To,
The Chairman,
Punjab Human Rights Commission.

We are writing this letter to you from Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab ("**RGNUL**") seeking out to this Hon'ble Punjab Human Rights Commission ("**Commission**") for flagrant violation of our human rights. RGNUL has been established under the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law Punjab Act, 2006 and is therefore a government institution. By virtue of RGNUL being a government institution, all members employed by RGNUL, especially the Administrative Officer and Vice-Chancellor, Capt. S.P. Singh (Retd.) and Prof. Dr. Paramjit Singh Jaswal respectively, are public servants.

The students of our institution have been on protest since the last 72 hours straight. We are all on the streets demanding our rights be respected. The trigger of the entire protest was the suspension of six students who wanted to highlight the deplorable condition of the mess food by the means of a group protest along with many others. This act of the university arbitrarily suspending students at their whims and fancies was met with great criticism by the students and was the spark that students needed to stand up against the maladministration which all of us have faced throughout our time at RGNUL; while our seniors entered and left the university facing this set in stone misogynistic, sexist, and opaque administration.

In light of the above, we raised **preliminary** demands focusing on simple basic human dignity and decency which we ask from public servants who are employed in the administration of this public university.

1) **Revocation of the suspension of the six students**

These six students were suspended under the directions of the administrative officer. This act by the administrative officer was itself ***ultra vires*** **the powers which are vested in him**. Regulation 11(2) of the RGNUL (Discipline amongst students) Regulations, 2015 states that the power to suspend students only lies with the Vice-Chancellor who is currently, Prof. Dr. Paramjit Singh Jaswal.

In addition to this, prior to the suspension, the students were not given any opportunity to be properly heard, therefore **violating** the rule of ***audi alteram partem***, a principle which is recognized by Section 33 of the RGNUL Act, 2006 itself.

Moreover, these students were told to hand over their mobile phones to the faculty members who forced the students to give unfettered access to the same by providing the lock screen pass codes of their mobiles. When these students claimed their right to privacy as was recognized as a

fundamental right recently in the case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) and Anr. v. Union of India and Ors.[1], a faculty member, Dr. Vipan Kumar who was a part of the hastily-formed investigation committee said to the students, "P*rivacy ke tattu, ab tu mujhe privacy sikhayega?!*" Needless to say, we were hurt, shocked and appalled by the conduct of this faculty member however, cases have happened in the past as well wherein this faculty member has been observed using filthy language with the students.

To add to the above, the above faculty member, Dr. Vipan Kumar also happens to be one of the three wardens of the boys hostel therefore presenting a direct conflict of interest against the six male students who were suspended. The same was the case with the other two faculty members of the committee, Dr. Anand Pawar, the chief warden, and Dr. Honey Kumar, warden.

The aforementioned students, subsequent to their suspension order being issued, were forced to vacate their hostel rooms and leave the premises of the university within an hour of the orders being handed to the students. The six students in question <u>all hail from different states</u> and do not have any relatives in the state of Punjab. They were then left with no option but to take up a room at a dingy roadside *dhaba* and **spend the night there amidst awful living conditions**. With no support for food, water and security, these students had their basic human rights flagrantly violated by the university that was just looking to pin the blame on scapegoats.

<u>Conclusion:</u> Currently, the suspension has been revoked conditionally. Formally, these six students are still suspended. They had to leave their hostel premises by force which is inherently illegal and immoral on the part of the university. We request your team to thoroughly investigate this occurrence and do the needful against the responsible parties.

2) Suspension of Administrative Officer Capt. S.P. Singh (Retd.)

Apart from abusing his powers left, right and center, it is an unfortunate open secret in the entire campus that Capt. S.P. Singh (Retd.) has no manners of talking to humans and especially no decency to talk to women. Passage of sexually colored remarks to women and rampant bullying of male students and staff members remains his constant *modus operandi* which even the batches which have graduated out of RGNUL in the previous years have testified to.

He frequently abuses the students he calls and has been documented saying things like "Y*e gender equality ka chashma utaaro*", "*I identify you as girls before as students", "Ladke kuch bhi kare koi farak nahi padta.*"

Apart from these harrowing misogynistic statements, has been observed using words and phrases like "*Bast**d*", "*I will chew you ba**s off*", "*I can't believe RGNUL ki ladkiya available ka tag laga kar ghumte hai*", etc.

