



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Press Statement

Police inaction at JNU is complicity: CHRI calls for a judicial inquiry

New Delhi, January 9 – Denouncing the Delhi Police for its complicity in the violence unleashed at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on the night of January 5, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) calls for a judicial inquiry to fully establish the perpetrators of the violence and the police's role.

“In the face of glaring police complicity, the Delhi Police has no legitimacy to fix accountability in this case,” said Devika Prasad, Programme Head, CHRI. “Its investigative track record is marred by its failure to make headway in two previous [cases](#) involving violence on campuses, the 2016 disappearance of JNU student Najeeb Ahmed and the violent clashes outside Ramjas College in 2017.”

“It is only robust independent investigations that can credibly investigate this level of partisanship, complicity, and abdication of duty. Everyone responsible - direct or indirect - must be brought to book at the very earliest,” Prasad added.

In light of existing eyewitness testimonies, media reports, and videos available, it is nothing less than the police's complicity with the attackers, allegedly affiliated to the student organization Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). The involvement of the ABVP has been further substantiated by wide reporting of screenshots of [chats](#) of WhatsApp groups planning an attack on JNU. The Hindu Raksha Dal has [publicly](#) claimed responsibility for the violence, which will be under investigation.

The evidence available clearly reveals that Delhi Police personnel were present at the gates of JNU when dozens of masked men and some women, carrying sticks, iron rods, bricks, and stones while shouting slogans “Desh ke gaddaro ko, goli maaro saalo ko” mobilised and entered the campus.

Police stood by for more than three hours while they went on a rampage, injuring more than 30 students and teachers and damaging hostels and university property. [Journalists](#) and a prominent [political activist](#) were beaten with impunity. The police did not intervene when an [ambulance](#) trying to enter the campus to reach injured students was attacked. Following the rampage, a senior journalist captured on [video](#) the attackers leaving the campus with no hindrance.

By its own admission, the Delhi Police had sufficient advance warning that masked attackers were mobilising and entering the JNU campus. *The Indian Express* has reported that an internal police report [states](#) 23 calls were made from inside JNU to the Police Control Room beginning from 2:30 pm on January 5. For a police organisation, this was

enough time to act to prevent the violence from taking place at all. In smaller numbers at this early stage, the attackers could have been easily apprehended. The fact alone that the violence took place is a clear signal of the police's choice not to act.

“This is a total abdication of duty and responsibility by the Delhi Police, and its parent ministry, the Ministry of Home Affairs. Masked men were able to harm students, teachers and property in the very presence of the Delhi Police,” said Sanjoy Hazarika, CHRI's International Director.

“There was clear incitement to violence. The police's total inaction is just as one-sided and complicit as when the police engage in excesses. Coming on the heels of the violence perpetrated by Delhi Police personnel in December 2019 at Jamia Millia University, the Delhi Police is entirely failing its mandate.”



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Although two special teams have been formed by the Delhi Police to probe the violence at JNU, CHRI notes that one is a “fact-finding” committee headed by JCP (western range) Shalini Singh. The other is a Special Investigating Team (SIT) of the Delhi Police Crime Branch. As reported, part of the fact-finding committee’s mandate is to probe the [“negligence on the part of the police”](#).

It is, therefore, CHRI’s recommendation that the Delhi High Court orders an independent judicial inquiry to determine 1) the individuals and organisations that organised and mobilised the attackers; 2) the identities of the masked attackers; and 3) unearths and establishes the full extent of the complicity of the Delhi Police in allowing the violence to take place, including command responsibility at the very top. The aim of the inquiry should be to gather the strong prima facie grounds needed to lay the path for prosecution. Considering all the hard evidence already available in the form of eyewitness accounts, videos, and photographs, it will only be a lack of will which will prevent a robust inquiry from taking place.

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About the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

Headquartered in New Delhi, with offices in London and Accra, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-government, international, non-profit organisation committed to protecting and promoting human rights in Commonwealth nations. CHRI works towards strengthening access to justice (through prison and police reforms) and building a culture of transparent governance (through the Right to Information). CHRI also monitors human rights-related trends and developments across the Commonwealth and makes formal submissions to treaty bodies and inter-governmental agencies, including the United Nations Human Rights Council.