

United Nations shows serious concern of the cancellation of FCRA of Manipur's NGOs

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Imphal, October 09 2018: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in its annual report has showed its serious concern over the cancellation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) of the non-governmental organizations in India who seek to cooperate with the United Nations.

The Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General is produced here below: .

"On 9 November 2017 two special procedures mandate holders expressed concern at the use of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act of 2010 to restrict the work of non-governmental organizations who seek to cooperate with the United Nations, for example, by refusing to renew or grant licenses.

"They drew attention to the revocation of the license of the Centre for Promotion of Social Concern (also known as People's Watch) under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, which was also addressed by three special procedures mandate holders on 31 May 2018 (IND 14/2018). On 29 October 2016 the Ministry of Home Affairs reportedly refused to renew the organization's license to receive foreign funding under Article 6 of the FCRA and CPSC's bank accounts were frozen.

The refusal was subsequently upheld by the High Court of New Delhi in January 2017 .

The case is still pending before the court following a April 2018 hearing, and has been adjourned to 31 August 2018 .

"The Executive Director of the Centre for Promotion of Social Concern, Mr. Henri Tiphagne was accused of using foreign contributions in his international advocacy "to the detriment of India's image," including in his engagement with United Nations special rapporteurs to whom he submitted information "portraying India's human rights record in negative light" .

Mr. Tiphagne has also made recommendations to the universal periodic review.

The special procedures mandate holders noted that the non-renewal of CPSC's license is a clear case of reprisal for his cooperation with the United Nations .

"Additionally, on 1 January 2018, it was reported that the Centre for Social Development, which promotes the land and resource rights of indigenous peoples in Manipur, received a six months suspension.

According to reports, the suspension was based on claims that the Centre for Social Development violated the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act by using foreign funding for purposes other than intended by the law, including drawing attention to Uranium mining in Meghalaya at "several global platforms" .

The Centre for Social Development submitted a report in October 2017 to the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights and to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which included inquiries related to uranium mining and cement factories in Meghalaya.

According to the Centre for Social Development, it has submitted nine reports to the United Nations since 2006 concerning violations of the rights of indigenous peoples in northeast India in relation to large-scale development projects, mining operations, and implementation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

They have requested the Committee's action under its early warning procedure.

"It is alleged that the Centre for Social Development has been targeted by Indian authorities since August 2017, when surveillance of its premises and staff's movements began.

The offices of the organization were reportedly visited by the Central Reserve Police Force and others to question the staff about their work, and staff have been harassed.

One staff member was physically attacked on 18 August 2017 .

In November 2017, one staff member and two volunteers of the organization were called in for questioning by the police.

"The Secretary of the Centre for Social Development, Mr.Nobokishore Urikhimbam, has been surveyed by military intelligence officials from the State of Manipur as well as those outside of the state at his office premises and at his home in Imphal, Manipur.

When he travelled to Shillong, State of Meghalaya in January 2018, the Intelligence Department of Meghalaya contacted the hotel and interrogated its staff about his actions and contacts.

The hotel staff was asked to provide detailed information on his activities, including a list of the people he interacted with.

These incidents were reportedly brought to the attention of the Superintendent of Police, Imphal East District and Patsoi Police Station, Imphal West District, to no avail" .