

NOTE

SAFFRON TERROR

The Sangh Parivar attacked and disrupted the 'National Student's Festival for Peace, Communal Harmony and Justice' on July 6, 2007. The organizers at Anhad, Act Now for Harmony and Democracy, had invited Professor Shivji Panikkar to inaugurate an exhibition of student artworks. On his arrival, a Hindutva (Hindu nationalist/extremist) mob surrounded Professor Panikkar's car, shouting slogans. When Professor Panikkar stepped out of the car, he was physically assaulted. The mob proceeded to throw bricks and an iron drum at the car, injuring the driver and smashing the windshield. Police intelligence, it has been made known, was involved and informed the crowd of the arrival of uniformed police, which allowed the mob to disperse.

On July 8, Deepak Kanna, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University resigned in protest of the attack on Professor Panikkar. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has called for Professor Panikkar's exile from Gujarat, and the Akhil Bharthiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) began a signature campaign on the Maharaja Sayajirao University campus on July 11 in protest of Professor Panikkar's alleged comments on Hindu bhajans (devotional songs).

Earlier this year, on May 11, 2007, Shivji Panikkar, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University, was suspended by the university administration from his appointment, for upholding a student's academic right to freedom of expression. Sangh Parivar groups had attacked student Chandra Mohan's works, displayed as part of an examination procedure, and had the artist arrested on May 9, 2007. Other students protested Chandra Mohan's arrest by exhibiting erotic works from the school's archives on the faculty porch, which the administration ordered to be shut down, which Professor Panikkar refused. The attacks against them had forced both Professor Panikkar and Chandra Mohan into seclusion out of fear for their lives.

Such targeting has become indicative of the culture of fear and repression that is allowed to continue in Gujarat, where, following the genocide against Muslims in February-March of 2002, insufficient and negligent action has been taken to bring restorative justice to the survivors of the brutal, gendered and sexualized, violence. Failure to apprehend and bring to trial the perpetrators of criminal acts on the part of the Gujarat state administration has continued to subject minority and disenfranchised communities to a reign of terror. These acts of violence and repression are produced in particular by the complicity of state and national governments. The Government of India has failed to restore democracy by holding accountable the perpetrators, including the Chief Minister Narendra Modi and other government and law enforcement officials for the state's proven complicity in aiding and abetting the violence of 2002. The Government of India has also failed to hold accountable the perpetrators among the cadre of Sangh

Parivar groups for inflicting the violence, and as applicable, refused to revoke their charitable status.

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