

India: State must denounce and investigate the violence in the Jawaharlal Nehru University

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 7 January 2020) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) unequivocally condemns the recent mob attack at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), in New Delhi, India. On Sunday, a mob, wearing masks, roamed around the campus attacking students and teachers with iron rods, sledgehammers and stones.

Reportedly some 34 people were injured, including the JNU Student Union President, Aishe Ghosh, who was reportedly hit over the eye with an iron rod, severely injured and hospitalised at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Video footage of the incident shows goons with masks over their faces stopping an ambulance with medical supplies and doctors from entering the University to treat injured students.

While there are claims and counterclaims as to how the violence began, FORUM-ASIA deplores in no uncertain terms the type of violence perpetrated by the goons at the JNU campus that has been an embodiment of liberal academia. Equally deplorable is the fact that the JNU Administration and the police let the mayhem continue for hours despite reportedly being warned of the imminent violence well in advance.

The JNU incident is the latest in a series of violent clashes that have occurred in different parts of India over the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act. At least two dozen people have been killed in what observers call 'unprovoked and disproportionate use of force' against the demonstrators.

Universities are a place of intellectual engagement. They are a place to debate and dissent, and practise and nurture democracy. There should be no room for violence of any kind in any form within academic institutions, as violence does not allow space for reasoned debate and dissent, both hallmarks of democracy.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Government of India to launch a credible investigation into the violence at JNU and to hold the perpetrators, including those belong or related to the JNU Administration, to account. It should take all measures necessary to ensure that such violence does not recur. FORUM-ASIA would also like to remind the Indian Government of its obligation to respect and protect the freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, and the life and liberty of their citizens at all times and under all circumstances.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 81 member organisations in 21 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.



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