

Letter of solidarity Wth JNU From Ashoka University Students, Alumni, Staff And Faculty

19 February, 2016
Countercurrents.org

We, the undersigned—who study and work at Ashoka University, as well as the alumni of the Young India Fellowship, in our private capacity—write to voice our solidarity with the students and faculty at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Recent events at JNU, including the arrest of the JNUSU President over the charge of sedition, as well as other disproportionate measures, amount to a deeply troubling attack on academic and cultural freedom. We strongly condemn the display of brute force by the police, who were given free entry to the campus, including hostels, to question, detain and arrest students and faculty members. We protest the lack of police protection to those students and faculty, and condemn the use of State force against democratic expressions of dissent.

As proponents of liberal education, we believe that societies can only grow when they foster intellectual engagement with fundamental social questions and contemporary political issues through non-violent debate and argumentation. University campuses are, and should be, autonomous spaces where people can peacefully express as well as challenge dissent and opinions. However, the recent spate of events involving many university campuses across the country has posed a serious threat to the sanctity of such spaces as well as the democratic right to dissent and freedom of speech and expression. This includes the turn of events that led to Rohith Vemula's death at the University of Hyderabad, the withholding of grants by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to Panjab University, and several instances of violent disruption of the screening of the film *Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai* in campuses across the country.

We condemn the State-backed misuse of the charge of sedition, a colonial era provision in the Indian Penal Code, against the JNUSU President, Kanhaiya Kumar. In the documented absence of any allegedly 'anti-national' actions or rhetoric on his part, we see the charge as an attempt to stifle dissent from the dominant order and silence critique of the State. We strongly believe that the provision against sedition, which was repealed in the United Kingdom itself in 2009, has no place in modern democracy. Most immediately, we strongly disapprove of the action of certain lawyers and a Member of the Legislative Assembly who physically attacked JNU students and faculty members as well as journalists outside the Patiala Court House premises on 15th February, 2016.

We fear that the continued State inaction against such instances of violence will foster an environment in which the label "anti-national" or "traitor" can be imposed on every voice of dissent.

We urge that:

- the JNU campus be restored to normalcy and the police be withdrawn from all parts of the campus.
- the JNUSU President, Kanhaiya Kumar be released from police custody immediately and all charges be dropped against him.
- such unconstitutional actions be denounced.
- we be allowed to nurture our universities as tolerant, democratic spaces where dissent and disagreement is respected, discussions are nurtured, and critical thinkers are born.

Faculty		
Ajit Mishra	Bhaskar Dutta	Malvika Maheshwari
Alex Watson	Debarati Roy	Mandakini Dubey
Anisha Sharma	Durba Chattaraj	Maya Saran
Anunaya Chaubey	Gilles Verniers	Nayanjot Lahiri
Anuradha Saha	Gwendolyn Kelly	Rajendran Narayanan
Aparajita Dasgupta	Jonathan Gil Harris	Ratna Menon
Aparna vaidik	Kranti Saran	Ravindran Sriramachandran
Arunava Sinha	Kunal Joshi	Saikat Majumdar
Aruni Kashyap	M A Ahmad Khan	Supriya Nayak
Pulapre Balakrishnan	Madhavi Menon	Vaiju naravane
Bharat Ramaswami	Malabika Sarkar	Vishes Kothari
Staff		
Adil Shah	Kanika Singh	Shiv D Sharma
Aniha Brar	Karuna	Shreya Khedia
Anu Singh	Meena S. Wilson	Sudarshana Chanda
Anuja Kelkar	Mercia Prince	Suha Gangopadhyay
Charu Singh	Priyanka Kumar	Sukanya Banerjee
Chiranjit mahato	Sarah Afraz	Sushmita Nath
Dr Maaz Bin Bilal	Saumya Varma	Swarnim Khare
Harshita Tripathi	Saurav Goswami	Tanita Abraham
Ishan de Souza	Sayan Chaudhuri	Zehra
Sushmita Samaddar	Surya Raman	Sandeep Saraswal
Apoorva Gupta	Aditya Sarin	Chandan Sharma
Alumni		
Aafaque R Khan	Kaavya Gupta	Rishi Iyengar
Akanksha	Kande Sruthi Niveditha	Ritesh Agarwal
Akshay Barik	Kaustubh Khare	Rohini Singh
Ananta Seth	Maansi Verma	Rupali Kapoor
Antony Arul Valan	Malini Bose	Sai Krishna Kumaraswamy
Anushka Siddiqui	Mayank Sharma	Sakshi Ghai
Ashish Kumar	Mrudula Nujella	Shahzaib Ahmed
Ashweetha	Neil Maheshwari	Shaleen Wadhvana
Avni Ahuja	Neelakshi Tewari	Shashank Mittal
Chaarvi Badani	Nikita Saxena	Shivangi Pareek
Danish Ahmad Mir	Nina Sud	Shrestha Mullick
Debanshu Roy	Nipun Arora	Shweta Subbaraman
Deepika Ghosh	Parushya	Simeen Kaleem
Devleena Chatterji	Pavithra Srinivasan	Simranpreet Oberoi
Dhaneesh Jameson	Poornima Sardana	Sonal Jain
Dhwani Sabesh	Pragya Mukherjee	Subhodeep Jash
Hardika Dayalani	Prama Neeraja	Tanuj Bhowani
Harsh Mani Tripathi	Rahul Sreekumar	Taysir Moonim
Harsh Snehanshu	Rajat Nayyar	Vaishnavi Viraj

