

## **To all students of UOR- Communication from Vice Chancellor on the current situation**

You may have witnessed/heard the media reports about 11 students being taken to police to record statements for an incident in Meddawatta hostel. I am certain that the said students have their own version of the story. But I would like to remind all of you that there is another side to the story based on the account of the Sub warden.

First of all, I would like to educate you on the role and services provided by the Sub wardens. The non-academic sub wardens are **graduates** who act as care takers of the University hostels. They ensure the wellbeing of the students residing in these hostels. They ensure that the hostel canteen functions properly so that all students get food at the subsidized prices. They supervise the cleaning services to keep all the sanitary facilities and environment clean. They also ensure maintenance services to repair all the breakdowns. They take students for health care when they are sick. Recently UOR automated the entire hostel management system with their support and the ICT branch under the guidance of the Deputy Vice Chancellor. One could understand their supporting role for student education in UOR and in the entire university system.

This must be viewed in the current context of the country which faced all the calamities namely Covid 19, economic, fuel and food crises. During all these crises and difficulties UOR conducted all the education programmes online and physically, completed even the convocation for 2022 recently. These sub wardens carried fuel, gas cylinders, found fire wood and raw materials from rice to vegetables to cook and feed the students under extreme difficult conditions during the past few years especially from March 2022 to August 2022. Basically they are the people who fed the students and kept their toilets clean for them to study. Causing harm or insulting them is totally unacceptable to UOR. It is almost like harming their /our own parents. It hurts the UOR administration badly. It cannot be tolerated as normal, as the perpetrators of this heinous crimes are adult students. You are adult students who should know what is good and bad.

It is sad to openly admit that the one of such committed sub wardens looking after the Meddawatta hostel who helped us to eliminate ragging in that hostel was locked up in a room after midnight on 18.12.2022 soon after the world cup final football match ended. A group of students have started shouting and whooting in the middle of the night disturbing the students who were not interested in football and studying for their examinations in Faculty of Science. The hostel is in a busy place with a resident community in the surrounding. It is illegal to behave like this after 1000 pm in the night disturbing communities. The sub warden has advised them to stop it and then he was locked up for more than 30 minutes in a room and during this period he was not able to answer the calls from his wife. His wife contacted the proctor and proctor informed the security to rescue the sub warden. I was also informed about it around this time. The team of security officers visited the hostel and had to walk through a gathering of more than 100 students looking for the subwarden and found the room he was locked in which could not be opened without being unlocked from inside. The security team was also hurled with humiliating insulting remarks and a suggestion to remove their cloths.

Then the security team rescued him. I decided to inform the police about it as this act violates the provisions and clauses stipulated in the Act No 20 of the 1998 on prevention of ragging and violence in universities and higher education institutes.

Eleven students were identified on video and their names were submitted to police. The law enforcement authorities will deal with it now. All of us need to understand that nobody is above the law. We raise our voice against politicians when they violate law and order but refuse to accept that we are also not above the law.

I witnessed unwanted interference by the student union leaders of the FOS, and some students of the FMF who made insulting remarks to me as VC and also the proctor on 19.12.2022 This approach will complicate the matters further, as I am not a VC who could be intimidated by thuggery.

I have been sympathetic for students who are poor and supported them in every possible way at UOR. However, I found that some of these students, who were identified are from social classes of the society whom we are proud to educate as UOR and ensure that they graduate from UOR with skills and competences and will help their own families to graduate out of poverty. It is ironical to note that these students who are heavily supported by the UOR, keeping them in hostels at a cost of Rs 50/per month, doing this to staff who help their education. We as VC, academics, no-academics who are helping them to learn, eliminated ragging maintained a peaceful educational environment for learning. Yet they are so ungrateful to insult them and lock them inside the rooms to take over administration. Question would remain whether these students deserve to be graduates without any rehabilitation who would not take law into their hands as graduate employees one day.

I also note that the FMF students have not attended the learning activities today including first year students. The first year students were noted to be forced to sit down in the canteen without being allowed to attend the educational activities. This acts violates the provisions of above act No 20. If this continues, administration will be forced to ban the University for such student groups for learning until the normalcy is restored.

**I also wish to express that right thinking students cannot behave in this manner inside a university hostel. Hence, always there is a possibility, that political elements who may or may not be paid wanting to disrupt the education of young people for political gain behind these incidents. It is the colour and the shape of the incident that will help you recognize such phenomena and not hard evidence. I request all the students to be watchful and focus on their education without getting caught or trapped in someone else's political game Hence, I request all the students of UOR to think and analyze these incidents carefully.**

**Prof. Sujeewa Amarasena**

**Vice Chancellor**

**20.12.2022**