

Thingkho Le Maleha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



AWAITING JUSTICE



JAMKHOGIN BAITE (36 yrs)

S/O THANGBUL BAITE
ADDRESS: B GOSHEN VENG, LAMKA DISTRICT
DATE OF DEATH: 4TH MAY, 2023
PLACE OF DEATH: LAMKA
CAUSE OF DEATH: SHOT DEAD



KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 01.05.2024



185
DEATHS



200+
VILLAGES BURNT



7000+
HOUSES BURNT



360+
CHURCHES &
SYNAGOGUES BURNT



41,425+
DISPLACED
PERSONS

Thingkho Le Malcha (charred wood tied with chilli): A war symbol; a pre-arranged secret code agreed upon by the Kukis to inform the people about the commencement of war and on receiving this, one has to remain alert and be ready for the battle.

KANGPOKPI POLICE PERSONNEL BRUTALLY ASSAULTED BY ARMED ARAMBAI TENGGOL; CO TU DECLARES 24-HOURS TOTAL SHUTDOWN

Barely two days after security forces rescued a CRPF jawan from the clutches of death at the hands of the Arambai Tenggol who waylaid and apprehended the jawan, four police personnel stationed at Kangpokpi Police were abducted along the National Highway 2 at Koirengei in Imphal East and brutally assaulted by armed cadres of the Arambai Tenggol this afternoon.

The four police personnel do not belong to either of the two warring communities; three of them are from the Nepali community, and one from the Muslim community.

They were identified as Ram Bahadur Karki (34), Ramesh Budhathoki (30), Manoj Khatiwoda (34), and Md. Taj Khan (29). They were stationed at Kangpokpi Police Station.

The incident occurred when the four police personnel, who were on their way back to Kangpokpi Police Station from Imphal, were overtaken by the armed Arambai Tenggol at Koirengei and frisked after being blindfolded at around 12:40 PM.

Narrating their ordeal, one of the victim's personnel said that the Arambai Tenggol, numbering more than 30 and armed with sophisticated weapons overtook their vehicle, stopped them, pulled them out immediately, blindfolded them and later took them to an unknown camp-like location, where they made them bend and brutally thrashed them black and blue.

He continued that the armed Arambai Tenggol were accusing them of supporting the Kukis and subjected them to various forms of torture, even threatening to ram their vehicle onto them, while some even threatened to shoot them with small arms on their foreheads.

"I was so scared that they would kill us and we would not be able to return back alive", he added.

After enduring the brutal assault and torture, victims were reportedly blindfolded and dropped off at



Khonghampat, where they were released with a stern warning to not reveal the atrocities they had suffered.

The brutally assaulted police personnel were brought to District Hospital Kangpokpi and were later referred to Kangpokpi Christian Hospital for further treatment.

Meanwhile, the Committee on Tribal Unity, or CoTU, in Sadar Hills have declared a 24-hour total shutdown in the entire Sadar Hills Kangpokpi District in connection with the incident to demonstrate their resentment over the abduction and brutal assault of the four Kangpokpi police personnel.

The total shutdown will begin from 12 midnight of May 11 till 12 midnight of May 12.

CoTU's Media Cell Coordinator, Ng. Lun Kipgen, said that the incumbent Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh, has lost control of his militia, the Arambai Tenggol and expressed curiosity about whether the Chief Minister still maintained authority over his government or if the Arambai Tenggol now holds the power.

He continued that regrettably, today, some of the police personnel from Kangpokpi Police were

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man-handled and brutally assaulted at Koirengei, the home polling station of the incumbent Chief Minister while pointing that the Kangpokpi Police is still under the Home Department of the Manipur government, of which he is the minister.

While recalling the attack on the CRPF a couple of months ago and the recent abduction of a CRPF jawan at Shantipur, he said that such incidents clearly indicated that even neutral forces are not safe from the grasp of his armed militia, the Arambai Tenggol.

He also recalled the incident at Wangkhei, where one Meitei police officer, an additional SP, was attacked by the Arambai cadres, stating that no response or action has been taken by Biren Singh's government to date.

