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### PUBLIC STATEMENT

#### *India: Amnesty International condemns arrest of human rights defenders in Manipur*

*Amnesty International expressed grave concern at actions taken by security forces in Manipur this weekend to derail a planned programme of peaceful protest and called for the immediate release of arrested protesters.*

*According to reliable reports, police cordoned off a hall in the capital, Imphal, where a meeting was to be held on November 27 to protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. They arrested two volunteers of the Committee Against Atrocities on Civilians (CAAC), Mr Kangjam Tombi and Mr Pukhrambam Brogen, who were at the hall preparing for the meeting.*

*The previous day, two CAAC volunteers were arrested while they were distributing badges and pamphlets and were later denied bail. The committee had been formed after 10 civilians had been shot dead by the security forces in October.*

*“We are shocked by reports that senior police officials have told human rights activists that it is ‘anti-national’ to peacefully challenge any law upheld by the Supreme Court of India. This makes a mockery of the concept of freedom of expression,” Amnesty International said.*

*“Human rights defenders must be permitted to carry out peaceful protests without fear of harassment or arrest. We call upon the police to immediately release the four arrested men, whom we regard as prisoners of conscience,” the human rights organisation added.*

*Peaceful protests are reported to have been carried out by human rights activists without interference by the security forces in Assam and West Bengal on the same day.*

### **Note to Editors**

*The date 27 November marks the second anniversary of a Supreme Court judgement upholding the constitutionality of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, a law in force in large parts of north-eastern India. This law confers broadly defined powers on security forces to arrest and shoot suspected members of armed groups.*

*The law has been criticised on successive occasions by members of the United Nations Human Rights Committee for violating articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a state party. Amnesty International believes that this law has fostered a climate in which the agents of law enforcement are able to use excessive force with impunity.*

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*For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London,*

*UK, on 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>*