

Protest continues at DU over female student's harassment

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Students of the Department of Anthropology at Dhaka University on Friday demonstrated on the campus calling for measures to protect women against increasing incidents of violence.

The demonstration was held in front of the Dhaka University central library.

The demonstrators stated that society was not safe for women to roam.

Recalling the role women played in bringing down autocratic Sheikh Hasina, the demonstrators said that women were used as shields in the July-August uprising.

If needed, women will again come out of their houses, the demonstrators said.

Students from at least 20 departments and Institute of Dhaka University on Thursday and Early Friday issued statements condemning the harassment of a female student over her attire on her way to the university from the capital's Shahbagh area.

The alleged perpetrator, Mustafa Asif Arnab, is a Dhaka University staff member.

The DU unit of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, in a statement on Friday expressed deep concern over the safety and security of female students.

DU unit JCD president Ganesh Chandra Roy Sahos and general secretary Nahiduzzaman Shipon in the statement demanded the university administration investigate and punish the alleged accused involved in the incident.

On Thursday night, the students of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism released a statement strongly protesting at the incident.

They demanded the permanent expulsion of the perpetrator, Mustafa Asif Arnab, citing sufficient evidence, testimonies, and confessions.

The statement also declared Mustafa Asif Arnab as persona non grata on the DU campus, with immediate effect.

The Department of Law students echoed similar concerns in their statement, alleging that both the police and university administration pressured the victim to withdraw the case.

They issued a stern warning that any attempt to reinstate the accused would result in a complete academic boycott by the department's students.

Students from the Department of Sociology also released a statement in this regard.

They warned that if the administration attempted to unjustly reinstate the accused, the department's students would take strict measures.

They also declared Mustafa Asif Arnab as persona non grata on the campus.

Similar statements calling for justice, and expulsion of the alleged perpetrator, and declaring him unwanted on the campus were issued by students from the Department of Television, Film, and Photography; Department of Organisation Strategy and Leadership, Department of International Relations, Institute of Education and Research, Department of Anthropology; Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; Department of Management; Department of Chinese Language and Culture; Department of Economics; Department of English; and Department of Political Science and others.

Protesters who posted the statement on Facebook, meanwhile, have alleged that they are receiving death and rape threats for speaking out against the harassment.

Condemning the incident, the Dhaka University unit of the Bangladesh Students' Union and Revolutionary Student Unity also issued statements, urging the probe committee to carry out a swift and thorough investigation and ensure exemplary punishment for the alleged harasser.

In a press release issued on Friday, the Democratic Students Alliance stated that they were shocked to witness a mob gathering at the police station to free a perpetrator of sexual harassment, welcoming him with flowers.

The future impact of this incident on society will be extremely alarming, the release added.

Students from various departments of Dhaka University, meanwhile, have declared the perpetrator unwanted on the campus. Welcoming this initiative, leaders have called on all students to unite against the culture of impunity and demand women's safety, says the press release.