He then said that, considering all these incidents, they now ask the Central Government, how long will they

allow someone like N. Biren Singh, who seems delusional and out of control, to remain in power, with no authority over his state administration or his armed militia.

He also urged the Central Government to recognize that the state of Manipur is lawless and appealed to the Central Government to take preemptive action by re-imposing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in all 19 valley districts, which were previously exempted, before considering any political solution for the Kuki community in the form of a Separate Administration.

The Kangpokpi Town Committee, and other local bodies of Kangpokpi also condemned the incident in the strongest term and declared their endorsement of the CoTU's total shutdown.

KSO QUESTIONS NEW DELHI'S SILENCE ON DE-FACTO RULE OF ARAMBAI TENGGOL OVER STATE MACHINERIES

Strongly condemning the physical assault and murder attempt of 4 Manipur police personnel posted at Kangpokpi police station today in Imphal West by cadres of the Arambai Tenggol militia group, the Kuki Students' Organisation, Sadarhills, has questioned the central government asking "how long it is going to tolerate the de-facto rule of Arambai Tenggol (AT) and the whole state mechanism at the whims of the militia group?"

In a statement issued on Saturday, the KSO-Sadar Hills made it clear that if adequate steps are not taken by the state and union governments against this outlawed terror groups that comprised of habitual offenders at the earliest, any consequences arising out of the necessary steps taken by KSO-Sadar Hills will be the sole responsibility of the government.

The four police personnel who hail from Koirengei, Kanglatombi and Khetrigao left Kangpokpi Police Station between 9:30 AM-10AM to discharge their officially assigned duty were apprehended, blindfolded

and threatened to be executed, at the behest of the Arambai Tenggol (AT) leader, in between 11:30 AM-12 PM by showing them live rounds somewhere in Koirengei. It is worth mentioning that Koirengei is situated in the assembly constituency of Manipur CM, N. Biren Singh.

As clear as a day, the KSO-Sadar Hills said, it has seen the sham authority of the State and the collapse of all the four pillars of the state government since May 3rd, 2023.

The student body also pointed out that the state authorities had failed to protect the innocent Kuki populace and the Kuki Public Servants of the Union of India as well as the State in Imphal such as Imphal west- Langol, Langol Phaipijang, National Games Village, Cannan Veng, Zomi Villa, AG Colony, Sanakeithel, Paite Veng, old lambulane etc Imphal East - Haokip Veng, Cannan Veng, Zomi Villa, Khongsai Veng, New Lambulane, etc.

VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS COME TOGETHER IN CHENNAI IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR

It has been a year since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur between the Meitei community and tribal Kuki-Zo minority, which left several people killed, injured and displaced. Various organisations came together in the city on Saturday to emphasise the need to end the violence in Manipur.

Indian Christian Women's Movement along with organisations including Dravidar Kazhagam, Poovulagin Nanbargal, All India Democratic Women's Association and Neelam Cultural Centre organised various events to express Tamil Nadu's solidarity with the victims in Manipur.

Members of the ICWM noted that they had been working with Manipur people, particularly the Kuki-Zo community for the past one year and the meeting was a call to condemn the communal violence against Manipur people and urge the State and Central governments to take action to end violence.

Various speakers noted that there was need to lend voice to the victims in Manipur, address the struggles of the vulnerable groups and bring peace in the land.

Advocate and activist from Dravidar Kazhagam A. Arulmozhi elaborated on Manipur conflicts and the root causes of the violence that had let the small State continue to burn for a year. Charging that the governments remained silent over human rights violations and sexual assault on women, she said people



had more responsibility in fighting against the disinformation and conspiracy theories of right wing.

Independent journalists Makepeace Sithlou and Greeshma Kuthar spoke about the ground reality in Manipur that was not largely covered and how people had been turned refugees and displaced to other parts of the country.

