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Bangladesh: Indigenous land rights defender Ringrong Mro arbitrarily detained in Bandarban District Jail on trumped-up charges

On 23 February 2025, indigenous land rights defender **Ringrong Mro** was arbitrarily detained in Bandarban District Jail following his arrest on 22 February 2025, on the basis of a case filed by Lama Rubber Industries Limited in 2022, which local activists and indigenous defenders say is a strategy to criminalise work in defence of ancestral land.

[Ringrong Mro](#) is a prominent indigenous leader and human rights defender from the Mro community in Lama Upazila, Bandarban. He has been at the forefront of grassroots efforts to protect indigenous lands and the environment, particularly against illegal encroachment by corporate interests. His human rights work focuses on land grabbing by companies such as Lama Rubber Industries Limited, which has been accused by the local indigenous communities of forcibly occupying the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples.

As a vocal advocate for the rights of the Mro community, Ringrong Mro has faced significant risks, including threats, harassment, and judicial persecution. His work has been crucial in raising awareness of land dispossession and environmental degradation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, an area long marred by land conflicts affecting indigenous communities.

On the evening of 22 February 2025, Ringrong Mro was arbitrarily arrested by plainclothes Lama police, without an arrest warrant, in Langkam Para, Sarai Union in Lama Upazila, Bandarban District. His arrest sparked widespread condemnation from human rights organizations and indigenous rights groups, leading to mass protests in Dhaka and calls for his immediate release.

Previously, Ringrong Mro was arrested on 14 August 2022 after Lama Rubber Industries Limited filed a case against him and ten other community members for unlawful assembly and mischief by fire or explosive substance under Section 435 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, a charge that carries a penalty of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine.

According to locals, these arrests are part of a broader crackdown on indigenous land rights defenders, particularly those protecting 400 acres of ancestral land from reported illegal occupation by the rubber company. In 1992, Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. was granted a lease by the Bandarban Hill District Council for rubber cultivation. Since then, the company has been accused by local communities of illegal land-grabbing activities and torching the homes of the Mro and Tripura communities.

This case highlights the systemic risks faced by indigenous activists in Bangladesh, especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where land-related conflicts persist.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest without a warrant and the legal harassment of indigenous land rights defender Ringrong Mro for his legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Ringrong Mro and drop all charges against him, as these actions appear to be solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defense of human rights;

2. Ensure the protection, both physical and psychological, of Ringrong Mro while he remains in custody, as well as that of all indigenous human rights defenders in Bangladesh;
3. Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into land grabbing practices, enforce corporate accountability, and strengthen legal safeguards for indigenous land rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts;
4. Guarantee that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh, especially those from the Mro and Tripura communities, are able to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free from judicial harassment.

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