

To,
Ms. Margaret Sekaggya
UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,
Country Visit: India (January 10-21, 2011)
Camp: Guwahati, Assam, India
Date: 14-01-2011

Subject: General Information on the situation of Indigenous Peoples' human rights defenders in the North East India.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

Greetings! Namaskar! Gwjwnthwng!

Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples North East Zone, a zonal chapter of the national umbrella organization of over 310 Members organizations of various indigenous and tribal communities of India would like to thank you for your under taking of this historic country visit to India and would like to extend our hearty welcome to you for your mission as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

Respected Madam, for your kind information, presently India is a home of over 100 millions Indigenous Peoples categorized as *Scheduled Tribes* who are otherwise known as *Adivasis*. Out of these, there are 212 different tribes in the entire seven sisters states of North Eastern region who are Indigenous Peoples constituting 26.93% out of the total population of 38,444,026 (2001 Census Report). Each and every tribe, they have their own unique village systems, customary laws, traditions, dialects or language, faiths, culture, economic, social and community governance systems. All the ethnic tribes have their own civil society known as apex bodies who espouse for their concerned issues, including defending their human rights. Established in 1987, Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP) is an umbrella organization net working for solidarity, lobby and advocacy amongst various Indigenous Peoples' civil societies in the country on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and we are the pioneer in espousing the IPs issues in international level since 1987 participating regularly in the various relevant UN meetings including regular sessions of UNWGIP, UNWGDD, UNPFII, UNCBD working for improving the situations of Human Rights of the Indigenous peoples including Human Rights defenders.

Having long experiences working in the field for more than 23 years in the country, we would like to bring the following points for your kind attentions and follow up actions.

As elsewhere in the country, the overall situations of the human rights defenders in the North eastern India, particularly with the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights defenders is not satisfactory as compared to other parts of the country and safe as we have been facing regular confrontations with the state authorities, intimidations, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detentions, torture, threats to life and properties, harassment to family members, deprivation from economic developments. In the first place, we are normally looked down as the antinational, anti-development and labeled as pro-militancy by the state authority and therefore we are front to be victims of suppression and atrocities. For example, for no fault of mine and because I am a human Rights defender belonging to Boro Indigenous People of Assam, I was arbitrarily arrested on 10th of June 1994, tortured inhumanly and unlawfully detained under TADA act and was enlarged on bail after 71 days of detention. Same way, Indigenous noted human rights defender friends like Ms. Anjali Daimary from Assam, Mr. Hebol Kholoi from Tripura, Mr. Uma Kanta Meitei and Mr. Jiten Yumnam from Manipur had to suffered a lot due to arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention and tortures in the region in recent times.

Therefore, we from ICITP-NEZ would like to recommend the followings to improve the situations of the human rights defenders in particular and human rights of Indigenous peoples as a whole in the region:

1. Intervene with the government of India to ensure the safety and security of life and properties of the Human Rights defenders in the country;
2. To stop the labeling of human rights defenders as anti-national and anti-national development leading to discriminations , arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, torture and extrajudicial killings in the country;
3. To recommend to withdraw the AFSPA (1958) from the North Eastern region;
4. To ensure to implement the UNDRIP (2007) in India;
5. To recommend to ratify the ILO Convention 169 for improving the situation of Indigenous Peoples and their Human Rights defenders.

Thank you Madam Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights defenders for your kind attention.

Sincerely yours,

Jebra Ram Muchahary
President, ICITP-NEZ
14-01-2011.