

## Karbi Leader Detained for Demanding Eviction of 'Illegal Settlers'



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In a move that has sparked anger and unease, police in Diphu have detained Karbi youth leader and social activist Lichong Rongphar for spearheading protests demanding eviction of alleged illegal settlers from VGR (Village Grazing Reserve) and PGR (Professional Grazing Reserve) lands in Karbi Anglong.

The irony is stark: while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's government is carrying out aggressive eviction drives in the plains—Lakhimpur, Dhubri, Goalpara and Uriamghat—similar demands raised in Karbi Anglong are being met with police crackdowns instead of action.

Rongphar had been leading a series of mass protests, insisting that Bengali and Bihari settlers occupying VGR and PGR lands be removed. He and allied organizations were even verifying land records of non-tribal residents in Howraghat's Rongkut area, while pressing for cancellation of pattas issued to non-tribals. His arrest has triggered widespread resentment, with fears of public unrest looming large.

This is not the first time police have swooped down on voices challenging questionable land allotments. Earlier, a youth from Dima Hasao who filed a petition against the allotment of 3,000 bighas to a cement company was also briefly detained before public protests forced his release.

Critics say the government's double standards are clear: eviction drives are swift and harsh in the plains, but when Karbi organizations demand similar action in their homeland, the campaign is suddenly silenced. The arrest of Lichong Rongphar is now being seen not just as a law-and-order move, but as a suppression of indigenous rights struggles in Karbi Anglong.

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Assam Times Staff. [editor@assamtimes.org](mailto:editor@assamtimes.org)

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