



General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 June 2021

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-seventh session

21 June–9 July 2021

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by World Barua Organization (WBO), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Freedom of Opinion and Expression is not Anti-National.

Freedom of Opinion and Expression is fundamental to any democratic nation. It is the responsibility of all states to promote and protect these rights by eliminating all the hurdles. Some states, though being members of esteemed council, consider that politically opposite or mismatching views are a threat to national unity. Madam Rapporteur, India is one such state. India is becoming more and more intolerant to the internal criticism and political opposition. It is harsh towards political opponents and especially against those belonging to indigenous communities, scheduled castes and religious minorities.

In India marginalised community has lost its fundamental right of Freedom of Opinion and Expression. Though enshrined in the Constitution of India in Article 19 this right is denied to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and religious minorities in India.

On one hand the communities are subjected to the online and offline hate speeches on the other hand the government is suppressing the right of free speech and expression of the members from the exploited communities. In a very recent case from the state of Manipur, the Human Rights Defenders were arrested in the month of May this year.

The journalist and a social activist, were arrested on May 13 for their social media posts that took a jibe at cow dung and cow urine being offered as a cure for coronavirus, and were booked under the National Security Act “within minutes” of securing bail.

One of them, Mr. Kishorechandra Wangkhem had been “targeted” repeatedly in the past three years because arrests and intimidations have not deterred him from expressing his opinions freely on social media. Wangkhem, who is associated with news portal Frontier Manipur, was arrested in November 2018 under the National Security Act for posting a video on social media criticising the BJP-led (a political party also in majority in central government) state government . He had also faced sedition charges then.

He was released in April 2019, after the Manipur High Court quashed all charges against him.

He was, however, rearrested in October last year, and booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code including sedition, for a post criticising the state’s titular king, Sanajaoba Leishemba, after he became a BJP Rajya Sabha MP.

In a recent arrest it is important to note that Wangkhem and Leichombam were granted bail by Imphal’s Chief Judicial Magistrate Y. Somorjit Singh on 17 May, However they were soon rearrested as the state government invoked the National Security Act against them.

This excessive use of sedition and administrative laws has become very usual for the central government which is supported by fundamentalist forces. The human rights defenders from marginalised communities are mostly at the receiving end.

Madam Rapporteur, we request you to urge India to release Kishorechandra Wangkhem and Erendro Leichombam immediately and free them from draconian administrative law, National Security Act. We also request you to urge India to not to harass human rights defenders from marginalised communities for expressing their opinions.