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## ARWO Urges Assam Government to Safeguard Rengma Naga Ancestral Land Rights

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The All Rengma Welfare Organisation (ARWO) Assam–Nagaland has called on the Assam government to take concrete steps toward recognizing and restoring the traditional rights of the Rengma Naga community over their ancestral lands. The appeal follows the recent

eviction of illegal settlers from the Rengma Reserve Forest under Uriamghat in Golaghat district, an action the group described as both lawful and necessary.

In a statement issued Friday, ARWO expressed its “heartfelt appreciation” to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for what it called decisive action to protect indigenous rights and preserve forest land. The organization urged the state government to continue such measures and to put in place permanent safeguards to prevent future encroachments.

ARWO President Akhu Kath and member Tegibu Tep said the eviction represented a “significant step toward restoring justice, law and order, and long-standing indigenous rights in the region.” They also credited Sarma for demonstrating political will and administrative clarity in addressing illegal migration, an issue they argue has adversely affected the socio-political landscape of Assam, Nagaland, and other northeastern states.

The Rengma Reserve Forest, the organization noted, has suffered from widespread encroachment in recent decades. Beyond its ecological value, the land holds deep ancestral, historical, and cultural significance for the Rengma Naga people, one of the oldest indigenous communities in the region. According to ARWO, the territory forms part of the tribe’s traditional homeland, predating modern administrative boundaries and political developments.

The group emphasized that the forest’s preservation is essential not only for environmental conservation but also for safeguarding the cultural heritage and identity of the Rengma Naga tribe. It called for permanent protective measures that would ensure both ecological integrity and indigenous ownership are maintained for future generations.

ARWO also extended thanks to civil society groups, youth organizations, Naga political bodies, and Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio for their proactive efforts in protecting the state’s borders and supporting the eviction operation.

The appeal underscores growing calls from indigenous organizations in the Northeast for stronger enforcement of land protection laws, with the Rengma case seen as a key example of aligning environmental preservation with the defense of traditional rights.