Himanshu Ranjan	Ratul Chowdhury	Venkat Prasath
Jahanara Rabia Raza	Rimjhim Roy	Vishal Khatri
Chahal Garg	Kshiti Gala	Hasil Gora
Manasi Khanna	Prashant Gautam	Onaiza Drabu
Aakriti Tripathi	Sanjog Sahu	

Students

Aakanksha Jadhav	Kaagni Harekal	Ranjana Sengupta
Aditi Jain	Karthik J N	Reetika Kalita
aditi khare	Karthik Shankar	Rishabh Raghavan
Aditya Prakash	Kavya Sindhuja Thatavarthi	Rishika Basu Majumdar
Alishya Almeida	Kc Sachin	Rituparna Nayak
Amalta Gupta	Kopal Agarwal	Sabah Merchant
Amrita Nanda	Laksh Banthia	Sahil Grover
Amrita Singh	Mahima Kohli	sai vikas
Angana Chakrabarti	Mahima Sharma	Senthil Kumar Gowri Sankar
Anita Rajan	Mallika Sridhar	Shaurya Oberoi
Anjali Menon	Manasi Rao	Shivangi Tikekar
Ankita Nanda	Manisha Koppala	Shranya Gambhir
Anodya Mishra	Manjari Sahay	Shreya Gautam
Anshula Madhavan	Meenal Manolika	Shristi Goswami
Anupriya Kukreja	Megha Devraj	Shubhangi Karia
Anurit Kanti	Mohammad Hamza Farooqui	Shubhvun Anan Chakravarty
Anwesh Patnaik	Mohit Gulati	Sidharth Ravi
Apratim De	Nainika Dinesh	Simoni Jain
Apuroop Sethupathy	Nayani Kushal Goyal	Simrin Sirur
Arjun Krishnan	Niharika Gotety	Sneha Visakha
Asawari Luthra	Nikita	Sreeja Basu
Asees Puri	Nishant Kauntia	Sri Lakshmi Anumolu
Ashmeen Bains	Nishtha Jaiswal	Srikant Mohan
Ashwini Ashokkumar	Nitish Srivastava	Sudhamshu Mitra
Ayan Tandon	Padma Gabriella Aradhya	Suhasini Patni
Ayesha Pattnaik	Palki Bhattacharyya	Sukanya Mohanty
Cordis Paldano	Phalguni Guliani	Suneet Singh Puri
Darshana Devarajan	Phurbu Dolma	Surjodeb Basu
Devika Chandra	Pranav Gupta	Swagam Dasgupta
Devika Prakash	Pranav Prakash	Swasti Acharya
Dhruv Chakraverti	Pranay Patil	Swetha Soundararajan
Divya Goel	Prashant Maheshwary	Uday Sarup
Gautham Narayanan	Prateek Pillai	Udeshi Basu
Gia Singh Arora	Priya Rathod	Uttara Chaudhuri
Goutam Piduri	Priyanka Sethi	Varina Rasquinha
Goutham	Priyanka Singh	Varsha Ramachandran
Govind K Nedungadi	Priyavrat	Varun Behani
Ira Sen	Purvai Aranya	Vatsala Peshawaria
Ishani Chaudhary	Radhika Sundaresan	Vedika Lal
Ishanika Sharma	Raghav Chakravarty	Vineet Nandkishore
Jahnavi Dutta	Rahul Hemrajani	Vishnu Sarthak Sinha
Janani Sekar	Rahul Maganti	Vishnupriya Rajgarhia
Jasmine Kaur	Rajashree R	Wakif Amin Hussain
John Koshy	Rajesh C S	Yash Budhwar
Jyothi Ravichandran	Rajkamal	Shivani Mangal
Sreya Muthukumar	Rohan Sablay	