



JNUTA statement on HRD Minister's Observations (24.2.17)

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JNUTA is disappointed at the statement by the Minister of Human Resource Development regarding the number of research scholars working with each faculty in JNU, and considers it his remarks as unbecoming of the Minister of Human Resource Development.

First of all, the claim that there are JNU teachers guiding more than 20/25 registered students is simply false, as this suppresses the important fact that JNU like other universities across India, has a provision that allows students to deregister from the university. This provision has proved very beneficial, as it enables students to take up employment and slow-track their PhDs until their life circumstances allow them to return to their jobs. It is only when deregistered students over a decade are included that some professors can have a reasonably large number.

Second, even where a somewhat larger number exists, the imputation that there has been any indiscretion by any JNU teacher in garnering students is extremely unfortunate. Perhaps the Hon. HRD Minister is unaware that between 2007 and 2012, all Central Universities were mandated by the Parliament Act, the Supreme Court and the Government of India to increase the number of seats for admission in every course by 54

percent. This resulted in a massive increase in the number of admissions (implemented in a phased manner over a period of 3 years), without a corresponding increase in the recruitment of faculty. This can be seen in the table below, where 2011-12 marks the final phase of the expansion. Since a student in JNU's M.Phil./PhD integrated programme is a student for 6-7 years (2 years for M.Phil. and 5 years for PhD), the reason why the distribution of students per faculty member grew in the last decade should be obvious. As faculty recruitment grows, this distribution will become healthier than what it is now.

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Third, JNUTA must remind the Hon'ble HRD Minister that the figures of 8, 6, and 4 now pronounced to be the maximum number of students an Assistant, Associate, and a full Professor may supervise have not been in place from time immemorial, but rather date from July 2016. No rationale has ever been given as to why these are the optimal numbers; indeed the names of the members of the UGC Committee who framed these guidelines have not even been revealed. Perhaps releasing this committee's report would be a good step to at least put the reasoning in the public domain. (Although, coming as we do from a University that produces nearly 600 PhDs a year — yes, the figure you were given for the entire country was wrong— only a thorough validation of the reasoning will convince us.)

Fourth, while it is bad enough to impute that JNU teachers are habitual offenders for just fulfilling their Constitutional obligations and commitments to social justice, we are aghast that the

'punishment' being meted out to the university is through seat cuts, whose primary effect will be to subvert the very policies of reservation that mandated an increase of intake to the university. JNU teachers spent the last decade or so upholding the *Central Educational Institutions Reservation Act, 2006*, by which seats for admission in JNU's programmes of study cannot fall below 2006 intake plus 54%. ***Instead, the proposed 1406 seats, have been unilaterally and arbitrarily slashed them to 194.*** As the **country's** HRD Minister, we urge you to stand up for this very important Act of Parliament. In fact, India's reservation policy in general has also been undone, as with 0, 1, and 2 seats in many departments, there can be no meaningful implementation of reservation. Further, JNU's own policies of affirmative action, expressed through the award of deprivation points for regional, gender, and social backwardness over and above reservations, have been completely set aside. This is totally inexplicable, as there is nothing in the UGC Regulations 2016 that prevents them from being implemented. Instead, formats for written entrance examination and viva voce as well as their evaluation are intended to positively thwart the chances of students from backward regions and deprived backgrounds for admission into JNU.

Fifth and finally, please allow JNU teachers to earn their salaries, as we are always mindful that the people of India pay them to us. With these seat cuts, teachers at many Centres would have almost no teaching in coming years. Innovative research programmes that are pathbreaking in conception, but as yet fledgling in their faculty strength, are the hardest hit, because they are Centres that have no Masters programmes; but even the larger Centres with MAs, teaching will reduce drastically, and there will be no admissions to any of these Centres for years to come. We are used

to working much harder, as at least two thirds of the faculty today have shouldered the burden of the OBC expansion between 2008 and 2012 without demur, even when the faculty strength stagnated and actually even declined.

In conclusion, you will agree that the stated education policy of your government is not one that espouses the restriction of access to quality education. 'Minimum' Regulations that lead to 'Minimal' Education must be annulled, irrespective of how many universities have accepted them or not.

Yours truly

Ayesha Kidwai

Pradeep Shinde

President

Secretary

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