

## Sub: Request for Immediate Intervention regarding the Safety of Women Students in The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

We, the Women's Collective of The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, are writing to inform your esteemed office about multiple incidents of inappropriate behaviour by several professors that have taken place on our campus, and also seek your immediate intervention in the same. The EFLU Women's Collective is an informal group of approximately 100 female students – formed in a time of emergency – set against the backdrop of the most recent sexual assault case in campus. We are reaching out to you because we are neither confident in nor comfortable with the way the administration has been reacting to the complaints previously made in this regard.

We would like to bring your attention to the incident of sexual and physical assault on a female student on the night of 18th October 2023, and the subsequent student protest that erupted on campus. The protest was triggered by the institutional lapses in addressing this incident. However, we would like to point out that this incident of assault occurred in EFLU in the context of a serious institutional apathy towards students, and particularly, in the context of several incidents of sexual harassment against students by faculty members, and violations of classroom etiquettes by senior members of the administration itself.

According to UGC Regulations, 2015, Section 4, there must exist a fully functioning Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) on campus, which must consist of three democratically elected students along with other administrative and faculty representatives. EFLU, Hyderabad, is in violation of this regulation, since no elections have taken place to appoint student representatives. We hold the administration accountable for the lack of a functional ICC, as it clearly shows the disregard for safety of women in the campus. Our grievances cannot be looked into, without proper representation.

The administration's callous and insensitive attitude towards matters of this nature can be seen in their treatment of the most recent sexual assault case that happened on campus, on 18th October, 2023:

- When students demanded immediate administrative action on the issue, the registrar in charge, Prof. K. Narasimha Rao responded by asking for the survivor's identity publicly, of which there is video proof available.
- Prof. T Samson (the Proctor of the University, at the time of the incident) was informed of the incident but did not take any action for close to six

hours. Furthermore, he publicly belittled the issue by calling it "a small incident".

- Deputy Proctor Dr. Rajkumar Eligedi, who is a part of the ICC, publicly mentioned the name of the survivor during his class. We feel that he did not handle the information that he acquired through means of both his position on the ICC, as well as his presence in the initial process of investigation, in a responsible and sensitive manner. When students approached him to point out his insensitivity, he immediately turned defensive.
- When the warden of Mah Laqa Bai Chanda Hostel for Women, EFLU, Mrs. Anna Bezawada, was contacted about the sexual assault, she was not prompt about the matter. She consistently delayed action and was also insensitive to the survivor's friends, who were trying to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for the survivor.

These points speak volumes about the incompetence of the EFLU administration. This heedless approach to such a sensitive case has broken the trust of the student community in the administration. The students have no faith that a fair investigation will be done with the current proctorial board in place.

During a talk organised by the University to falsely claim the legitimacy of the current ICC, a female student raised concerns about the same. At a protest that occurred the next day, she was manhandled and dragged away by the police — "on direct orders from the VC", as stated by the police themselves, of which video evidence exists. She was also detained after sunset without any charges and was told that she would only be released once the protest ended. Other students who were proactive and at the frontlines of the protests were singled out and slapped with FIRs and show cause notices. Even as we send this letter, we are worried about our safety with the increased surveillance on campus and the consequent targeting of students by the administration.

The experiences of some female victims with these professors have already been published in two news articles, linked below.

- [Deccan Chronicle article, written by Rachel Dammala, dated 26th October, 2023.](#)
- [The NEWS Minute, written by Yunus Y Lasania, dated 26th October, 2023.](#)

In this letter, we would like to expand upon a few of these experiences, as shared by the victims themselves. We understand the responsibility that must be

shouldered upon mentioning the names of specific professors, and we urge the concerned authorities to take the necessary actions against these individuals.

- Prof. T. Samson (Department of English Literature; Dean, Planning, EFLU) has been known to make inappropriate jokes during class. He once suggested that the class should take a picnic to a park so that they could gaze at women. Over the years, many students have complained about the inappropriate jokes he makes in class, particularly focusing on women's clothing.
- Dr. S. Dominic Savio (Associate Professor, Dept. of Phonetics and Spoken English) refused to join the class WhatsApp group meant for classroom communication and would instead insist on communicating with the class through a female student, which made her uncomfortable on many occasions. He asked for her personal information and political opinions which were completely unrelated to any lesson plan. He also sent her academically unrelated videos and asked her not to share the same with her class. On another occasion, he singled her out and offered to buy her snacks. She, as well as other students, have felt that he uses sexual innuendos in class while conversing with them.
- Dr. P. Moinuddin (Asst. Professor, Department of English as Second Language Studies) used to intrude the privacy of a student by incessantly texting and calling her late at night. He would try to obtain information about the victim (such as her hostel room number and private family details) from her friends after which, he suspiciously requested the same friends to delete their chat history with him. He also asked the victim to stop hanging out with male students from other departments. These interactions have deeply affected the victim emotionally. In another instance, he interacted with another female student, and used inappropriate physical touches, while she was with her friends in a public setting. He persisted even though she tried to brush his advances off and made it clear that he did not have her consent to touch her.
- Dr. Sareen Chatla (Asst. Professor, Department of Film Studies) has made inappropriate advances towards a student by insisting on spending time together. He later used to ask for private meetings claiming that he felt uncomfortable meeting in public places. He forced the victim to go out for lunch with him and she felt the need to comply, fearing academic repercussions. In the restaurant, he made her sit towards the inside of the table, away from the door, although she said that she was feeling uncomfortable and claustrophobic. In their conversations, he included details of his sex life and prodded into her mental health issues, while also claiming a likeness of his ex-wife to the victim.

- Dr. Y. Suresh Babu (Asst. Professor, Department of English Literature) has tried contacting several female students through WhatsApp chats and calls at odd times, on multiple occasions. He would ask them intrusive questions about their lives, such as their relationships and their personal business. He sent Valentines' Day wishes to one of the female students, which made her extremely uncomfortable. These incidents have made his female students feel very uneasy about attending his classes.

We, as a Collective, request your esteemed organisation to look into these grievances, as our administration has proved to be hostile upon such allegations against one of their own. We request a fair investigation into these matters and ask for proper redressal of these claims. We, as students, require a campus free of harassment and violence, where we can freely approach faculty or administration. The actions of a few have harmed the credibility of many, and we, once again, ask for your help in dealing with these issues.

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