An exhibition showing the visuals from violence-wracked Manipur, protests and scenes of struggle captured by journalists was held. Other speakers included P.Suganthi from AIDWA, advocate M.Vetriselvan from Poovulagin Nanbargal, advocate Pa.Pa.Mohan, Jaqueline Jothi, Church of South India and writer-journalist Jeyarani.

A candlelight vigil seeking a political solution and justice for victims of the communal strife and violence was also held.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



I would rather be a rebel than a slave.

- Emmeline Pankhurst

ESCALATING LAWLESSNESS IN IMPHAL VALLEY: PREPAK CADRE ARRESTED; GRENADE BOMB PLACED AT HOSPITAL

The escalation of lawlessness in Imphal is becoming a matter of grave concern for residents and authorities alike. From rampant extortion to targeted violence, the city is grappling with various forms of criminal activities that pose serious threats to public safety and security.

In the last 24-hours, Manipur Police apprehended an active cadre of the proscribed outfit PREPAK (progressive) in Imphal East District, on May 10. The individual, identified as Huidrom Mishal Singh, aged 24, was taken into custody following a coordinated operation by law enforcement authorities.

During the arrest, the police recovered a cache of items from Mishal Singh's possession. The seized items included 1 Pistol, 4 live rounds, a magazine, a 4-wheeler vehicle, and a mobile phone.

Mishal Singh's affiliation with the proscribed outfit underscored the challenges faced by authorities in dealing with insurgent activities and illegal arms trafficking. Mishal Singh is currently in police custody, and further investigations are underway to gather more information about his activities and possible connections with the insurgent network.

In another incident, security forces arrested an active member of the MNRG outfit identified as K. Gaijailung, 41 years old from Langol, Imphal West District. Further from his possession, 2 mobile handsets and a 4-wheeler vehicle were recovered. He was involved in extortion from construction companies in Noney.

Following the same, Manipur police forces have intensified their efforts in fringe and vulnerable areas of hill and valley districts, resulting in significant seizures of illegal arms and ammunition.

According to reports, the security forces' search operations in Kamu Ching, Imphal East District, led to the discovery and seizure of a cache of arms and ammunition. The haul included: 2 country-made 40



mm guns, 21 Pompei mortar bombs, about 3 feet of cortex wire, roughly 1 kg of Dynamite gun powder, 4 Pompei ammunition round cap holders, 24 empty cases, and 1 battery cell.

The seized arms and ammunition have been taken into custody as part of ongoing investigations into illegal arms network in the region.

In another case of lawlessness in Impal valley, medical institutions have also been targeted. A tense atmosphere gripped the Saina Institute of Medical Sciences in Manipur's Imphal East on Saturday after a bomb was discovered at the hospital's reception desk. Staff and patients were evacuated as bomb disposal experts arrived to remove the device safely. Police received a report at around 10:30 AM of a suspicious package left at the hospital, said an official.

The Manipur police bomb detection and disposal squad quickly responded and identified the object as a hand grenade concealed inside a black plastic bag, he said.

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This incident followed reports of a similar grenade placement at the same location by unidentified underground group demanding money from the hospital.

The institute, situated between Porompat police station and the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences, has become a target for extortion. Fortunately, the bomb disposal squad successfully deactivated the explosive device. Manipur police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

One of the most pressing issue contributing to the sense of lawlessness is the proliferation of armed groups and militants operating with impunity. These groups often engage in extortion, intimidation, and violence, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the populace. Moreover, their influence extends to

various aspects of daily life, including business activities, transportation, and even political affairs.

Another contributing factor to the lawlessness in Imphal is the ineffective enforcement of law and order by the concerned authorities. Despite efforts to curb criminal activities, the lack of adequate resources, corruption, and political interference often hampered the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies allowing criminal elements to operate with relative ease and impunity, emboldening them to perpetrate further acts of violence thereby contributing to the lawlessness. These frequent violent activities have once again highlighted the dire need for the reimposition of AFSPA in the Imphal valley.



A sign along the highway from Imphal to Moreh, in the Kuki-dominated Tengnoupal district.

