The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was put into place to combat insurgencies in the Seven Sister States of India. This Act has allowed oppression and violations of human rights in Northeast India since 1958. Mr. Leichombam will share historical background about one state in particular, Manipur, as well as updates on the current situation, in which Indian military personnel have complete legal impunity to arrest anybody on suspicion without warrant, to shoot on suspicion, to enter and search any premises on suspicion. Mr. Leichombam will discuss the racial and economic discriminations which people of Manipur face, and will explore the sociopsychological effects of living in a society with widespread corruption and violence. Mr. Leichombam contends “The unjust, unconstitutional handling of the region has perpetuated and worsened the divide between Manipur and India. The struggle to repeal this law AFSPA has been followed through the Indian Judicial system to prove it unconstitutional and in violation of basic human rights, but the Supreme Court and the parliamentarian attitude towards the law has eluded the issue further. It is time to truly understand the reality on the ground and build an advocacy movement to repeal AFSPA and support the people of Manipur.”

Erendro Leichombam was a World Bank Fellow at John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, where he obtained his Master's in Public Administration in International Development. His research interests include the Political Economy of the Northeast Region of India (NER). Mr. Leichombam was born and raised in Manipur, and has worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN affiliated nonprofit organizations in India as a consultant. In 2011, he was elected as the President of The Harvard India Caucus, and in March 2012 he founded The Manipur International Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Sponsored by the University of Chicago Human Rights Program and the Committee on Southern Asian Studies. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Sarah Patton Moberg at spmoberg@uchicago.edu.