



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

No. 555, West Cross 4th Street, K.K.Nagar, Madurai - 625 020, Tamil Nadu, India.

Mobile: 99943-68540

E.mail: hrda.india@gmail.com Web: www.hrdaindia.org

HRDA/UA/NE/MPR/05/08/2024

30/08/2024

To,

Mr. Indrajeet Kumar,
National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Deputy Registrar,
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi –110 023
Email: hrd-nhrc@nic.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: HRD Alert – Urgent Appeal for Action – Manipur – Assault of IMPACT-TV reporter Mr. Rameshchandra Singh @ RC Mangangcha by Manipur Police.

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert!

HRD Alert -India is a forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are writing to express our concern regarding the assault on a reporter of IMPACT-TV Channel by Imphal East District police, while covering a protest by the inmates of relief camp in Imphal East District.

About the Human Rights Defenders:

Mr. Rameshchandra Singh @ RC Mangangcha, is a reporter of IMPACT-TV Channel

Source of Information:

- Communication with HRDA North East Co-ordinator
- Communication with other Human Rights Defenders in the region

Perpetrators:

Sub Inspector Sh. Nikhil Singh and

Other police officials of Imphal East District

Date of Incident:

August 01, 2024

Place of Incident:

Relief Camp, inside the campus of Ideal Girls' College, Akampat, Imphal East District

Background:

Since May 2023, ethnic violence between two communities Meitei and Kuki-Zo has been taking place in the state of Manipur leading to loss of many innocent citizens' lives and injuries, arson, assault and other heinous crimes. The said communal clash is continuing 16 months after its beginning. The journalists, who cover the news of the conflict have been doing so at great personal risk to their lives.

Details of the Incident:

On August 01, 2024, about 100 inmates/internal displaced persons (IDPs) staying at the Relief Camp opened inside the campus of Ideal Girls' College, Akampat, Imphal East District held a protest rally in Imphal against the Government demanding to return to their respective homes and seeking the resettlement and rehabilitation in their native places. The said inmates were mainly from Myanmar border town Moreh and the rally was organised by the Protection of Meitei Victims, Moreh.

The Manipur Police fired tear gas at the protestors marching towards Manipur Legislative Assembly. Admit the tension, some persons among the IDPs turned aggressive and pelted stones at the police forcing the latter to unleash tear gas shells to control the situation and herd back the protestors. With the confrontation taking place close to a girls school namely Ideal Girls' School, Akampat, many students lost consciousness and were stricken with fear due to harsh action of the police as well as inhalation of tear gas and mock bomb fumes and had to be taken to hospital for further treatment.

Mr. Rameshchandra Singh @ RC Mangangcha, a reporter of IMPACT-TV Channel was assigned for coverage of the said incident. The Police personnel fired mock bomb and tear gas shells to the rally of IDPs to disperse them when he reached at the spot near Singjamei Bridge at about 11.30 am. Then, one police personnel asked him whether he was from the press when they saw him covering the incident by using his

mobile phone camera. Then Mr. Rameshchandra Singh replied that he is a journalist and thereby showed his identity card. However, one Police Officer/Sub-Inspector Sub Inspector Sh. Nikhil Singh rushed him and broken his mobile by throwing it on the road and started mercilessly assaulted the reporter with tear gas gun without hearing his repeated request/clarification. Mr. Rameshchandra Singh was brought to the Raj Medicity, a private hospital for treatment.

At 3 PM on August 01, 2024, the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) held a meeting and condemned the act of the Manipur Police and thereafter, conducted a protest rally in the evening at about 5.00 pm and thereby, the AMWJU and Editors Guild Manipur submitted a representation to the Chief Minister of Manipur demanding to conduct inquiry commission for impartial investigation and to take prompt action against errant police officer within 48 hours and protection measures of journalists and published these actions in media.

On August 03, 2024, the Superintendent of Imphal East Police K. Meghachandra Singh suspended Sub Inspector Sh. Nikhil Singh of CDO/IE for his grave misconduct. On 5th August 2024, Indian Journalist Union condemned and protested against the police.

HRDA is deeply concerned with the assault on journalist Mr. Rameshchandra Singh @ RC Mangangcha by the Manipur police.

This amounts to violation of multiple Constitutional rights that include freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a), freedom of assembly (Article 19(1)(b), freedom to carry his profession as a human rights activist (Article 19(1)(g) and right to life and liberty (Article 21) without any fear of intimidation and harassment.

The Right to exercise freedom of Speech and Expression is enshrined under Article 19(a) of the Indian Constitution.

- 1) The right to hold opinions without interference,
- 2) The right to access to information and
- 3) The right to impart information and ideas of all kind.

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1999 also seeks to protect the monitoring and advocacy functions of defenders by recognizing their right to obtain and disseminate information relevant to the enjoyment of human rights. According to

Article 11 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1999 *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise their freedom of association and assembly”.*

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1999 states the following: Article 12 (2) and (3) *"The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms."*

Journalists are the 4th essential pillar of a democracy and if journalists are attacked for reporting news and protests then the essence of democracy will be in danger.

Appeal:

We urge the Hon'ble Commission to take cognisance of the above case and urgently:

- Direct the Director General of police of Manipur to initiate a transparent, independent inquiry and submit the report to NHRC.
- Issue adequate compensation to the HRD for the further medical treatment and for causing physical injuries and mental trauma.
- Direct the Director General of the Police of Manipur to ensure the safety of journalists in the state

We hope to hear from you soon,

Yours Sincerely,



(Henri Tiphagne)

National Working Secretary