

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

The Student Bar Council of NALSAR University of Law expresses its solidarity with the graduating Batch of 2026 of the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, and records its concern regarding the events surrounding its convocation, which ultimately led to its cancellation.

The Student Bar Council stands in solidarity with the NLSIU students and, especially, the Batch of 2026, in light of the administration's decision to cancel the convocation. It is not lost upon us that these circumstances are only a result of the solidarity shown to us by NLSIU students and alumni during the BCI controversy, which also included an objection to the presence of the CJI and the BCI Chairman at their then-upcoming convocation. While we refrain from commenting on the contested versions of what led to such an impasse, it cannot be emphasised enough that a convocation marks a poignant milestone, recognising years of learning, growth, hard work, and the beginning of a new chapter in a student's life. Snatching this opportunity from students, which would have enabled them to savour this moment with family and friends, is cruel. Students had already made arrangements to attend the convocation, including arrangements for their families.

We acknowledge the statutory design of NLSIU, where the office of the Chancellor is helmed by the CJI in their ex officio capacity. Convocations are convened by the Chancellor, and degrees are conferred in their name. In this light, students had agreed to the presence of the CJI at their convocation. However, it is particularly concerning, and deserves condemnation, that students were asked to issue a public letter of 're-invitation' to the CJI — a condition added only subsequent to the said agreement. Here, we want to make it clear the actual sequence of events can only be clarified by direct stakeholders in the issue. However, it has been made clear to us that the NLSIU administration had not asked for any such public letter of 're-invitation'. Such a request, when rejected by the students, led to the unfortunate cancellation of the convocation by the administration.

In the current circumstances, especially in light of the BCI controversy, requiring students to publicly re-invite the CJI is nothing but asking them to go back on their act of dissent and forsake their principled act of solidarity. Such imposition of an onerous burden on the graduating cohort, by pushing them to choose between a lifetime event, i.e. convocation, and their right to dissent, will have only one consequence: a chilling effect on future acts of dissent and solidarity. We also want to note that if such request of a 'public letter' was made by the office of the CJI, it is

incredibly unfortunate as the office of the CJI apparently preferred creating suitable public discourse in the interest of their office over the interests of the students. We salute the principled stance of the students of the Batch of 2026 when they rejected this request and stood by their earlier act of dissent.

It is highly relevant that importance of student dissent is reflected in the observations made by none other than the CJI himself during the Supreme Court proceedings concerning the BCI's action against the NALSAR students. The Chief Justice stated that the students have the right to protest, and that if they are peacefully raising their voice, they should be allowed to do so. The Court also restrained punitive or criminal action against students and faculty in connection with the matter.

In this context, the subsequent requirement of a public statement inviting the Chief Justice, and the linking of that requirement to the holding of the convocation, is a matter of great concern. It is unclear whether this situation is solely due to any acts of commission by the NLSIU administration. However, such a situation surely points towards grave acts of omission and absence of care by the NLSIU administration towards its students. The administration, in an act of lightning speed, cancelled the convocation with an oblique reference to 'unavoidable circumstances' – failing the standards of transparency expected from a legal institution. It is apparent that other options including postponing of convocation etc., were not explored.

The Student Bar Council stands in solidarity with the students of NLSIU. We also place on record our appreciation for the manner in which the graduating Batch of 2026 and the Student Bar Association have conducted themselves throughout these events—especially under tremendous pressure, asking them to forsake their act of dissent, yet consistently standing steadfast in their solidarity with us.

Student Bar Council, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad