OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, DELHI.

No. 31 /PRO/PHQ, Delhi, dated the 02/02/2021.

To

The Chief Editor,
The Guardian

Subject: Rejoinder concerning news article 'Indian journalists face criminal charges over police shooting reports' published in 'The Guardian', dated 01.02.2021 and authored by Hannah Ellis-Peterson, South Asia correspondent.

Sir,

This refers to the captioned news item appeared in your esteemed newspaper published yesterday. It is found to be factually incorrect and misleading.

While it is assumed that senior correspondents of a leading media outlet like The Guardian know what had caused the violence and mayhem in India's National Capital on its Republic Day, the bias, tone and tenor of the subject news article makes it imperative to re-emphasize that the problems had started the moment the protestors had refused to follow the mutually agreed 'Tractor Parade' routes. Well demarcated and jointly inspected routes were worked out in consultations with the protestors so that they could organise Tractor Parades espousing their cause while causing minimum inconvenience to the general public and to ensure that the National Republic Day celebrations do not get impeded in any manner. These consultations with the leaders of the protesting factions had stretched over three-four days and each and every proceeding, leading up to the agreement on the routes, timings, maximum numbers of participants etc. are a matter of record.

However, in serious (and apparently conspiratorial) breach of all obligations mutually consented to, the protestors, converging into Delhi from three separate directions, broke the police barriers/barricades, caused serious breach of peace and indulged into rioting – openly defying the route and resorting to totally unprovoked violence using arms and armaments upon the policemen and officers, who were totally unprepared for such a massive breach of trust. The singular objective of the rioting, rampaging mob soon became reaching the New Delhi area where Republic Day function was then underway. During the entire episode, police exercised restraint and used non-lethal means of force to attempt dissuading the rioting mob from proceeding towards New Delhi, containing them wherever possible and to insist that whoever were left in the tail of the three massive processions continue on the respective agreed routes. In the process, no less than 510 police personnel of various ranks have received injuries, many of them grievous and life threatening.

However, the rioters managed to reach and enter the historic Red Fort, armed with swords, spears, knives, chains, steel rods with spikes etc. and charged police officials trying to protect the National monument, causing further injuries and damage to public and private properties.

In the same duration, scores of protestors who were trying to breach the New Delhi area, reached the ITO junction where they faced

resistance from police who were defending the then ongoing Republic Day celebrations. In this moment, a protester aimed his tractor towards well secured police barricades and as the machine hit the barrier, it tumbled and overturned, dislodging him from the driving seat and subjecting him to physical injuries which resulted in his unfortunate demise. Despite the death of a colleague protestor, many of the remaining protestors pushed on with their criminal acts. Those who had gathered at the spot forcibly took control of the body and carried it away with them along with the subject tractor. The entire episode has been recorded by the relevant CCTV and various mobile phone cameras and much of it is already available on the cyber space. The post mortem examination was conducted in a Government hospital situated in the native place of the deceased in Rampur District of State of Uttar Pradesh. Legally, the body should have been handed over to Police Station having jurisdiction for further legal action. As such, an offence amounting to destruction of evidence was caused when the rampaging crowd took away the body from the spot to a location outside Delhi. The post mortem report, prepared by a panel of doctors, mentions the cause of death as 'shock and hemorrhage as a result of ante-mortem head injury'. The post mortem examination report, coupled with a plethora of digital evidence pertaining to the spot, is sufficient to prima facie conclude and understand what had happened.

However, abandoning all journalistic ethics, trying to weave a narrative out of statements made by some persons who never cared to assist law enforcement and supplementing it with some opinions attributed to a forensic doctor who never had access to the cadaver and thus is totally a stranger to the case is nothing else but a deliberate and sinister attempt to misinform the readers and playing to the gallery, if not an outright collusion with those who had orchestrated and precipitated the violence and lawlessness in the name of a peaceful protest. The claim that some witnesses saw the decease being hit by a bullet is incorrect, unsubstantiated and speaks of the standards to which 'The Guardian' has stooped to.

It is also informed that a criminal case has been registered based on a complaint reporting circulation of factually incorrect, misleading and potentially instigative of serious breach of peace over Twitter and other social media/digital news platforms without caring to verify the facts from the concerned authorities. It need not be emphasized that repeated endorsement of such a false and malicious narrative has the potential to adversely impact law and order situation in Indian National Capital. The criminal case under reference is being investigated on the best scientific principles pursuing the applicable law of the land.

Delhi Police is committed to handling the present farmer protest with professionalism and in line with its motto that is 'Shanti, Seva, Nyaya' (Peace, Service, Justice).

Kindly take this rejoinder on record and it may be given the same digital and print space as has been bestowed upon the article under reference.

Yours faithfully,

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PRO, Delhi Police