen, Cheerala Venki, Venkatesh, Koteshwar Rao, Pratiek, Navya Sree, Anji and 7 others at Osmania University police station.

The right to exercise freedom of speech and expression is enshrined under Article 19 (a) of the Indian Constitution. The right to freedom of opinion and expression encompasses three different aspects:

- 1) The right to hold opinions without interference;
- 2) The right to access to information, and
- 3) The right to impart information and ideas of all kinds.

The Supreme court in *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. UOI* 2018 17 SCC 32 held that:

“54. The right to protest is thus recognised as a fundamental right under the Constitution. This right is crucial in a democracy which rests on the participation of an informed citizenry in governance. This Right is also crucial since its strengths representative democracy by enabling direct participation in public affairs where individuals and groups are able to express dissent and grievances, expose the flaws in governance and demand accountability from the state authorities as well as powerful entities. This right is crucial in a vibrant democracy like India but more so in the Indian Context to aid in the assertion of the rights of the marginalised and poorly represented minorities.

59. A particular fundamental right cannot exist in isolation in a watertight compartment. One fundamental right of a person may have to coexist in harmony with the exercise of another fundamental right by others and also with reasonable and valid exercise of power by the state in the light of the directive principles of social welfare as a whole. The court’s duty is to strike a balance between competing claims of different interests.”

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1999 states the following:

- Article 12 (2) and (3) "The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

- Article 9 (1): “In the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights as referred to in the present Declaration, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights”.

The Right to protest is an essential element of the right to participate in any democratic dispensation, and restrictions imposed on this right must be closely scrutinized with respect to their necessity and reasonableness (A/61/312, para. 56)

Human rights defenders play a pivotal role in ensuring that protest and criticism are expressed in a peaceful and constructive manner. States should legitimize and empower human rights defenders in this role and encourage defenders to take full ownership of this role (A/62/225, para. 102).

HRDA strongly believes that the detention of student activist is an act of reprisal for their activism.

Appeal:

We urge the Hon’ble Commission to take cognisance of the above case and urgently:

- Direct the Director General of Investigation of the NHRC to initiate a transparent, independent inquiry into the detention of the HRDs and submit the report to the NHRC within Two Weeks.
- Direct the Director General of the Police of Telangana to ensure the safety of HRDs and their family to protect them from further harassment by the police.

We hope to hear from you soon,

Yours Sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary