

OPEN LETTER TO VC OF UNIV OF HYDERABAD

We of the global scholarly community make an urgent appeal calling for an immediate halt to the violence unleashed against peacefully protesting students at the University of Hyderabad. The heavy-handed and forceful repression of protest has no place in a democratic society, still less in a seat of knowledge and debate. The actions of the police in dragging students away, arresting non-violent campaigners and inflicting severe injuries through unrestrained lathi charges are completely at odds with democratic values.

In the face of such flagrant repression, we find ourselves compelled to ask whether we can any longer continue to sustain research links and ties with the UoH. Many of us have strong academic connections and affiliations to colleagues at the University of Hyderabad and admire the work of the many scholars based there. At present, however, the University of Hyderabad in no way resembles an institution of higher education and erudition. For a University to thrive, it requires a culture of open discussion, vibrant debate and tolerance of alternatives. All of these public virtues are currently being eroded on campus. To try and win an argument by force is a clear admission of the weakness of your position. We stand in solidarity with protesting students and staff and condemn in the strongest possible terms the heavy-handed police interventions witnessed in recent days. We demand the immediate withdrawal of police from campus and release of all arrested students and staff. Rather than trying to silence dissent, the university management would be much better advised to engage with and listen to their student critics. The tragic death of Rohit Verma shocked the world and should have resulted in institutional reforms and learning. Instead, the situation is being exacerbated. Continued failure by the Vice-Chancellor and others to cease hostilities and engage the students in dialogue will compel us – with great regret – to reconsider our engagements in and collaboration with the University.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Hugo Gorringe, University of Edinburgh