

JNU 'relieves' former IIT-Kharagpur Professor Rajeev Kumar without his consent: JNUTA demands an explanation and the guarantee of due process

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On 5 June 2017, [Professor Rajeev Kumar](#), Professor in the School of Computer and Systems Systems Sciences, on lien from IIT Kharagpur (IITKgp) received an intimation that two years after he was appointed in JNU, he was being sent back to IITKgp.

Prof. Kumar protested, as he did not wish to return to IITKgp and that he was committed to working in JNU. But JNU was adamant, and on 9 June issued another relieving order, this time abandoning even the requirement of a 'No Dues' certificate:

Why did the JNU administration 'relieve' (effectively, *fire*) Prof. Kumar without even informing him, asking for his consent, or at least issuing

him a show cause notice? This completely unprecedented violation of all practices of the university w.r.t. *lien* was occasioned by IITKgp's letter to the JNU VC on 26 May 2017 asking for the release of Prof. Kumar so that he may 'resume his duties at IIT Kharagpur on or before the expiry of the *lien* period on 11 June 2017". ***But this cannot be the whole story, as the last we checked, faculty in any institution (even in the hallowed IITs) are not bonded labour, and no person can be made to work at an institution against his will.***

In fact, IITKgp had been very persistent in blocking Prof. Kumar's efforts to resign from IIT ever since he joined JNU. On 8 June 2016, as soon as JNU confirmed him to the post of Professor, Prof. Kumar submitted his resignation to IITKgp and asked for termination of the *lien*. IITKgp however did not accept it, citing the fact that a Writ Petition filed by Prof. Rajeev Kumar against it "had not yet reached its logical conclusion". Prof. Kumar has approached the High Court of Delhi against the attempts to coerce him to rejoin IITKgp. The matter is listed for hearing on 11 July 2017.

Why was IIT Kharagpur so insistent that Prof. Kumar be sent back at once and why is JNU so keen to help it out? Whatever is the reason it is certainly not one of admiration as Prof. Kumar has been an RTI activist crusader. **Certified as a whistleblower by the Central Vigilance Commission (see [this](#)), he has been called an "unsung hero" by the Supreme Court for his efforts through a PIL to clean up the JEE system of the IITs.** It was his PIL that forced IITs to provide carbon copies of answer scripts, release of answer keys before results, online availability of evaluated scanned scripts among others.

Prof. Kumar has alleged that his RTI activism, as well as his revelation of major financial scams at his parent institution, led to a biased enquiry proceedings against him at IITKgp, a two-year suspension, and an order of compulsory retirement, against which he has appealed to the Visitor of IITKgp, the President of India. That appeal is still pending. The treatment he received in IITKgp were widely reported in the [press](#), the most detailed of which is the one below. NDTV India also covered the story [here](#).

It is not JNUTA's province to determine the truth of the allegations made both by and against Prof. Kumar; but what is important is that Prof. Kumar fulfilled all the formalities when he was appointed in JNU, and that IITKgp had no objections to this application or appointment or to granting him *lien*. No proceedings have been initiated against Prof. Rajeev Kumar in JNU, and given that JNU had clearly indicated that it wished to confirm him in 2016, his performance and conduct is not at issue.

JNUTA cannot comment on the legitimacy of IITKgp's decision to recall Prof. Kumar, but it is extremely concerned by what seems to be the complete absence of due process in relieving Prof. Rajeev Kumar. We are disturbed in particular by the nature of the precedent

this case sets, as many colleagues join JNU utilising this very provision. The JNUTA expects a full explanation from the JNU administration on the grounds by which Prof. Rajeev Kumar's lien came to be cancelled without intimation and demands that Prof. Rajeev Kumar be guaranteed the principles of natural justice and full opportunity to present his case for continuing in his current position in JNU.

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