



Date – 03/03/2018

TISS Students' Union and Student Councils of Off-Campuses Statement

3rd March, 2018

Dear friends *who believe in social justice*,

The letter issued by certain members of the Students' Union (SU) dated 3rd March 2018 has come as a shock to a large number of students whose demands are yet to be met. The SU members who were uninformed of this decision have also expressed similar shock and resentment to the issuing of such a letter, as it goes against the General Body of students' decision, and was taken **without consulting either the entire SU body or the Students Councils of the off-campuses**. While all our energy and efforts are currently focused on pressurizing the administration and the government to pay heed to our demands, the letter issued by only a certain section of the SU has forced us to issue this statement to communicate and bring clarity to the larger student community.

It must be elucidated by narrating what transpired in the past 10 days from when the Students' Union gave the call for a university strike on 21st February 2018. In order to negotiate with the administration systematically, a charter of demands was prepared which contained all arguments with proof justifying each demand. On this basis, 3 rounds of negotiations were conducted with the administration till now. In the first round of talks held via sending delegates to meet the administration in their office, the administration did not concede to any of the demands listed in the charter, owing to which the protest continued. After protesting for 3 more days at the main gate of TISS the administration finally gave in to a public meeting on 25th of February in which they agreed only to the 1st demand of the charter, that too partially. Again the protest continued. Following the casual attitude of the administration towards the student's demands, not acknowledging their faults and lack of any concrete solutions, it was decided in the GBM to continue the protest further. It must be noted that throughout these 5 days all the decisions had been taken by holding discussions with the GBM. And the same continued till the 28th of February.

On the 28th of February the administration addressed the students without any intimation with a newly formed committee at the protest site at 12 o' clock at midnight. The proposal read out by the administration partially fulfilled the first demand only. The administration rolled back the hostel and DH fee waiver for only M.A. students of 2016-18 and 2017-19. Whereas did not even address about MPhil and PhD GoI-PMS students of these Batches. The administration's proposal did not offer anything for 2018-20 i.e. the upcoming batch. The proposal for the upcoming 2018 - 20 batch for SC, ST GoI PMS M.A. students requires payment of hostel and DH fees in two installments on monthly actuals. Whereas for the NC OBC GoI PMS students the proposal is to pay the full course fee, hostel fee and DH installments based on actuals. Although there is a mention of student aid to each NC OBC GoI students during admission but the upfront payment here will be still as high as 30,000 for some courses. Such payments is still not justified for a category of students whose family income is less than 1 Lakh. This proposal was rejected by majority of the students as

the proposal did not offer any concrete solution for 2018-20 batch. The proposal completely ignored the OBC-NC GoI-PMS issue, PwD issues, MPhil-PhD GoI-PMS issue.

A large section of the GoI PMS holders (from all SC, ST, OBC(NC)) were unsatisfied as they felt that their demands had only been partially met. It was in view of these half-met demands that the GBM held at 2 a.m. on March 1st rejected the proposal unanimously. A delegation of the SU members along with 2 members of the GB approached the administrative committee at 2 a.m. to convey the decision rejecting the proposals and intention to move forward with the protest. We Union members had discussed and agreed to put forward the idea to call off the strike as we felt at that point that the demands which could be met at administration level had been met. Though we must suggest that this was still not a decision of all members. When the Union got back to the General Body at 4 a.m., we put forth our “decision to call off the strike”. This was received with much opposition from the students in the GBM. In this GBM many students rejected the proposal to call off the strike out rightly asserting that the demands were yet to be met.

The OBC NC students who receive GoI PMS were largely neglected in the administration’s proposals as they were exempted from the waivers. OBC NC recipients of GoI PMS are the most vulnerable as their annual income falls below Rs. 1 lakh. When the hostel and dining hall fees together total up to Rs. 62,000 per year, it becomes a financial burden on OBC NC students to pay these without any waiver. When the SU called for a strike to fight for the marginalized sections of students in the framework of social justice, the already relegated OBC NC students was also a focal point. As statistics from RTI filed by students had shown, the ratio of OBC students had fallen to 18%, i.e. 9% lesser than the required constitutional mandate, after the fee waiver was withdrawn for OBC students specifically. The year following the fee waiver withdrawal also saw a 100% increase in the number of OBC students who withdrew their admission. In this regard, the undersigned SU members believe it is imperative that this demand also be taken seriously by the administration. Since they failed to do so we stand by the agitating OBC students and believe that the protest should continue. The fee waivers for GoI PMS students in MPhil PhD had not even been considered thoroughly.

When the call for the strike was given, a clear cut idea of how social justice was being curtailed at TISS over the years was formulated, more so during the course of the protest. In this regard, we believe it is essential that such justice be served to the upcoming batches. It was of utmost priority specifically given that the demands of the current batches could be challenged through legal means. When a similar policy of revoking fee waivers is being applied to the upcoming batches a similar drop out will be witnessed from the SC ST and OBC NC categories as well. **The general body of students gave time to us - the SU - to reconsider the proposal, which we did and met again at 3 p.m. in afternoon. After much discussion and debates, we all came ahead and decided to not call off the strike.**

When the SU gave a call for strike across the 4 campuses of TISS, the 3 off-campus did so in solidarity. But these campuses faced many other problems like lack of facilities etc. which the Mumbai campus was oblivious to. During the course of the protest their demands were also projected and its graveness was revealed when even the faculty of TISS Hyderabad campus endorsed their demands. Calling off the protest

without addressing the demands of these off-campus which do not enjoy autonomy would have been utterly autocratic and undemocratic.