Read @jeegujja's latest report from #Manipur, to understand why the Biren Singh government gives a free hand to #ArambaiTenggol.
caravanmagazine.in/conflict/biren...



11:59 pm · 10 May 24 · 4,358 Views



Sushma Sharma
@SushmaSh22

Follow Back

Do not fall for this study which has been conducted by fake #Meitei scholars pretending to be dispassionate analysts!

government police, security forces all the higher ups and ter roer groups have been neglected whike making this.

#eurovisiongr #Auroraborealis #23point5EP10 #blockout2024 #WWESmackdown #buyingcontent #GTvsCSK #TECNOxAMVCA10

Table 6
Number of Sources Quoted (Non-sample)

Newspaper	Meitei			Kuki		
	Individual	CSO	Total Sources & %	Individual	CSO	Total Sources & %
The Hindu	15	4	19	34	8	42
The Indian Express	39	3	42	90	19	109
The Times of India	15	2	17	2	-	2
The Telegraph	41	15	56	18	17	35
Hindustan Times	13	9	22	24	20	44
Total	123	33	156	168	64	232
Statements			(40.2%)			(59.8%)
Grand Total						388

12:35 pm · 11 May 24 · 532 Views

STOP RETURN OF MYANMAR REFUGEES FROM MANIPUR: INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS TO INDIA

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) on Friday asked India to “immediately halt the forced” return of Myanmar refugees from Manipur and “respect” the non-refoulement principle.

The ICJ has issued a statement to this effect, two days after Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh said 5,457 illegal immigrants had been detected in the strife-hit state, the biometrics of 5,173 of them had been collected and their deportation process was underway.

Since March 8, the BJP-led Manipur government has deported 77 Myanmar people who had entered Manipur following the 2021 coup in the neighbouring country. The last lot of 38 were deported on May 2.

The statement of the Geneva-headquartered ICJ, an NGO defending human rights and the rule of law worldwide since 1952, said the Indian authorities “forced” return of 77 Myanmar refugees “violates the principle of non-refoulement”, and any further plans to “forcibly return” more Myanmar refugees must be “immediately halted”.

The statement also referred to Singh’s May 2 announcement that the state government had “completed the first phase of deportation” of 77 Myanmar refugees and that it was continuing to identify “illegal immigrants” and recording their “biometric data”.

Mandira Sharma, ICJ Senior International Legal Adviser, said: “The forcible return of Myanmar refugees from Manipur violates the principle of non-refoulement under international law as it exposes them to a real risk of serious harm, such as indiscriminate violence against civilians amidst escalating conflict in Myanmar, and the widespread and systematic human rights violations being committed by the Myanmar military.”

Sharma then added: “The Indian authorities must immediately halt all further forcible returns of Myanmar refugees from Manipur and should instead offer protection and support to those seeking safety from serious harm, in line with the non-refoulement principle



and India’s other obligations under international human rights law. The incitement of discrimination, hostility or violence against Myanmar refugees in relation to the ongoing violence must also be stopped and prohibited.”

Non-refoulement is a customary international law which ensures a refugee/asylum seeker/migrant cannot be returned to a country where they would face serious threats to their freedom and life.

The ICJ said “reports” indicate over 6,000 Myanmar refugees have “sought safety” in Manipur as a result of the deteriorating security situation in Myanmar and that chief minister Singh has “blamed illegal immigrants for stoking the ongoing violence, and unrest between the Meitei community, the Kuki and other tribal hill communities, and promised to “identify and repatriate them”, despite the lack of substantive evidence of their involvement in the ongoing violence in Manipur”.

The ongoing between the two communities conflict erupted on May, leaving at least 227 dead and over 67,000 displaced. The government has not been able to find a solution to the unrest till now. The Kuki-Zos of Manipur, the Mizos of Mizoram and the Chin people of Myanmar share the same ancestry.

