



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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HRDA/UA/North/DEL/01/07/2025

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To

1. Justice Mr. V. Ramasubramanian (Retd),
The 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

Respected Sir,

Sub: HRDA – Urgent Appeal for action in the case of illegal detention and torture of students/human rights defenders by Delhi Police - Reg

HRD Alert - India is a National forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavors to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns. Under the Regional Action Plan of Asia Pacific Forum 2021 NHRC is obligated to promote gender equality, recognition of Women HRDs, monitor & report the violations against HRDs and strengthen national networks of HRDs.

Hon'ble Chairperson, in the inaugural session of the 4-week Summer Internship Programme – 2025 for **University-Level Students** held just 37 days ago (16 June 2025) you stressed the transformative power of peer learning and said that a child is nurtured by a mother's care, a father's direction, siblings' insights, and the influence of peers. You further encouraged proactive engagement and urged the students

(interns) to champion justice and empathy by contributing to a society where equal rights and opportunities are accessible to all human beings.

The students from well reputed universities (Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia) did nothing short of what you highlighted. They fostered the culture of contributing to a society where equal rights and opportunities are accessible to all human beings by being proactive. But for the very act of championing justice and empathy, they are being convened into a deciduous category by the State of India commanding coercive and illegal removal.

Ehtmam UI-Haque, Baadal, Gurkirat, Gaurav, and Gauraang were picked up by the Delhi Police in the odd hours between 9, 10, 11 July 2025. They were illegally detained at the New Friends Colony Police Station for around a week while being subjected to intimidation and threat using torture and sexual assault. This was a clear case of illegal detention where the due process of law was not followed in their detention and no one, including parents, professors and friends were informed of their whereabouts.

The range of custodial torture and police brutality allegedly include stripping of clothes, beatings, electrocution, sexual assault by groping and indecent behaviour, and threatening to rape using iron rods.

Subsequently, each of them was let off one-by-one at different times. They made them sign on a blank paper and laid down certain conditions including not to enter Delhi ever again.

Rudra, a student of Delhi University was picked up and illegally detained while returning to Delhi from Kolkata on 18 July 2025 and his whereabouts are still unknown.

Affiliations of the Students/Human Rights Defenders:

- **Ethmam UI-Haque**; Jamia Millia Islamia; Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM)
- **Baadal**; Delhi University; Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM)
- **Gurkirat**; Jawaharlal Nehru University; Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch (bsCEM)
- **Gaurav**; Jawaharlal Nehru University; Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch (bsCEM)

- **Gauraang**; Jawaharlal Nehru University; Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch (bsCEM)
- **Rudra**, Zakir Hussain College, Delhi University

In addition to the students two more Human Rights Defenders namely,

- **Samrat Singh**, a social activist and psychologist, and
- **Vallika Varshi**, Nazariya Magazine,

are allegedly presently still illegally detained by the Delhi Police. Samrat Singh, in particular, was picked up by the Delhi Police at his house in Haryana - which is clearly outside the Delhi Police's jurisdiction.

Source of Information:

- In Communication with the Human Rights Defenders (HRDs).
- In Communication with the other HRDs in the region.
- Media Reports.

Place of Detention:

New Friends Colony Police Station, New Delhi

Details of the Incident:

On 09.07.2025, Gurkirat, Gaurav, and Gauraang of the Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch were illegally detained by the police, their whereabouts were not known. On 11.07.2025, Ehtmam UI-Haque and Baadal of the Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization were detained by the Delhi Police, and social activist Samrat Singh was picked up by the police from Yamunanagar, Haryana. The students/human rights defenders were illegally detained at New Friends colony police station in New Delhi.

All of them were placed in separate cells and were subjected to threats, intimidation, verbal abuse and torture. Baadal was subjected to verbal abuse and sexual assault by groping and indecent behaviour and threatened to rape using iron rods. Ehtman was subjected to brutal custodial torture which includes stripping of clothes, beatings, and electrocution.

On 18.07.2025, the Delhi police released the students/human rights defenders. The police forced them to sign papers promising not to set foot in Delhi. Baadal was

released only after her father signed a blank paper stating that she would never step into Delhi, never participate in political activities, and never speak to anyone in Delhi.

