

CHALLENGE THE LEFT UNITY FOR TOKENISM: RISE UP IN RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

On the 27th January 2016 the indefinite hunger strike under the banner of the JNUSU was started in order to express the solidarity with the ongoing student's movement against Rohit Vemula's institutional murder. However suddenly on the night of 1st February the strike was called off by JNUSU and other organisations (AISF, AISA, DSF, SFI) saying that the hunger strike that has been going on at HCU was called off so we are also discontinuing here, but Jitendra Kumar, one of the indefinite hunger strikers disagreed with this move. It was pointed out that hunger strike at HCU was only converted from Indefinite to Relay so we should continue the strike here also (in whatever form) till the strike ends at Hyderabad. However, JNUSU and other organisations called it off from their behalf. However Com. Jitendra continued with his hunger strike to which, on the next day, Birendra Kumar and Anubhuti joined in solidarity. BAPSA, YFDE, UDSF, SIO, DSU, SFS, SSJ, UOF extended their support to us by organizing a procession from Ganga Dhaba to Ad Block against Caste discrimination and oppression, and asking for the 'Justice For Rohith'.

On the 5th of February, an all organization meeting was called to discuss the future course of action regarding the hunger strike as well as modalities of campaign and mobilization. In that meeting we proposed that since relay hunger strike was continuing in HCU and the JNUSU has always stood in solidarity with them, now too the relay hunger strike in JNU must be taken up as a call of the Union. And this hunger strike should be just one amongst the many activities initiated by the union for #JusticeForRohith onwards to the Chalho Dilli call given by the JAC in HCU. We appealed to the Union and all other organizations to take up this call collectively and move into a serious campaign around the issue of institutional discrimination and violence. However unfortunately no agreement was reached upon either by the Left led Union nor the various organizations.

Later that day we organised a Public Talk on the issue of Caste Discrimination in Higher Education Institutions at the site of the hunger strike. At the meeting once again this proposal came up that our indefinite hunger strike must be converted into a relay hunger strike. The HCU students had converted their mode of struggle from indefinite hunger strike to relay hunger strike, which too is an important mode as a symbolic expression of solidarity and resistance. The opinion of the house was sought to this proposal where all students raised their hands in favour of this call.

While culminating the public meeting, we three took the call that onward to the 'DILLI CHALO' call given by the JAC-HCU, there should be relay hunger strike along with a series of campaigns and programmes to galvanize the wider student community as well as the larger community. The indefinite hunger strike is converted to the mode of relay hunger strike in solidarity with the HCU students who are continuing their struggles.

Unfortunately however, neither the Union nor any individual organizations up till now have actively taken up this call of solidarity. What makes this kind of a situation detrimental to progressive campus politics in a long run is that the question of social justice; the issues faced by Dalit, Adivasi, OBC and Minority students, teachers and karamcharis is systematically being reduced to mere tokenism and politics of convenience. The genuine issues of students who hold marginalized identities are being reduced to crude vote bank politics. This was the precise model that was adopted by the JNUSU when it called for the indefinite hunger strike for Rohith. The entire question was reduced to its immediate instrumental value of tokenism. This campus, which is known for its progressive and revolutionary content has become degenerate. The rationale for this analysis emerges from the question that the grievances of the Dalit, Adivasi, OBC and Minority students are increasingly and exclusively being deflected and pushed into legal recourse. Redressal is being sought through the labyrinth of legality. This situation begs the questions, where is the culture of resistance and protest. Why is struggle not chosen as the route to address the questions of the oppressed? It is this very same campus that witnessed people like Com. Chandrashekhar who had the courage to lock down the Academic Council meeting when it was in progress to ensure deprivation points for students. That is the politics that we must stand by. It is not mercy that we seek, rather it is our right that we demand for and which we will fight and win.

We appeal to the entire JNU student community to come and join the Relay Hunger Strike.

Birsa Ambedkar Periyar... Hul Johar Hul Johar !!

Sd/- Birendra and Jitendra