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India

Condemn the Police Violence on the Students' Agitation in Jadavpur University: Uphold the Right to a Campus Free of Sexual Harassment and State Terror

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Radical Socialist strongly condemns the massive police crackdown on the peaceful protest of the Jadavpur University students after the midnight of 16-17th September 2014. The students were agitating peacefully since the last week of August 2014 after a the sexual assault of a woman student by some hostel students in the campus at the night of 28 August 2014. The assaulters apparently took upon themselves the task of moral policing and also beat up her companion who was not a JU student.

The students, from the very beginning, were demanding a fair and speedy investigation, especially when two women members of the Internal Complaints' Cell (ICC) reportedly visited the girl's home and asked her about the details of that night along with what dress she was wearing or whether she was in an inebriated state. Moreover the student was advised by the Vice Chancellor not to come to the campus for a fortnight.

As per the decisions of several General Body meets of the students across political affiliations or independents, the students started sit-in-demonstration in front of the administrative building of the University. They demanded an impartial transparent probe with the induction of a gender right activist, a psychiatrist and a former judge in the ICC. Instead of getting patient hearing the repeated student deputations received verbal threats of police action to break their protest, from the VC.

Despite that, the students continued their sit-in-demonstration with songs and recitations. Their demand was to get a public assurance from the VC and Executive Council (EC) members and about the investigation and its present status. These simple demands were met with violent police operation after 2 am of 17 September, 2014, which coincided with the switching off the lights in the area around the administrative building. All norms of arrest and operation were violated. There were only a few woman cops and the main operation was carried out by the male cops and the thugs without uniforms. They did not, as usual, hesitate to trample over the students, dragging them by their hair and sexually assault the girl students deliberately hitting their breasts.

While many of the injured students were in trauma and pain, the VC was escorted by the security forces helped by the goons so that he could safely enter his car. Most of the EC members, too did not stop to talk to the students many of whom had to be admitted into the adjacent KPC hospital and two of them were critically injured. 37 students were arrested and taken to Lalbazar Police Head Quarter, where they were further intimidated and detained for hours. Later they were released after issuing PR bonds.

The VC with a solid support from the State Education Minister, kept on peddling lies about the aggression of the students. The Commissioner of Police too talked about 'outsiders' and 'arms' hidden by the agitating students. As reported by the students, there is a veiled threat of clamping a 'code of conduct' to browbeat any agitation or dissent against the authority.

In view of the foregoing the Radical Socialist:

• Unequivocally condemns the University-government-terror nexus and police violence on the peaceful agitation of the students

• Strongly condemns the physical and sexual assault by the police

• Demands immediate investigation into the police atrocities and punishment of the guilty police officers

• Demands the immediate resignation of the Vice Chancellor who has lost any moral authority to continue his office

• Demands public apology from the Executive Council members who as yet did not issue any statement of

clarification

• Demands the immediate dismantling of the existing ICC and its reconstitution as per law, University regulations and the suggestion of the students

• Demands adequate measures to ensure the safety and the right to free mobility of the students and university staff

• Opposes any imposition of code of conduct and surveillance system inside the campus in the name of disciplinary action or in the name of maintaining law and order

• Support the spontaneous agitation of the Jadavpur University students under the banner of 'Independent Students' Movement for Justice, Equality and Freedom'

Radical Socialist also appeals to all the Rights groups and democratically-minded citizens to come into the support and solidarity of the agitation being continued by the Jadavpur University students and joined by students all over India.

We also urge the all the college and universities' teaching, non-teaching and officers' associations to oppose all forms of government control in the campuses and to demand immediate establishment of sexual harassment cells in all educational institutions so that an atmosphere of confidence can prevail among the students and staff both inside and outside the campuses.

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