

## **[Statement] India: Protect Manipur Human Rights Defender Babloo Loitongbam**

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 12 October 2023) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the reprehensible attack on the home of Babloo Loitongbam, a prominent human rights defender and lawyer from Manipur, India.

On 5 October 2023, Babloo's residence was [attacked](#) by members affiliated with the militant groups Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol. The incident occurred hours after Babloo—alongside former Manipur Police Services officer Thounaojam Brinda—received [threats](#) from them. Babloo and Brinda, who are both Meiteis, were accused of [defaming](#) the Meitei community. The groups demanded they remain silent and refrain from giving interviews regarding the ongoing inter-communal violence in Manipur that began in May 2023. Such actions are a grave violation of freedom of expression and free speech.

An unwavering advocate of justice and equality, Babloo serves as the director of Human Rights Alert, an organisation which monitors the human rights situation in the northeastern region of India.

'FORUM-ASIA is seriously alarmed by the threats and attacks targeting Babloo Loitongbam and other human rights defenders in Manipur, a region plagued by ongoing ethnic violence and human rights violations. These assaults not only undermine democratic principles but represent a serious breach of India's obligations to protect human rights defenders, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The government must fully uphold its commitment to protect the rights of defenders and actively work towards resolving the conflict in Manipur, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard,' said Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

This violent attack was triggered by Babloo's statement in an [interview](#) in May, where he addressed the escalating violence in Manipur, voiced his apprehensions regarding the involvement of radical organisations, and demanded accountability for their role in the ongoing conflict.

FORUM-ASIA urges the Government of India and the respective authorities in Manipur to take immediate and decisive action to investigate the threats and attacks made against Babloo. We call on the government to swiftly implement all necessary measures to ensure the safety of Babloo and his family. We reiterate our unwavering solidarity with Babloo and all human rights defenders in Manipur. The harassment of human rights defenders is an assault on the fundamental principles of democracy, justice, and human rights. This should neither be tolerated nor left unaddressed.

## **About FORUM-ASIA:**

**The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)** is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)

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