However, on the night of 1st March 2018 it came to the notice of the General Secretary that a mail had been sent to the administration on the behalf of SU and from the SU mail id conveying the SU's decision to call off the protest and revealing the names of SU members who voted for continuing strike and also those who agreed not to. Whereas in the GBM none of the members of SU gave their stand as wanting to call off the strike. It also turned out that many of the SU members did not even know that such a mail had been sent. And now this letter has again been issued by some SU members and projected it like all SU members are a part of that decision. **This is a grave misconduct and abuse of power by some members of the SU as they have used the names of the non-consenting members without their knowledge in order to pass a decision. The clandestine manner in which this decision was made and conveyed to the administration is condemnable and we strongly stand against it. Also the undersigned SU members feel that the other members have betrayed the general body as they have gone back on a promise made to the GB and are now trying to break the strike by uniting with the administration.**

The letter dated 3rd March signed by Acting Director, Prof. Shalini Bharat, mentions that the majority of the SU members endorsed the decision to call off the strike. However, it should be brought to the notice of the larger student body that this is incorrect. Six publicly elected representatives stand by the decision that the strike should go on along the lines of the resolution of the general body.

There have been allegations that the GBM on 28th February and day after were 'hijacked' by persons with political motivations. The arguments given in the GBM by many students were valid and made complete sense and hence many SU members (as undersigned) also held similar opinions and voted for continuation of strike. This also coincided with the larger consensus and sentiment within the GB. This also coincided with the fact that the issues of other campuses had not been addressed as yet.

We resent that some members of the union have raised doubts on other students' capacity to understand their own issues and their determination to fight for their demands. It should also be pointed out that any attempts to create confusion, demotivate the students and delegitimize the protest, should cease immediately. The students in all 4 campuses are united in their convictions and their fight for the charter of demands being met.

Given that we have not been able to communicate with the students' community very efficiently in last few days we also want to use this letter as an opportunity to address the messages that have been doing rounds in social media platforms on campus. One of the things being said is that the methods used by the protesting students are unruly, unconstitutional. We want to say that the methods of imposing strikes, bandhs are very much part of the protest in any democracy world over. We must reiterate that the call for bandhs, blockades issued from the SU have resulted from the severity of the issues at hand and the insensitivity of the administration towards our concerns since a very long time now. It should be again noted that such a modality of protest has been used in all TISS campuses in unison which again reflects on the severity of



issues at hand and hence inviting such strong reactions from across campuses. The Hyderabad students have been forced to take a call for hunger strike to make the admin listen to them! **We being the elected members of Students Union cannot and will not override the general body and will continue to fight till the demands are met in toto! Our demands resonate the student body's demands and we will continue to use the power vested in us by students for the same. We also suggest that the SU members need to seriously self-reflect and must come to an understanding that SU is not a decision making body and only an executive body. We request you to not become puppet in the hands of the administration for narrow personal gains or to gain favors for your attempts to fracture this movement.**

We also want to state this again that the protest continues to be against the administration because the withdrawal of fee waiver from SC ST OBC students is strictly against the very vision of TISS which talks of prioritizing the students coming from marginalized and vulnerable backgrounds. We are convinced that our demands lie in the ambit of being fulfilled at the level of this institute and hence we will continue the strike right at the gate of TISS.

Signed by:

Fahad Ahmad, General Secretary, TISS SU 2017-18

Jackson Lotha, Sports Secretary, TISS SU 2017-18

Imran Gandhi, SPO Representative

Alpha Topo, SPO Representative

Vidya Supriya Raosaheb, Gender Amity Committee

Mohammad Altamash, Gender Amity Committee

Student Council, Guwahati 2017-18

Regia Kom, President

Abhishika Das, Vice President

Ratnadeep Baruah, General Secretary

Julina Kashyap, Treasurer

Divya Patnaik, Literary Secretary

Ushnish Guha, Sports Secretary

Azmol Hussain, Cultural Secretary

Minal Karani, Dining Hall Committee

Devdarshan Cheita, SPO Representative

Parasmita, SPO Representative

Meher, Library Representative

Antara, Cyber Library Representative

Dimple Adhikari, Gender Amity Committee

Amrita Mazumdar, Gender Amity Committee

Akash, Gender Amity Committee



Jaya, Gender Amity Committee

Students' Council, Tuljapur 2017-18

Sunny Suman, Chairperson

Maya Somkuwar, Vice Chairperson

Sambhand Yadav, Treasurer

Dishant Rathod, Literary Secretary

Rajat Shinde, Cultural Secretary

Kishan, Sports Secretary

Smruthy Sasidharan, CASH Member

Khyati Singh, SPO Representative

Vishal Soni, SPO Representative

Prem Daya, Dining Hall Committee

Naveen Naik, Dining Hall Committee

Al Ameen, Additional Cultural Secretary

Shubhashish Sahoo, Library Representative

Baksheesh, Computer Centre Representative

Students Action Committee, Hyderabad

Sherin Sathyadas, Chairperson

Arjun Mukherjee, General Secretary

Sharwan Gautam, Sports Secretary

Kalyani Jada

Vishal Udaykumar

Moulika Chhinduri

Lynda

Harendar Singh

Vishnu Prakash

Dhanavath Ashok

Sanjana Saxena

Parvathy

Shital Bariak

Sarayu Nandakumar

Manshi

Meghana

Lamminthang

Vishakha Dutta

Pallavi Pratibha

Carolyn

Vaishali

Harshita



Students' Union

Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Mumbai Campus

Chinmay Patil

Alokananda

Sneha Gamre, Social Protection Cell

Thomsong, Social Protection Cell

Salman, Social Protection Cell