Know The Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Act, 2018

In a patriarchal society, the unequal power relation between men and women puts women in a disadvantageous position in which violence is used as a tool to dominate and keep them under control. Witch hunting is one such tool. Witch hunting is beyond superstition and illiteracy and is not limited to caste, tribe, religion or language. Women are majority targets although a few men have been accused as witches too.

Women have been blamed for personal tragedies, sickness, crop loss and deaths. Self proclaimed Bej or Ojas i.e., witch doctors enjoy impunity endorsed by their community and they see this labelling as a solution to many problems faced by the community. Tikker, dahinir, ramini, bateloga, dainagorh, daini, dayan, chippi, jokhini are different names given to women who are labeled as witches. Witch hunting not only affects an individual but also the kith and kin of the targeted person. It is a gender based crime against women that violates her right to a life of safety and dignity. It is used as a tool by which conflicts, tensions and jealousies are used to restore status quo swiftly and absolutely in a manner that evokes little or no opposition or intervention from the community. Even state authorities mandated to protect people remain mute spectators.

On July 19, 2021, government informed the State Legislative Assembly that a total of 100 witch hunting cases have been registered in Assam between January 1, 2010 to June 30, 2021. Accurate or gender segregated data is not available.