



**FEDERATION OF
UNIVERSITY TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATIONS
Reg. No. 8151**

Federation of University Teachers' Associations

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FUTA strongly condemns the arbitrary arrest and detention of protesters

The Federation of University Teachers' Unions (FUTA) strongly condemns the arbitrary arrest and detention of twenty protesters, mostly students on 18th August 2022, and the blatant and shocking disregard by the police of the civil and political rights of our students.

It is clear from media reports that the student's actions were peaceful. No form of provocation by the protestors is apparent. Even at the point when students confronted the police human-chain, protestors were seen to stop advancing and disperse.

The actions of state actors are, however, troubling. According to lawyers appearing on behalf of students, there was no court order that deemed the march to be unlawful, and as such the protest was well within the law. Video images indicate a perplexing preponderance of police, STF, and the military armed with tear gas, water cannons, and batons. Students were chased along the streets and arrests were made of even those waiting at bus stands. Multiple accounts suggest arrests were made without reasons being declared, as required by law. Further, police officers falsely denied the presence of detainees in their police stations, a serious criminal offense violating the Enforced Disappearances Act (2018) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). Although the President chooses to identify protestors as terrorists and fascists, criminality seems to reside mainly in the acts of the state.

The State's suppression, however, has broader implications. Three students are apparently held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which has been consistently used by successive governments to arbitrarily detain and target political dissidents and minority rights, and activist groups. Today they are targeting our students with these draconian laws. Under the PTA provisions, the state can hold these students without producing them in court for up to twelve months. This suppression selectively targets specific people and groups, revealing a classist character. It appears to have the broad aim of criminalizing dissent and legitimate democratic action, all of which is totally unacceptable.

FUTA is concerned that these actions target the very people, our students, that we are mandated to protect and support. We wish to make clear that the idea that education is somehow incongruous from activities encompassing democratic action and that students' activism is inimical or antithetical to their role as students is ridiculous. As university teachers attached to public educational institutions and universities serving the public, we recognize that there can be no education without democracy. Any action by the state suppressing the rights of people to demand justice is against the principles of education and prevents us from fulfilling our mandate as university teachers.

FUTA has consistently demanded that the state end the use of flagrantly anti-democratic mechanisms to suppress the people of this country. We call upon all people to recognize and condemn the repression that is being carried out in their name.

Rohan Laksiri-Secretary-FUTA