

\\Press Release\\

Hyderabad/New Delhi, 3 December 2018: The Indian Journalists Union (IJU) has strongly condemned the Manipur government for grossly misusing the draconian National Security Act (NSA) to silence criticism. Making a note of the detention of a ‘journalist’ Kishorechandra Wangkhem, under the Act in Imphal on 27 November for expressing his views against the leaders of ruling party at the Centre and the State in a Facebook post, the IJU said the detention violated the freedom of expression guaranteed under the Constitution and worse it was a blatant use of misuse of the NSA by the authorities.

Criticising the detention order, which stated that Wangkhem was arrested “with a view to prevent him from acting in any matter prejudicial to the security of the state and to the maintenance of public order”, the IJU said the State authorities were setting a wrong precedent and sending a terse message across to all that dissent would not be tolerated.

In a statement, the IJU President and Press Council of India (PCI) member Amar Devulapalli and Secretary General Sabina Inderjit said the detention of Wangkhem must be seen as an attack on the freedom of expression and most undemocratic. The detention, they added, was all the more objectionable after he was set free by the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Manipur (West) district a few days earlier quashing charge of sedition slapped on him.

Wangkhem was arrested on charges of sedition and for inciting hatred and defamation on 21 November. The magistrate in his release on 25 November said “In giving the speech, the accused person transgressed beyond decent human conduct but it cannot be termed seditious.” The court noted that “The government, especially its functionary like prime minister cannot be so sensitive as to take offence upon expression of opinions by its citizen, which may be given very nicely by using proper words or indecently by using some vulgar terms.”

The IJU statement said “While we do not approve the vulgar and indecent terms used by Wangkhem against the highest functionaries of Central and State governments, we want to point out that the freedom expression includes the right to offend. The IJU advises journalists not to use indecent and vulgar language in their comments and social media postings critical of those in power because harshest criticism couched in polite words is always more effective. ”

The IJU demanded the government to immediately revoke the detention order under NSA and ensure unconditional release of Wangkhem as his liberty would not in any way be prejudicial to the security of the state and to the maintenance of public order.

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(Y Narender Reddy)
Secretary