

# CU women students issue open letter to CA over rape threats

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A Chittagong University women students' platform on Wednesday issued an open letter to the chief adviser, protesting at 'moral policing, rape threats, cyber bullying and administrative negligence' amid the continued unrest at Chittagong University.

The letter, issued by Nari Ongan, was read out at the university's arts faculty by one of its organisers, Sumaiya Sikder, also a former coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination Movement.

In the letter, the platform accused the university administration of creating a hostile environment for women when the proctor allegedly made indecent comments at women, the authorities imposed 'evening restrictions' and targeted women students for expulsion.

It alleged that the assault of a first-year philosophy student by a guard on August 30, which triggered clashes with locals was followed by a wave of abusive comments and rape threats on social media.

Members of Nari Ongan also reported receiving obscene messages on WhatsApp and harassment through fake accounts.

'This situation is extremely alarming. Ongoing campus violence, administrative negligence and false propaganda by Shibir leaders have put the safety of female students at grave risk,' the open letter stated.

Alongside the letter, Nari Ongan announced seven demands, including full medical care for the injured, arrest and speedy trial of the attackers, stronger security on and around campus, housing allowances, introduction of circular buses and e-cars, an effective anti-sexual harassment cell, and the resignation of the vice-chancellor and the proctorial body.

Meanwhile, female students said that they were left traumatised by intimidation during the August 30 violence.

They said that they received rape threats during the violent attack on the university students.

A law student told reporters that they were inside their flat when villagers tried to break down the door. 'They took pictures of our house, which has increased our sense of insecurity,' she said.

The students said army personnel eventually arrived and helped them evacuate safely.

Proctorial body official Sayed Bin Kamal Chowdhury said that the complaint was taken seriously and measures were ensured for the women's safety.

On August 30, clashes began at the university at midnight past August 29, when a first-year female philosophy student was allegedly assaulted by a building guard near the Gate No 2.

Students rushed to her rescue when they clashed with Jobra village residents, injuring at least 60 students in the first spell of violence.

The situation escalated again from about noon on August 31 in a hours-long violent fight involving sharp weapons, vandalism and looting, leaving many more injured, including the pro vice-chancellor (administration), proctor and several teachers.

Security forces intervened later in the day, Section 144 was imposed, and the university suspended examinations until September 4.

On September 2, CU authorities filed a case naming 95 accused and up to 1,000 unidentified persons, while also lodging a general diary over the looting of locally made weapons from the university's security office.