

26 March, 2016

Dr. C. Rangarajan
Chancellor
University of Hyderabad

Dear Dr. Rangarajan,

We have learnt with dismay about the attack by the police on students at the University of Hyderabad on 22 March, 2016. We understand that there may have been acts of destruction by some of the students, and we strongly condemn such acts. It is arguable whether it was necessary to call the police to deal with the students. However, having called the police, the administration of the University should have ensured that the police force did not make a brutal assault on the students. The Vice Chancellor and the administration of the University failed in this respect, as the ensuing heavy-handed police action proves. We strongly condemn the attack by the police, and the failure of the administration of the University to prevent it.

We would like to make the following points about the immediate repercussions of the events of the 22nd:

1. Several students and two members of the faculty of the University have been detained by the police. We request you, and the administration of the University, to take every possible measure to secure their release, and to get them back to the University at the earliest.
2. Some students were injured in the police action, and have been receiving medical treatment at the University's Health Centre, and in private clinics and hospitals. We urge that all available help be extended to these students, and we request you to ensure their well-being.
3. We understand that some students who have been protesting are worried about their future in the university, and fear retribution from the administration. It is imperative that their fears be assuaged, and that students are not penalised for legitimately voicing their political opinions, or for challenging the University establishment.
4. There was no food or water in the student hostels, and the connection between the University campus and the Internet was closed down, for two days after the 22nd. This is a form of collective punishment. We condemn it, and ask the administration of the University to see that such acts of punishment do not recur.

We have the following points to make in the general context of the stormy events at the University:

1. The direct cause of the events on the 22nd was the resumption of office by P. Appa Rao, the Vice Chancellor of the University. A judicial enquiry has been initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, into the events around Rohith Vemula's suicide, and Prof. Appa Rao is one of the central figures in those events. There is a case against him under the SC/ST Atrocities Act, and another under the laws relating to abetting a suicide. In these circumstances, it is utterly inappropriate for him to occupy the office of the Vice Chancellor of the University, and we demand that he relinquish that office forthwith.

2. There has been almost no progress in the police cases against Prof. Appa Rao, whereas the police have been quick to act on the protesting students. We demand that this imbalance be redressed, and that the cases against Prof. Appa Rao be speedily brought to their logical conclusion.
3. The protest by the students on the 22nd grew out of the events that led to Mr. Vemula's suicide. Issues of systematic injustice against Dalits, and of attempts by certain groups of students of the University to disrupt the activities of students whose opinions they oppose, have repeatedly surfaced in the discourse following Mr. Vemula's suicide. We ask the administration of the University to seriously address these issues.
4. A troubling feature of the events at the University is the frequent reliance of the administration of the University on the police apparatus. We feel that the police have no place in an academic campus, and should be called upon only in rare circumstances. We, therefore, request you to have the police removed from the campus of the University.

The University of Hyderabad is one of the important educational centres of the country. For that reason, we hope that you, and the administration of the University, will do everything to provide the students of the University the freedom, and the consideration, that are a distinguishing feature of a great academic institution.

Yours sincerely,

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