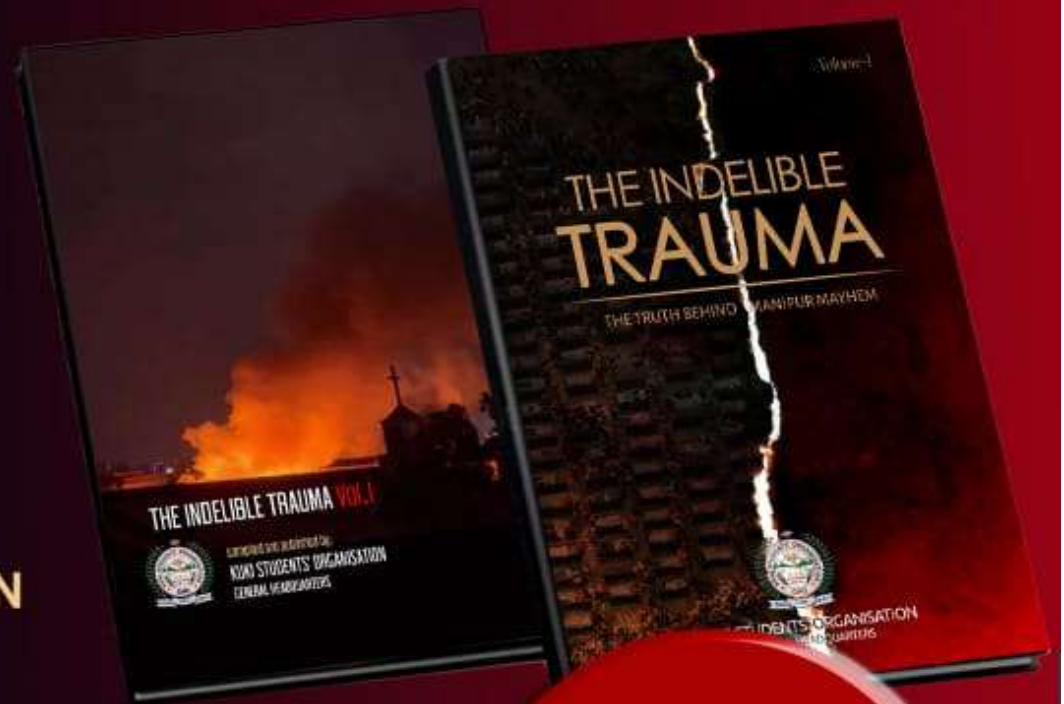
The Centre had in June last year directed the Manipur and Mizoram governments to finish the collection of the biometrics of illegal immigrants by September. However, the Centre revised the deadline to March this year.

Source: [The Telegraph India](#)

THE INDELIBLE TRAUMA

THE TRUTH BEHIND MANIPUR MAYHEM VOL. I

COMPILED AND PUBLISHED BY
KUKI STUDENTS' ORGANISATION
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS



PAPERBACK COVER &
HARD COVER PRINT

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This treatise is being prepared and published to unravel the lies and perfidy of our adversaries and put in perspective the authentic truth so that it stands as a testimony of the genocide that is being perpetrated on us and our people

With the hope and expectation that the perpetrators of these reprehensible crimes are brought to justice; and ignite a glimmer of solace and consolation to our indignant souls

The treatise also seeks to debunk the patently false canards, innuendoes and narratives that are being peddled as the gospel truth, and the aspersions that are being casted without any substance

And to put in perspective the historical misdeeds meted out to the tribal society by the extremely self-centered Meitei society with the clarion call to stand united and the urgent need for the convergence of our political position so as to collectively extricate ourselves from this oppressive dispensation

If we are to march forward like our tribal counterparts of Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh- SEPARATION IS THE ONLY SOLUTION.

Issued and published by
Kuki Students' Organization- General Headquarters





FEATURED ARTICLE

Manipur Police, Extremists Not Questioned Despite Viral Video Probe That Reveals Complicity in Gangrape

Makepeace Sitlhou

*N spends most of her days in solitude, cut off from the rest of the world. As a young woman in her late teens, she has tried to get on with her life by reconnecting with her passion for fashion design.

