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### India: Human Rights Defender Babloo Loitongbam's house vandalized in Manipur

On 5 October 2023, human rights defender **Babloo Loitongbam's** residence in Manipur, India was vandalized by unidentified perpetrators. Hours prior to the attack Babloo Loitongbam was threatened by a militant group named 'Meitei Leepun' who called for the human rights defender to be boycotted. The attack is linked to the human rights defenders statements against the ongoing violence in the State of Manipur, which call for accountability for perpetrators and an end to human rights violations. Babloo Loitongbam has been critical of the BJP led state government in its role and response to the violence.

Babloo Loitongbam is a human rights defender and a lawyer based in Mainpur, India and the director of Human Rights Alert, an organization that works to monitor, investigate, and report human right violations, including attacks on human rights defenders. He has been a valuable source of support to victims of persecution and human rights defenders facing reprisals for their work. The human rights defender is a vocal advocate against state policies that violate, and discriminate against, the rights of local communities in Manipur and other North Eastern states.

On 5 October 2023, Babloo Loitongbam's residence in Imphal West, Manipur was [vandalized](#) by a mob, who damaged property and belongings. A few hours before his house was vandalized, members of the Meiti Leepun group called for a [boycott](#) of human rights defender Babloo Loitongbam from public platforms, and claimed that the allegations he made against them were false and baseless.

Manipur has been witnessing devastating ethnic violence since the beginning of May 2023, followed by an order of the Manipur High Court to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the state's dominant Meiti community, allowing them to access affirmative action, a scheme which is reserved for India's tribal and indigenous communities. The court ruling resulted in protests from the state's tribal Kuki-Zo communities and counter-protests from the Meiti community, rapidly escalating into violence that continues today. Internet services have been largely suspended in Manipur while central and state governments have done little to contain the violence, often contributing to existing tensions between the two groups and targeting human rights defenders and journalists for highlighting the human rights violations in the state.

Since the outbreak of the violence, Babloo Loitongbam's has [spoken publicly](#) about the emergence of certain groups such as Meiti Leepun in the state, comparing them to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is the ideological arm of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He spoke about the increasing far-right ideology being instilled in the Meitei community by these groups, and about how they have been responsible for attacks against minority communities, including the dismantling of churches across the state, since the violence began. He also publicly demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Biren Singh for not taking adequate actions to contain the violence in the state.

Front Line Defenders condemns the targeting of Babloo Loitongbam which it considers to be an act of reprisal against the human rights defender's legitimate right to expression and his

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human rights work. Front Line Defenders is also concerned about the scale of violence in Manipur and the consistent attacks against human rights defenders, activists and journalists in the region. During a critical emergency such as the one underway in Manipur, the role of human rights defenders is even more crucial in order to ensure peace, justice and security for citizens, and to document incidents of human rights violations.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:**

1. Immediately ensure the safety and well-being of human rights defender Babloo Loitongbam, including providing him with adequate compensation for the damages to his property;
2. Initiate an immediate and impartial inquiry into the destruction of his property, with a view to bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with international human rights standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Manipur are able to continue their legitimate human rights work free from fear of reprisals.