

## Indigenous Groups Condemn Police Atrocities, Demand Justice and Constitutional Safeguards



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Indigenous leaders of Assam have strongly condemned what they described as "barbaric atrocities" by Assam Police on members of the Koch-Rajbanshi community at Golokganj in Dhubri district on September 10. They demanded an impartial judicial inquiry and strict action against the culprits, urging the state to ensure that such incidents are not repeated when communities raise their democratic rights.

At the same press conference, the leaders also expressed outrage over the detention of Bhanu Tatak — a young activist and legal advisor of the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum — at Delhi's international airport on September 7. Tatak, who had been invited to Dublin City University in Ireland for a three-month program beginning September 9, was subjected to prolonged questioning and barred from boarding her flight despite valid documents. The leaders demanded clarification from the Government of India and safeguards to prevent such treatment of Northeast's indigenous representatives.

Tracing historical grievances back to the 1826 Yandaboo Treaty, which brought Assam under British rule, the forum said that despite independence in 1947, the indigenous peoples of the Northeast continue to suffer displacement, economic marginalization, and cultural erosion due to immigration, neglect, and divisive policies.

To address these issues, the organization placed a **10-point charter of demands** before the Centre and the state, including:

- Recognizing February 24, 1826, as the constitutional base year for defining indigenous people of Assam and the Northeast.
- Formation of a separate ministry for indigenous ethnic communities.
- Granting autonomous statehood and creating legislative councils to ensure dignity in governance.
- Extending the Inner Line Permit system across all eight Northeast states.

- Revising the cut-off year for identifying foreign citizens in Assam from 1971 to 1951.
- Official recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).
- Promotion and official status for indigenous languages under UNESCO's International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-32).
- Inclusion of Koch-Rajbanshi, Tai, Karbi, Mishing, Dimasa, Rabha, Deori, Hajong, Kuki, Bodo, Rengma, Garo, Tiwa, Kamrupiya, and Mar languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Declaring Assam a tribal state under the Sixth Schedule.

The statement was signed by **Khagendrajit Thakuria**, President in Charge, and **Anup Arandhara**, Secretary General.

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