



India: Demilitarise educational institutions in the state of Manipur

(Kathmandu/Bangkok, 6 November, 2019) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and its member in Manipur, Human Rights Alert (HRA), are deeply concerned over the deployment of Central Paramilitary Forces and the Indian Army to Manipur, and the militarisation of educational institutions.

The increased presence of the military in the already militarised State is seriously alarming. It is causing panic and security concerns with the local population.

Manipur is a highly militarised zone due to the armed conflict, which has been going for many decades now. A number of draconian laws, such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 authorises armed forces to exercise lethal force and grants virtual immunity from accountability. In addition to Manipur, these laws also apply to North East India and Kashmir.

Over a year ago, the Supreme Court of India tasked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to expedite its inquiry into several cases out of the 1,528 cases of alleged extra-judicial killings by security forces in Manipur¹. The CBI's inaction, despite repeated orders from the Supreme Court, calls into question its impartiality and transparency.

Paramilitary Forces are reportedly occupying educational institutions, including Dhanamanjuri University, Modern College and Maharaja Bodhchandra College. This is in addition to the deployment of troops inside the Manipur University over the last 30 years. It is highly alarming that the local administration has once again authorised the stationing of armed forces in educational institutions and on other public premises.

In September 2010, the Supreme Court directed the Indian Army and paramilitary forces to vacate all schools and hostels of educational institutions. In 2014, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child urged the Government of India to abide by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, on this matter.

¹ Even though more than 50 Manipur police personnel have been indicted and prosecuted for the same crime of cool blooded murder of civilians.

One of the recommendations of the UN Committee urged the Government to ‘take all necessary measures to prevent the occupation and use of as well as attacks on places with a significant presence of children, such as schools, in line with international humanitarian law’. Another recommendation urged the Government ‘to ensure that schools are vacated expeditiously as appropriate; and to take concrete measures to ensure that cases of unlawful attacks on and/or occupation of schools are promptly investigated; and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.’²

The militarisation of educational institutions is a blatant violation of: the Constitution of India; India’s international commitment to human rights in general and the rights of the child in particular; and core values of democracy. FORUM-ASIA and Human Rights Alert express their deep regret at this unfortunate development and urge the Government of India and local authorities in Manipur to:

1. Take urgent action to comply with the Supreme Court’s directives, and recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child,
2. Immediately revoke the orders that permit paramilitary and armed forces to station inside educational institutions,
3. Initiate legal actions against the authorities, who ordered the deployment of the paramilitary and armed forces inside educational institutions, and
4. Respect human rights standards and international humanitarian law in all its counter- insurgency and terrorism measures.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 81 member organisations in 21 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.

For further information, please contact:

- South Asia Programme, FORUM-ASIA, sasia@forum-asia.org

² Concluding observations on the report submitted by India under article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, CRC/C/OPAC/IND/CO/1, July 7, 2014, paras. 28-29.