



JNU Executive Council censures Prof. Surajit Mazumdar for trying to express his views!

2 OCT
2017

1 COMMENT

The JNUTA condemns the censure of Prof. Surajit Mazumdar by the Executive Council, as recorded in the 269th Executive Council minutes:

The Executive Council took a serious note of an objectionable remark made by Professor Surajit Mazumdar against the members of the Executive Council. The Executive Council asked Professor Mazumdar to tender his written apology. After his denial, the Executive Council passed a strong stricture against him.

Members of the JNU EC have confirmed that this stricture was passed after Prof. Mazumdar made repeated requests to the Chair to let him express his views on the arbitrary and illegal dissolution of the GSCASH, and after he was repeatedly stonewalled when demanding explanations and documents on a number of other issues. This stricture comes in the wake of a series of similar attempts in successive Executive Council meetings to deny Prof. Mazumdar (along with other teacher representatives) the right to speak, to tender and access documents, to propose agenda items for discussion, to explain the reasons for his dissent on various items, to point out what the established practices and rules of JNU actually are, and most of all, to hold the JNU administration accountable for the several disastrous steps it has taken.

Teacher Representatives' Important Role

The JNUTA would like the JNU Vice-Chancellor and his team to understand that the elected teacher representatives are in fact unlike any other members of the JNU EC, as they signify the university's commitment to participative and transparent governance and management of the university's affairs, particularly on matters relating to the recruitment, employment, remuneration, and welfare of the teaching community. The fact that teachers representatives are elected by cadre — one representative each from the Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor levels — brings to the Executive Council the experiences and expertise of teachers on the ground as it were. Far from being considered peripheral, unimportant members of the Executive Council, teachers representatives must be accorded a central role; otherwise all claims to transparency and accountability would prove to be a sham.

Whereas the bulk of the Executive Council is composed of persons from outside the institution (Heads of recognised institutions, nominees of the Visitor) and members of the JNU administration (the VC and his team of Rectors and six Deans), it is the elected representatives alone who represent the full diversity of the university in terms of employees and effectively the only ones who are directly mandated to enforce administrative accountability and to speak truth to power. It is therefore as much their duty to ask tough questions, present teachers' grievances, protest at injustice and violations of norms, rules and the JNU Act and Statutes as it is to disseminate the legitimate decisions of Executive Council. To pass strictures on them for fulfilling their role is to signal that the university is no longer administered with democracy as its basis, but

through authoritarian command structure in which law, rules, and due process have no basis, and the competence of authority has just to be presumed not validated.

The Witch-hunt

In October 2016, Prof. C.S.R. Murthy had written a letter to the JNU teaching community speaking eloquently of the experiences of the 2014-16 team of teacher representatives on the JNU EC. We attach the full letter [here](#), drawing colleagues' attention to the particular contemporary relevance of one point:

The power to dissent has been the most potent one we did not hesitate to use when situation demanded. For example, we dissented on the EC decision in November 2015 to grant extension of the tenure of the Finance Officer, because in our view it went against standard procedures and even tenets of propriety. Our approach – in vain – to the Visitor and the MHRD to have the decision reviewed by the EC apparently annoyed University officials who were rumoured to have closely scrutinized our individual service records to see how we can be targeted. Indeed, when I apprised the Council about the perceived witch-hunting in the course of the 7 September EC meeting, the VC solemnly assured that no such vindictive action would be allowed. I would have saluted the VC if that assurance had been incorporated in the minutes, for it would only preserve sanctity of fearless participation in the EC.

Much as JNUTA rues with Prof. C.S.R. Murthy that this assurance was not minuted (and the fact that how much has changed in less than a year), the stark reality today is in fact that witch-hunts against defenders of rule-bound and ethical conduct are always in the offing. **The JNUTA salutes and stands with Prof. Surajit Mazumdar, and the other teacher representatives for their fearless participation in the Executive Council of the JNU of today.**

Ayesha Kidwai Pradeep Shinde

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skbohidar

2 Oct 2017 at 7:21 pm [Edit](#)



An Authority of the University, the Executive Council grovels before an officer who is meant to carry out decisions of the Authorities. This inversion of the relation between the Authorities, which are collective bodies, and an officer, a position occupied by a nominated individual is destructive of the very idea of a university. Yet another moment to be ashamed off and strengthen our resolve to resist.

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