



YFS STATEMENT ON INDIA'S FARMERS PROTESTS

December 4, 2020

CW: SUICIDE, STATE VIOLENCE

The York Federation of Students affirms its support for all farmers across India, as well as the protests supporting them. Throughout September 2020, the Government of India passed three bills in relation to the rights of farmers. With the intent to “unshackle farmers”, as India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi states, these acts deregulate India’s agricultural industry and allow farmers to freely trade their agricultural products to private corporations at any price. This effectively eliminates guaranteed minimum prices to sell agricultural goods and government support in the case of the price falling, otherwise known as “Minimum Support Price”. The three acts are the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

With the passing of these bills, farming communities have been forced to depend on private corporations, making it easier for these companies to dominate the agricultural industry, and worsening the financial crisis for farmers. Farmers, unions, and the friends and families of these workers have gathered in solidarity in Delhi from places in India with most coming from Punjab and Haryana. These protests acknowledge that the passing of these bills will only further indebt farmers and worsen the frequent rates of suicide within their communities. The Government of India responded to these protests by attacking protestors with tear gas, water cannons, batons, and other acts of violence. As a Federation, we denounce the acts of violence being carried out against protestors by the state.

We recognize this is not the only instance farmers in India have been poorly treated by The Government of India. PM Modi and the Government of India’s response to a water crisis earlier this year was for farmers to change how they work and adjust to crops that consume less water instead of taking proactive steps to support farmers and the people of India. India’s Agricultural industry makes up a large portion of India’s GDP with approximately 16%, but despite this, 53% of agricultural households are in debt. As a result of the lack of support provided by the Government, Indian farmers have a long history of suicide with a significant number of suicides in India coming from Indian farmers.

The York Federation of Students affirms its solidarity with farmers, those impacted by suicide, and those who have been brutalized by their governments for advocating for their rights to sustainable livelihoods. We support our Indian members, those who stand in solidarity with farmers in India, and anyone being impacted at this time. If you are in need of resources, please do not hesitate to reach out to us for support.

For more information, contact YFS President Kien Azinwi at president@yfs.ca.