[1] Writ Petition (Civil) No. 494 of 2012.

Aligned with the vision of this Commission, an affront to the bodily and emotional dignity of the women of RGNUL remain a non-negotiable concern for us. Accordingly, a student inclusive formal enquiry has been prayed for.

Conclusion: The University has sent Capt. S.P. Singh (Retd.) on indefinite leave and has iterated to the students that they will conduct an enquiry but the students will not be made a part of it, neither will the minutes of such enquiry be shared with the students and the students will only be communicated a final order. (Conditional to the students withdrawing their protest before ***any*** action is taken by the University)

3) **Formalization of a student body**

Perhaps one of our more major of demands impacting the university for all times to come is the demand for a student body. Currently all processes of the administration are opaque and anyone who questions or challenges anything is belittled, harassed and bullied by not only the faculty but even by the Vice-Chancellor. This ultimately creates a hostile atmosphere in the entire university where there exists absolutely no grievance redressal system. The university administration has specialized the art of targeting students who proactively try to improve the functioning of the university.

As an example, it is a matter of fact that there was a report on the review of the health center prepared by students to ensure greater accountability of the health center services including of the incompetent doctor employed there. The report was submitted to the higher authorities of the university including the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Paramjit Singh Jaswal, the Dean of Student Welfare, Dr. Anand Pawar only to be ultimately buried, with the students who created it refusing to talk about their interaction with the authorities.

The above is just one isolated incident amongst the dozens which the students have faced throughout the years both those pursing law and those who have now gone on to become advocates. Not only is student interaction and involvement completely absent at this university, it is also actively discouraged. Functioning of the Placement Cell, the Health Center, the Gymnasium, the IT services, the Library, the Hostel Messes, the university canteen, the hostel in-timings, etc., are all areas which a designated member of a student association should be in-charge of rather than a complete shut out of students in any and all regards with any request to change only met with hostility and belittlement.

The undersigned on this email is the Student Association of RGNUL which we hope to establish to address all issues with the university once and for all. The body which we aim to form is one which will be apolitical in nature and democratically elected for the students and by the students

exclusively. This will help us present our interests better and have an active participation in the functioning and working of ***our*** university.

It is also to be noted that recently, in 2018 Hon'ble Chief Minister Amarinder Singh recently announced that student union elections were now legal in institutions across Punjab.[2] Attention may also be directed towards Lyngdoh Committee Report which was as per the Direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to frame Guidelines on Students' Union Elections in Colleges/Universities.[3]

Conclusion: The University has stated that they will ***consider*** our demand only if we call off our protests entirely. However, history is evidence that this never works and therefore, the protest is still continuing. The University is not even prepared to give us a written assurance that the same will be constituted. Per the University stance, the aforementioned consideration will be done behind closed doors without student involvement, minutes of the same will not be shared and the students will only be told the final result.

4) Repeal sexist university rules

Most women on campus will testify to the fact that RGNUL has sexism woven in its fabric and all students believe that it's time to rid RGNUL of the same. Some areas where blatant sexism persists are:

- ***Discriminatory hostel in-time restrictions***

Since the longest time, boys and girls have had unequal hostel in-timings and any girl who protested against the same was singled out and questions were raised on her character along with harassing her. This became so rampant that almost every batch which joined the university would often have their first taste of dealing with the administration regarding this issue.

Pressure was put on the University due to Right to Information requests by students via acquaintances and relatives (to avoid disclosure of identity and subsequent harassment) and only then was a circular published stating that the in-time for both boys and girls was equal. However, the same was never implemented for the male students.

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[2] http://punjab.gov.in/key-initiative?p_p_id=pressrelaese_WAR_PressReleaseAdminportlet&p_p_lifecycle=2&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_cacheability=cacheLevelPage&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2&_pressrelaese_WAR_PressReleaseAdminportlet_param=27625&_pressrelaese_WAR_PressReleaseAdminportlet_groupid=10179&_pressrelaese_WAR_PressReleaseAdminportlet_mvcPath=%2Fhtml%2Fpressrelaese%2Fdisplay_content.jsp&_pressrelaese_WAR_PressReleaseAdminportlet_articleid=27625

[3] https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/2892831_Recommendation-of-the-Committee-accepted-by-the-Honble-Supreme-Court.pdf

During exam times, when the library timings were increased to 1 am, the women students could only avail the facilities of the library till 9 pm due to their unequal hostel in-time.

