

Editorial ২২

The Interned DU Teachers And Students

The issue of the release of Dhaka University teachers and students is back again. The government has weakened its position already by releasing the teachers of Rajshahi University after they were convicted. Many of the intellectuals have also joined the fray by demanding the release of the interned teachers. However, the question remains, how far is it fair to release people who have committed crimes?

In civilised countries the demand is for a fair trial. Here, we demand outright release, irrespective of the fact whether they had committed any crimes or not. This is a very unhealthy trend. Just because somebody is considered a VIP, of sorts, he feels that he is above the law. This is not fair.

In India, when VP Singh was accused of keeping money in St. Kitts in the Caribbean, he immediately took up the challenge and was honourably acquitted. It enhanced his stature beyond the boundaries of India. But we do not have anybody doing it, here. Yet, we claim to be a nation that upholds the rule of law.

It is up to the government to decide what it wants to do about the detained teachers and students. But a question remains what precedent we are creating by doing this? Practically, we have started a process of legal decay by releasing the Rajshahi University teachers even after they were convicted and now it seems that we will reinforce the process by releasing the Dhaka University teachers. In that case, why bother to try them at all? Their colleagues have been demanding their unconditional release, which will extricate the government from getting into further complications.

What did the University teachers and students do? They created mayhem and incited violence which itself is very disturbing. Is it within the rights of teachers to do so? The students were protesting the establishment of an Army camp in the Dhaka University and their demands were fulfilled which emboldened them and led to further escalation of the violence. Now after the release of the agitating teachers and students it is possible that they will feel encouraged to continue doing what they were arrested for.

The university teachers who are asking for the release of their colleagues are talking like lawyers. They are not saying what went wrong and why. Whatever the provocation should a teacher engage in arson? Why should less educated people suffer for the same crime? Teachers, as responsible citizens of society, must take responsibility for their actions. They should be self-righteous if they want to be the conscience keepers of the nation. Apparently, self-interest is prevailing over the national one.

In a society of privileged groups one cannot think of democracy or rule of law. Every occupational group feels that it is indispensable. If this is the case then there is hardly any room for the rule of law. Yet, the government has decided to retract on its earlier position. If this leads to a better society well and good but if it does not, the government and the teachers must bear responsibility.