



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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HRDA/UA/South/TN/01/06/2025

June 5, 2025

To,  
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](mailto: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](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

Dear Sir,

**Sub: Urgent Appeal for Action in case of suspension of seven post graduate students of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu on 25.05.2025 for writing 'Jai Bhim', 'Free Palestine' on hostel walls - Reg**

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert!

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.

We are writing to express our concern regarding on 25.05.2025 seven post graduate students of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu were suspended by the institute for writing 'Jai Bhim', 'Free Palestine' on hostel walls.

**About the Human Rights Defenders:**

- Syed M.A Abbas
- Aslam S
- Nahal Ibnu Abullai
- Shyam Krishna
- Krishnanand N.G
- Muhammad Adil
- Adithya H. Verma
- All of them are post graduate students from Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.

**Source of Information:**

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

**Perpetrators:**

Subrata Hazra, Director of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu

**Date of Incident:**

25.05.2025

**Place of Incident:**

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu

**Background:**

On 22.05.2025, Syed M.A Abbas, Aslam S, Nahal Ibnu Abullai, Shyam Krishna, Krishnanand N.G, Muhammad Adil and Adithya H. Verma all of them pursuing their post-graduation degrees from Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu wrote 'Jai Bhim' and 'Free Palestine' on the hostel walls. (Annexure I)

**Details of the Incident:**

On 23.05.2025 the institute administration formed an investigation committee under the Chairperson ship of S. Suresh, Disciplinary Action Committee. The committee carried out investigation and concluded that Syed M.A Abbas, Aslam S, Nahal Ibnu Abullai, Shyam Krishna, Krishnanand N.G, Muhammad Adil and Adithya H. Verma

has committed anti-national activities by writing 'Jai Bhim' and 'Pro Palestine slogans'. The committee recommended suspension of three masters in social work students.

On 25.05.2025, Subrata Hazra, Director of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu suspended Syed M.A Abbas, Aslam S, Nahal Ibnu Abullai, Shyam Krishna, Krishnanand N.G, Muhammad Adil and Adithya H. Verma based on report of Disciplinary Action Committee. The students were also expelled from the hostel premises on 25.05.2025 (Annexure ii). Three students are pursuing their final semester and their final exams are scheduled on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

The institute administration restored to suspension and expulsion without any record of serious allegations of violence, disruption or illegal conduct on the part of students. The hurried suspension of students solely based on the report of the Disciplinary Action Committee right before the final exams effected the student's entire academic year. The order was passed without giving an opportunity for the students to present their case.

The students alleged that Mr. Avinav Thakur, The Assistant Registrar, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is accused of a sexual assault case which is pending before Chandigarh police. This was exposed by the student body movements of the institute by organizing peaceful protests within the campus premises on 04.04.2025 (Refer Annexure iii). Therefore, he grew malafide against the students and out of such malafide, on 24.05.2025 he visited the hostel premises with warden and assistant warden during which he alleged that he found some graffiti painted on the hostel wall by displaying "Jai Bhim" and "Free Palestine". The students also allege that Mr. Avinav Thakur has influenced the enquiry committee against the students for exposing his sexual assault case against him (Annexure iii). He has also forced other students to confess before the enquiry committee against the students who participated in the protest held on 04.04.2025 against the sexual assault case of Mr. Avinav Thakur.

One student namely S. Aslam has approached Madras High Court in W.P No. 19760 of 2025 seeking quash of suspension order dated 25.05.2025. On 29.05.2025 the Hon'ble Madras High Court passed the following order (Annexure iv) –

*"Considering the welfare of the student/petitioner, the petitioner is at fag end of his carrier. If he is not permitted to attend the examination and internship programme it will cause too much hardship to the petitioner. Hence, the impugned order passed by the first respondent dated 25.05.2025 in RIGNIYD/Admin/2025-2026/058 is ordered to be stayed. Further, the respondent is directed to reschedule the examination for the*

*petitioner and issue hall ticket to him so as to attend the examination and also permit him to attend block placement programme in social service department and also directed to include him in the whatsapp group for the purpose of continuing his education subject to the outcome of the writ petition.”*

HRDA strongly believes that the suspension of students is an act of reprisal for their activism. The right to freedom of expression is recognized in many international and regional instruments, including: -

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19),
- 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

- a) to abstain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right;
- b) to protect the right by working to prevent, punish, investigate, and provide redress for harm caused by private persons or entities; and
- c) 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”*

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<sup>1</sup> Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, A/HRC/14/23, para. 24, 20 April 2010.

*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 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”<sup>2</sup>*

*“staff and students in higher education are especially vulnerable to political and other pressures which undermine academic freedom”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, A/75/261, page 22, 28 July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> General Comment No. 13 1999, para 38 E/C.12/1999/10

## **Appeal:**

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

- Direct the investigation division of the NHRC enquiry into the case and submit the report before the commission within four weeks.
- Direct the administration of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, to withdraw the suspension order dated 25.05.2025 and reinstate students and give it to writing to the NHRC within one week.
- Make a public statement calling to attention the suspension of students an implicating their activism as anti-national activities following the SCA recommendation to the NHRC in its recommendation of March 2023 and upholding the Regional Action Plan on protection of human rights defenders of Asian Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions of March 2021.

We hope to hear from you soon,

Yours Sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary

## **Enclosure**

- Annexure 1 – Pictures
- Annexure 2 – Suspension order
- Annexure 3 – Anticipatory bail order Mr. Avinav Thakur, The Assistant Registrar, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development and students council email's exposing the sexual assault.
- Annexure 4 – Order of Madras High Court in W.P No. 19760 of 2025 dated 29.05.2025