European Solidarity Statement with Academics and Students in India

Students, scholars, and academics at European universities

08.01.2020

We are students, scholars, and academics at European universities who unequivocally condemn the violent attacks on student and faculty members of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi that took place on 5th January 2020. We see the attacks as part of the larger pattern of systematic violence that is being consistently inflicted on students across Indian universities for the past month by the Indian police in collusion with far-right organisations. We are shocked by the proclivity of the Indian State to turn upon its own students, and by the failure of universities and other academic institutions to protect their members; the cases are too many to be all listed here, but along with JNU, this inhumane orchestration of violence has extended to Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh, and Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi.

Even as the students and faculty members of these institutions have been peacefully protesting against a new legal framework that seeks to complicate and possibly exclude Indian citizenship for Muslims, the Indian police have wantonly stormed, stoned, shot, hit, gassed, and injured participants of these peaceful interventions. Several reports by independent news sources and civil rights organisations have detailed the reckless and vicious violence that was unleashed on students at Jamia Millia Islamia, and subsequently also at Aligarh Muslim University on 15th December 2019 when the police used sticks and tear gas shells to injure peaceful protestors. On the night of 5th January, far-right political groups with ties to the current Indian government, vandalised the campus and severely injured students and teachers at JNU, who also could not get immediate and proper access to medical attention for their injuries. Gripped by fear of violence, many students are still reportedly locked in their hostel rooms without food and drinking water. The situation is compounded by the fact that many journalists who tried to cover the incident were hindered and assaulted.

Across European pasts and presents, we have seen the rise of fascist States and the erosion of democracy go hand-in-hand with the oppression of students and media. In the current global and European climate, we are also especially cognizant of the Islamophobic undertone which characterises the targeting of these particular universities that have a long history of championing the rights of the minoritised in South Asia.

Given the importance of universities for generating democratic discourse and contestation, we are deeply troubled by the undermining of these spaces by the Indian State. As academics, students, and humans, we assert our right of freedom of expression, right to dissent, debate and engage in democratic protest, and demand the same for our colleagues in India. We defend the intellectual autonomy of academic institutions and their ability to function fearlessly. Accordingly, we call upon the Indian government to:

(1) Immediately end police brutality against peacefully protesting students and all others protesting peacefully.
(2) Provide prompt medical aid to all the injured.
(3) Ensure media coverage of the situation is not hindered.
(4) Conduct fair and independent inquiries into the violence.
(5) Restore democratic, safe, and peaceful university

life.

We stand in solidarity with our colleagues, students and faculty across Indian universities.

The original statement was published here. Please co-sign!

Signed (1/8/2020, 6:00 pm):

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5. Philipp Dann, Professor, Humboldt University
6. Zeenath Hasan, Senior Lecturer, Linnaeus University
7. Rupsha Paul, Student at ISS(International Institute of Social Studies)
8. Luca Brennecke, Student, Leuphana University Lüneburg
9. Saanika Patnaik, Student, Leiden University
10. Sheena MacRae, PhD Student – University of Hull
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12. Jenneke Evers, PhD candidate, Leiden University
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14. Seda Gürses, TU Delft
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