

**BARAK HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

Rongpur Part-iv (Near Uco Bank), Silchar - 9, Cachar (Assam)

A human rights organisation of the nature as is contemplated under Sec 12 (i) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

**FOR  
EQUALITY,  
JUSTICE  
AND PEACE**

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः

E-mail: bhrpc.net@gmail.com, FAX- 03842-263592; WebPages: http:// bhrpc.wordpress.com

Ref. No. **BHRPC/**

Date:

Press statement

**For immediate release**

3 March 2011

**BHRPC files case at NHRC concerning assault on reporters at Assam University**

Silchar, 3 March: Barak Human Rights Protection Committee (BHRPC) filed a case at the National Human Rights Commission on 3 March in the matter of assault on reporters at Assam University campus on 25 February 2011 by the security guards of the university. The attack was allegedly led by the proctor of the university Mr. Manabendra Dutta Choudhury and Dean in charge of students' welfare Mr. Reamendu Bhattacharjee. The reporters were grievously injured and their laptops and camera were snatched away. The scribes were assaulted reportedly for covering students' agitation.

According to information received by the BHRPC, Hostel boarders of the university were observing hunger strike and resorted to blockade at the main gate of the campus demanding immediate uninterrupted water supply. Ratan Das, general secretary of Assam University Students' Council told that drinking water crisis in the hostel was acute for a long time. Even there was scarcity of toilets. Students had been demanding for permanent solution, but the authority turned a deaf ear to it, he alleged.

BHRPC further received information that the university authority did not allow the entry and reading of the Dainik Samayik Prasanga, a local daily newspaper inside the campus.

BHRPC thinks this is an undemocratic and authoritarian attempt at stopping outside information from coming to the hostel boarders of the university coupled with the attempt of stopping flow of information from the university as evident from the assault on the reporters. It seems that the authority of the university are flouting law of the land and behaving as law unto themselves.

BHRPC finds the incidents establish a *prima facie* case of violations of fundamental rights of the reporters to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 (1) (a) of the constitution of India and the right to practice profession of one's choice guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (g) of the constitution.

It is also a *prima facie* case of violations of human right 'to freedom of opinion and expression' as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the general assembly of the United Nations in 1948. The right violated in this case is also guaranteed in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

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Rights, 1966 to which India is a state party. This covenant including this Article is a part of the Human Rights Protection Act, 1993 by virtue of section 2 (1) (d).

BHRPC thinks that the conduct of the university authority vis-a-vis the grievances of the students and their peaceful protest is, to say the least, authoritarian and undemocratic. The students were staging peaceful protest and demonstration for adequate sanitary facility, adequate supply of drinking water and other such basic amenities. These amenities are part of right to live with human dignity under Article 21 of the Indian constitution.

BHRPC also wrote a letter to the prime minister of India urging him to initiate a prompt, thorough and objective investigation into the allegations of assault on reporters as well as grievances of the students of the university, to prosecute the alleged perpetrators, expeditiously if found guilty by an objective investigation, to provide adequate compensation to the victims, to provide adequate security to the victims and witnesses of this incident, to ensure exercise of right to freedom of speech and expression by the people and particularly by the journalists in an environment of free from fear and backlash in Assam and to take effective measures for addressing students' grievances immediately and effectively. Copies of the letter were sent to the President, Home Minister, Human Resource Development Minister, Chief Minister of Assam and Vice Chancellor of Assam University.

If no substantial action is taken within a reasonable time BHRPC may seek intervention of the United Nations' 'Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression'. BHRPC may also consider legal options within domestic jurisdiction.

(Neharul Ahmed Mazumder)  
Secretary General, BHRPC