

India: Uphold the right to protest and immediately release the students and teachers of Manipur University

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 8 October 2018) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) condemns the suspension of ten professors, and the arbitrary arrest of six professors and 16 students protesting against the financial irregularities and administrative mismanagement in the Manipur University. They were arrested for charges such as 'confinement,' 'attempt to murder,' 'kidnapping' and 'criminal conspiracy,' which FORUM-ASIA believes to be false and urges the immediate release of the arrested professors and students.

Over 90 students and six teachers were detained by Manipur police at the midnight of 20 September 2018 during a raid in Manipur University. Using excessive force and regressive tactics, the police fired tear gas shells, rubber bullets and carried out violent attacks that injured at least 10 students. The incident happened on the same day when Professor K. Yugindro Singh, the newly appointed vice-chancellor of the University, filed a complaint alleging that the students had threatened and manhandled him. During the raid, nobody including the media was allowed to enter the campus, and nobody from the campus was allowed to go out.

Following the raid, the Manipur Government banned all the mobile internet connection in the state for six days. This was the fourth time that the internet had been shut down by the local authorities in Manipur since 2015.

It has also been reported that armed security personnel have set up additional camps inside the University, which violates the sanctity and autonomy of the University. It is depressing of the Manipur Government to create a state of terror and harassment in the campus. The protest has continued and dozens of female students had staged a hunger strike since 24 September, demanding the release of the arrested teachers and students. More than 20 hunger strikers were admitted to the hospital in the past week.

Manipur University has experienced unrest for the past three months as students and teachers had been demanding the removal of the then vice-chancellor Professor Adya Prasad Pandey who is currently suspended for his alleged misuse of authority. Before his suspension, Pandey appointed Yugindro Singh as vice-chancellor, which had been objected by the students' union and the teachers' association. The long-running turmoil has paralysed the campus and disturbed students' routine academic schedule, which FORUM-ASIA is deeply concerned with.

The violent measures taken against the students and teachers of Manipur University by the local authorities amount to a grave violation of their fundamental right to protest, which also contradicts the Constitution of India. Furthermore, such excessive use of force is not aligned with the principle of

'legality, precaution, necessity, proportionality and accountability,' as suggested by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs.¹

Being a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and a member of the international community, the Government of India must commit itself to its obligations and guarantee an enabling environment for democracy and human rights.

FORUM-ASIA strongly urges the Government of India to immediately and unconditionally release the arrested students and teachers of Manipur University, and take effective actions to settle the dispute. FORUM-ASIA further calls for the National Human Rights Commission to investigate the incident and hold the law enforcement officials accountable.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

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¹ [Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies](#)