Eventually complacency and routine set in sidelining human rights, dignity, Article 19 and Article 21 aside altogether.

Conclusion: The University has stated that they will ***consider*** our demand only if we call off our protests entirely. Per the University stance, a committee will be constituted by the Hon'ble Chancellor in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and they will then decide the fate of this request.

- ***Restriction in the movement of girls within the Girls Hostel post 11 pm***

In spite of all of being in the general age bracket of 17 to 23, the university restricts the movement of girls even within the campus of the hostel from 11 pm and they are locked-in so as to avoid them from going and meeting other girls in different blocks in the same Girls Hostel. Women students are, at times, questioned as to where female students are going even if they have to use the washroom.

Dr. Shilpa Jain, the Girls Hostel Warden and a faculty member is well aware of this scenario and has ensured that this *status quo* remains well settled.

In spite of the campus being in utter shambles since the last three days, rather than addressing our concerns, the University has told us that our mid-term examinations will be continued as scheduled and that it was upon us to take our call indirectly coercing us to either failing out mid-term examinations or working towards dignity, respect, fairness, transparency and accountability. The ***University did however add that they were prepared to re-schedule one exam only if we called off the protest immediately.*** As another coercive tactic, the university has also sent ***communications to parents*** about the protest in hopes that parents will be able to convince their children not to fight for their rights against the administration. The students are united in their demands and as a result have boycotted the mid-term examinations till our demands are met.

Some students have been threatened by faculty members that there will be repercussions for their part in the protests in their viva-voice which is a blatant and utter violation of our rights as human beings.

To put it in simpler terms, ***we have lost faith in the administration*** of our Vice-Chancellor and he has informed us that the ***Chancellor is too busy*** to interact with the students who have been sleeping out on the campus roads since the last three days in hopes for more accountability, transparency and fairness.

The media has covered our protest extensively (links below). However, right now, we are 72+ hours into the protest and the administration is not willing to consider our demands and there exists an impasse. In this dark scenario and denial of our fundamental rights, we desperately turn to you for your help and intervention along with a sanction of a Special Investigation Team to ***investigate each and every aspect of this university***. We turn to you to safeguard our rights and save this premier institution of law.

Sincere regards,
Student Association,
Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab.

March 18, 2019.

Links to media coverage:

1) https://barandbench.com/protests-rgnul-patiala-suspension-six-students/

2) https://www.thequint.com/my-report/rgnul-students-erupt-in-protest-against-faculty-administration

3) https://scroll.in/latest/916900/punjab-students-at-national-university-of-law-in-patiala-protest-against-suspension-of-six-people

4) https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/maladministration-sexism-rgnul-patiala-students-protest-continues-on-day-3-143648

5) https://www.lawctopus.com/rgnul-students-start-protests-against-a-sexist-opaque-high-handed-administration/

6) https://punjabi.jagran.com/punjab/patiala-university-management-stays-protesting-against-suspension-of-6-students-8645776.html

7) https://www.ptcnews.tv/patiala-rajiv-gandhi-national-university-of-law-students-road-protest/

8) https://legaldesire.com/rgnul-suspends-students-protesting-against-bad-quality-food-terms-it-as-act-of-violence/

9) https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/students-protest-after-national-law-university-suspends-6-students/articleshow/68441670.cms

10) https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/chandigarh/protest-over-suspension-of-six-law-university-students-ahead-of-exam/744400.html

Copied to:

1) Punjab State Human Rights Commission *at* pshrc.chd@gmail.com.

2) National Human Rights Commission *at* dg-nhrc@nic.in.

3) National Assessment and Accreditation Council *at* naacoffice.delhi@gmail.com.

4) Sh. Arun Gupta, Addl. Distt. & Sessions Judge *at* djpat-chd@nic.in.

5) University Grants Commission *at* subureau@yahoo.in.