Standards:

We would in all humbleness point out that the above-mentioned case-in-point violates **eight** Articles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 2 - Freedom from Discrimination (Ehtmam Ul-Haque was tortured to the extent of electrocution owing to his religious identity in addition to his status as HRD)

Article 3 - Life, Liberty and Security (The liberty and security of all was in jeopardy for more than a week)

Article 5 - Freedom from Torture (All were tortured)

Article 9 - Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest/Detention (All were illegally and arbitrarily detained without following due process of law)

Article 13 – Freedom of Movement (Baadal hailing from outside of Delhi was threatened to never enter Delhi)

Article 19 - Freedom of Opinion (All faced reprisals solely because they decided to voice out)

Article 29 - Mutual Responsibility (The voicing out was in a manner accordance with the law and in no circumstance leading towards jeopardising public tranquility)

Article 30 - Freedom from State or Personal Interference (The State exercised its sovereignty in a manner that violates the rights laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

The National Human Rights Commission, India is governed by the standard set by the Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions (Paris Principles). As a document that provides for the principles to be upheld by NHRIs, the very necessity of the idea of a NHRI that functions as a body with a constitutional and/or legislative mandate to protect and promote human rights comes from the essence and scope laid down by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, this is a very serious violation of more than one of its maxims and hence needs to be treated with exigence.

The right to freedom of expression is recognized in many international and regional instruments, including: -

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19),
- The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5(d) (viii))
- The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (Article 6).

The right to freedom of opinion and expression encompasses three different aspects:

1. the right to hold opinions without interference;
2. the right of access to information; and
3. the right to impart information and ideas of all kinds.¹

The right to freedom of opinion and expression also requires states to comply with positive and negative obligations, including:

1. to abstain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right;
2. to protect the right by working to prevent, punish, investigate, and provide redress for harm caused by private persons or entities; and
3. to take positive measures for the realization of the right.

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in Para 8 of A/HRC/11/4 report on 30 April 2009 s notes that -

“Many of the cases concerning attacks of journalists, students, human rights defenders and unionists in retaliation for the exercise of their right to freedom of opinion and expression —are linked to the repression of peaceful protests conducted to express disagreement with a particular governmental policy, at the national or local level, or with the actions of large corporations”

Millenniums have passed, and yet teachers, scholars, students and others who work in such pursuits – academics and their institutions – continue to face social harassment and State repression. They face harassment and repression for their research, the questions that they pursue, the points that they raise in or out of the classroom or journals, the forums that they provide

for peaceful assembly and protest and the evidence and ideas and methodologies that they bring to bear on public policy – or simply for the stature that their academic work has given them in society. Such interference can constitute a violation of the rights to education, science, culture, association, conscience, belief, due process (A/75/261, Para 2)

Academic freedom should be understood to include the freedom of individuals, as members of academic communities (e.g., faculty, students, staff, scholars, administrators and community participants) or in their own pursuits, to conduct activities involving the discovery and transmission of information and ideas, and to do so with the full protection of human rights law. (A/75/261, Para 8)

The Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders issued recommendation for academic institutions: (General Comment No.13 1999, para 38)

1. Respect the rights of all members of their communities, including faculty, students, researchers, staff, administrators and outsiders who participate in academic pursuits. That respect must include the right of all members to freedom of opinion and expression, including peaceful protest on academic premises;
2. Ensure that members of academic communities have protection against coercion by third parties, whether the state or groups in society. This requires, in particular, institutions to stand up for members of their communities who face attack or restriction owing to the exercise of their academic freedom.

The states must recognize that “an academic work product involves not only expression but also, often, freedom of opinion that cannot be subject to any interference”²

“Staff and students in higher education are especially vulnerable to political and other pressures which undermine academic freedom”³

Further, all the violations as seen in the UDHR can be directly correlated to Article 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India, laying out the blatant and abominable conduct of the Delhi Police.

Appeal:

HRD Alert - India strongly believes that the illegal detention and torture of students/human rights defenders is an act of reprisal for their work that fell in line with what Mr. Bharat Lal, Hon'ble Secretary-General, NHRC emphasized in the same inaugural event - cultivating a deep sense of sensitivity, responsiveness and compassion among youth to address societal challenges with a purpose and dedication. Therefore, we urge the Hon'ble Commission to immediately intervene and:

- Direct the investigation division of the NHRC to immediately enquire into the facts of this case and submit a report before the commission within a week after verifying the CCTV footages available in the Police Station.
- Issue a public statement calling to attention the illegal detention and torture of students/human rights defenders by Delhi Police, the moment the prima facie case is made out.
- Direct the Director General of Police, Delhi to ensure protection of all student activists from further harassment by the police officials, by making it clear that student activists are also human rights defenders.

We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary

News Articles:

- <https://thewire.in/education/insaf-statement-jamia-jnu-campus-violence>
- <https://countercurrents.org/2025/07/joint-statement-on-the-enforced-disappearing-and-custodial-torture-of-student-and-youth-activists-by-police-forces-in-delhi-india/>
- <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/student-activists-illegally-detained-for-a-week-tortured-by-delhi-police-allege-rights-collective/>
- <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/blindfolded-electric-shocks-islamophobic-abuse-student-activists-allege-torture-in-delhi-police-custody/>
- <https://maktoobmedia.com/india/29-rights-groups-demand-probe-into-alleged-enforced-disappearances-torture-of-student-activists-in-delhi/>