

Statement of Support for Jawaharlal Nehru University

26th February 2016

We, the undersigned, at Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and University of Rhode Island, strongly condemn the violence unleashed by the BJP, RSS, ABVP, and the Delhi Police within and outside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus over the last few days.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of the unfounded, unjust and archaic charges brought against JNUSU President Kanhaiya Kumar, and of his release from custody. The invocation of colonial laws on sedition, while labeling people as “anti-national,” has been used as a tool to criminalize dissenting opinions and political and social movements that challenge the status quo. These allegations of ‘anti-national’ behaviour, are being used by the government as an alibi to raid hostels and disrupt peaceful demonstrations, violently assault students and faculty, and flagrantly violate the constitutional rights of the university community.

We further believe that the charges of ‘sedition’ and ‘anti-national activities’ being brought against Umar Khalid and other students (based on claims that they resorted to anti-India slogans and spoke out for Kashmir’s right to self-determination) reflects the failure of the state to respect critiques and engage meaningfully with disagreements, the failure to appreciate the value of robust, diverse and politically vibrant public universities, and the failure to concede that freedom of speech, especially against state injustice, is a fundamental right.

We strongly condemn this increasingly prevalent tendency to unleash state-sponsored violence and intimidation techniques on university campuses, to stifle students’ voices and scuttle academic freedoms. This is connected to a more general culture of intolerance towards any opinion that articulates dissent or resistance against the capitalist, casteist and Hindu fundamentalist government, evident most recently in the systematic harassment and tragic death of the Dalit student Rohith Vemula at the University of Hyderabad.

An open, tolerant and pluralistic society must be measured not by self-appointed gatekeepers of ‘nationalism’ from a dominant caste, religion or community, but by the degree to which that society fosters critical thinking and freedom of speech. The current political environment—the vicious slander against dissenting students and the maligning of the university on social media and television—poses a growing threat to such freedoms in India, and is of concern not only to members of JNU but to students and engaged citizens around the world. We therefore extend our solidarity with the JNU students in their struggle, and express our hopes for a long-term, united movement towards a more just and a truly free society.

Signatories:

1. Magnus Pharao Hansen, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
2. Juan F. Santoyo, Staff, Neuroscience, Brown University
3. Shishav Parajuli, Graduate Student, Political Science/Theory, Brown University
4. Lakshmi Padmanabhan, Graduate Student, Modern Culture and Media/History, Brown University
5. Christopher J. Lee, Graduate Student, English, Brown University
6. Bryan Moorefield, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
7. Anne Gray Fischer, Graduate Student, History, Brown University
8. Felix Green, Graduate Student, Brown University
9. Paja Faudree, Faculty, Anthropology, Brown University
10. Genoviva Coker, Graduate Student, Public Health, Brown University
11. Lydia Kelow-Bennett, Graduate Student, Africana Studies, Brown University
12. Faiz Khan, Graduate Student, Brown University
13. Yeong Ran Kim, Graduate Student, TAPS, Brown University
14. Noga Rotem, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
15. Kanksha Barman, Graduate Student, Center for Language Studies, Brown University
16. Rama Srinivasan, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
17. Pavitra Govindan, Graduate Student, Economics, Brown University
18. Veronica Ciocanel, Graduate Student, Applied Mathematics, Brown University
19. Esha Sraboni, Graduate Student, Brown University
20. Rajeev Kadambi, Graduate Student, Political Science/Theory, Brown University
21. Puneet Bhasin, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
22. Andi, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
23. Julia Gettle, Graduate Student, History, Brown University
24. Dennis Johannssen, Graduate Student, German Studies, Brown University
25. Matthew Ellis, Graduate Student, Modern Culture and Media, Brown University
26. Sertac Sen, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
27. Benjamin Bellman, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
28. Simran Vazirani, Graduate Student, Public Policy, Brown University
29. Elizabeth Dean Hermann, Faculty, Division of Architecture and Design, RISD
30. Suvaid Yaseen, Graduate Student, History, Brown University
31. Miriam Rainer, Graduate Student, German Studies, Brown University
32. Darien Acero, Undergraduate Student, Religious studies, Brown University

33. Colin, Graduate Student, Applied Mathematics, Brown University
34. Vazira Zamindar, Faculty, History, Brown University
35. Dorin Smith, Graduate Student, English, Brown University
36. Anindita Adhikari, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
37. Kaustav Chakrabarti, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
38. Stephanie Galasso, Graduate Student, Brown University
39. Bhrigupati Singh, Faculty, Anthropology, Brown university
40. Brian Horton, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
41. Prerna Singh, Faculty, Political Science, Brown University
42. Rijuta Mehta, Faculty, Modern Culture and Media, Brown University
43. Erik Ehn, Faculty, Theatre Arts, Brown University
44. Michael D. Kennedy, Faculty, Sociology and International and Public Affairs, Brown University
45. Viraj Sikand, Undergraduate Student, Environmental Science, Brown University
46. Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Faculty, Art & Art History/Art, University of Rhode Island
47. Uday Shriram, Graduate Student, Neuroscience/Biotechnology, Brown University
48. Karie Fisher, Staff, Watson Institute, Brown University
49. Catherine, Graduate Student, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology, Steidl University
50. Jessica Katzenstein, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
51. Malay Firoz, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
52. Kay Warren, Faculty, Anthropology, Brown University
53. Patrick Mayne, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
54. Quinn Bernier, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
55. Abhilash Medhi, Graduate Student, History, Brown University
56. Ferris Lupino, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
57. Cecilia Garza, Undergraduate Student, Development Studies, Brown University
58. Nur Yasemin Bavbek, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
59. Charlotte Buecheler, Graduate Student, Comparative Literature, Brown University
60. Apoorva Bhandari, Staff, CLPS, Brown University
61. Jammie Chomsky, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
62. Rehan Jamil, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
63. Shreena Thakore, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
64. Emily Cunniffe, Undergraduate Student, Brown University

65. Arohi Kapoor, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
66. Aidan Dunbar, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
67. Divya Mehta, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
68. Sebastian Clark, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
69. India Ennenga, Brown University
70. Ryan Lee, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
71. Aanchal Saraf, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
72. Eli Neuman-Hammond, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
73. Athena Washburn, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
74. Mackenzie Abernethy, Staff, School of Professional Studies, Brown University
75. Maya Sorabjee, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
76. Tathya Abe, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
77. Sheena Raza Faisal, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
78. Tuba Tariq, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
79. Jagdeep Raina, RISD
80. Nicole Burrowes, Faculty, History, Brown University
81. Valentine Moro, Podova University
82. Terrence George, Graduate Student, Mathematics, Brown University
83. Syeda Masood, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
84. Hannah Marshall, Graduate Student, Anthropology, Brown University
85. Jan Stockbruegger, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
86. Kudrat Wadhwa, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
87. Yashas Vaidya, Graduate Student, Sociology, Brown University
88. Taylor Johnson, RISD
89. Dennis Congdon, Faculty, Painting, RISD
90. Tenzin Lama, Undergraduate Student, Brown University
91. Shreya Jindal, Graduate Student, Education, Brown University
92. Patrick Heller, Faculty, Sociology, Brown University
93. Jonathan Highfield, Faculty, English, RISD
94. Poulomi Chakrabarti, Graduate Student, Political Science, Brown University
95. Raghvi Bhatia, RISD
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