

Teachers condemn mob violence, media attacks

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The University Teachers' Network has strongly condemned a wave of violence, arson, and mob attacks across the country, accusing student representatives of acting beyond their authority and threatening freedom of expression.

In a statement issued yesterday, the network said the situation deteriorated following the shooting of young politician Sharif Osman Bin Hadi on December 12 and his death on December 18.

The killing was followed by attacks on leading newspapers, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, as well as cultural institutions Chhayanaut and Udichi Shilpi Gosthi.

"Using the anger and frustration after Hadi's killing, opportunistic groups have carried out one criminal act after another," said the statement.

The interim government has failed to arrest the killers, while journalists, cultural activists, and ordinary citizens have come under attack, it added.

The teachers also condemned several killings across the country, including the mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Bhaluka over alleged blasphemy and the burning to death of two children of BNP leader Belal Hossain in Lakshmipur.

They further criticised the conduct of Rucsu leaders, particularly its General Secretary Salahuddin Ammar, accusing him of creating mob pressure, harassing teachers, and forcing deans to resign.

"The elected student representatives acted as if they themselves were the administration. They used threatening language, issued illegal resignation letters, and tried to publicly humiliate deans, which is completely beyond their jurisdiction," the statement said.

The network noted that although 12 deans at Rajshahi University were elected during the previous government, only six were targeted for resignation, while the remaining six were spared, raising questions about political bias.

They also criticised media coverage of the issue, saying the resignations were portrayed as voluntary when the deans were actually under pressure and had agreed to continue their duties at the request of the university administration.

The statement alleged that Rucsu leaders openly threatened teachers, warning that so-called pro-Awami League teachers would be physically dragged and tied up if they entered the campus. Rucsu Vice President Mostakur Rahman Zahid was quoted as saying that "no Awami fascist teacher would be allowed to take classes at RU."

The teachers said such statements created fear on campus and encouraged hate speech through Rucsu and Islami Chhatra Shibir-linked social media platforms.

"We are shocked that the university administration took no action against these behaviours, even though many of them amount to criminal offences. This is a direct attack on academic freedom, and its impact has spread to campuses across the country," the statement said.

It also referred to threats made after Hadi's death to shut down The Daily Star and Prothom Alo and calls made by a Shibir leader at Jahangirnagar University to vandalise Udichi and Chhayanaut.

The statement alleged that student representatives from Rucsu and Jucsu, along with Shibir leaders, were involved in incitement and attacks linked to the December 18 arson.

The pattern of violence shows that these were not isolated incidents but "planned and interconnected events", many of which were promoted earlier through YouTube channels and other media, it said.

"The home ministry has shown extreme failure, and law enforcement agencies remained passive despite clear warnings," the statement added.

Referring to commitments made by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus after the July uprising, the teachers said the interim government had promised media freedom, freedom of expression, and protection of lives and property, but failed to uphold those commitments.

They welcomed the arrest of several suspects in the December 18 arson and the Dipu killing and demanded the immediate arrest of Hadi's killers.

The teachers called on university authorities to take action under university rules to stop harassment and unauthorised activities by student representatives.

They also urged Jamaat-e-Islami to control its student wing and warned against dismissing violent actions as "personal opinions".

"Incitement to violence is a crime," the statement said, adding that administrative action must be taken against Rucsu, Jucsu, and Ducsu leaders involved in provocation or direct attacks.