But N rarely steps out of her home.

Gone are the days when she would participate in community life by going for social events, church fellowships or just hanging out with friends her age, a time when all Meitei, Naga and Kuki-Zo ethnic groups in the small but diverse state of Manipur—26th by size of 28 Indian states—lived in relative harmony.

“I’m not comfortable to be around people who know me from before,” she told Article 14. “I would rather be with people who don’t.”

N said she felt alone, as she fought the triple trauma of gang rape, being paraded naked by a marauding mob of hundreds of men from the state’s Meitei community—made public two months later in a viral video—and seeing her father and brother hacked to death.

Elections unfolded in Manipur (polling was on 19 and 26 April) despite continuing conflict, with more than 200 dead and 70,000 displaced, and a chief minister persisting with sectarian remarks.

The latest violence includes two dead in murders and mutilations on 14 April, the killing of two paramilitary personnel by unidentified armed groups on 28 April, and a Kuki-Zo “village volunteer” killed in a gunfight the next day.

There is little closure for thousands.

The story of N, her murdered brother and father and the two women gangraped with her is particularly important because a police chargesheet, accessed by Article 14, revealed the the complicity of the police, the extent of the breakdown of the State, and its inability to deliver justice, despite the involvement of the Supreme Court and the Central Bureau Of Investigation (CBI).

“We take her out, somewhere, to refresh her mind,” said Tete Suantak, a volunteer with Vaiphei Zillai Pawl, a student organisation of the minority Kuki-Zo community in Manipur’s Churachandpur district.

The organisation has taken charge of the wellbeing of N and K*, another woman who survived the same 4 May 2023 gangrape and public humiliation at their village in B Phainom village in Kangpokpi district, more than a 100 km to the north across the Meitei-dominated main valley of Manipur.

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A third woman who was raped has relocated to New Delhi with her husband and children.

K, who is older, has a husband and two children to look after. The family does not meet others from their Vaiphei tribe and now live in rented accommodation in Churachandpur, the second largest town in the state that is home to 9.8% of the state population composed mainly of Kuki Zo tribes and a minority of Naga tribes as well as the Meitei community .

K's husband, an ex-serviceman and the chief of B Phainom village, filed the first information (FIR) 14 days after the gangrape. He said that the family was uncertain of their future and had not yet been given accommodation promised in July 2023 by the government or the ones being provided by the presbyterian church.

“We can't plan for the future until we get justice from the Supreme Court,” he said. All the three women received Rs 10 lakh each as compensation from the state and union governments.

As this story will detail, that justice is going slow, with questions raised about the effectiveness and impartiality of inquiry committees.

'Timely Intervention' By Govt: Modi

In the first week of May 2023, sectarian violence broke out between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo tribals in Manipur and raged for almost a year.

All the cases involving Kuki-Zo victims and complainants unfolded in the Valley, where the Meitei are the majority, while a few, such as the gangrape of the three women, took place in the foothills of Kangpokpi hill district, where the Kuki Zo dominate.

Amidst ethnic clashes, 249 churches in the Valley and over 100 Hindu and Sanamahi (the indigenous faith practised by the Meitei) temples were reportedly destroyed in the hills. Christians among the Meitie were also attacked.

The conflict has driven a deep wedge between the Meitei and the Kuki Zo, with a buffer zone separating the hills from the Valley, effectively cleaving into two territories. The Valley and the Kuki Zo dominated districts of the hills have mostly been cleared of residents from the opposite community.

The conflict mutated into a civil war that claimed 223 lives and displaced over 60,000 persons, according to data shared by Governor Anusuiya Uikey in the Manipur assembly in February 2024.

Uikey said that about 10,000 FIRs had been filed and 187,000 were taken into preventive detention before release.

In a April 8 pre-election interview with the Assam Tribune, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that thanks to the “timely intervention of the government of India and efforts made by the government of Manipur, there has been a marked improvement in the situation of the state”.

N and K shared little of Modi's confidence in the state government, accusing it of being complicit in the crime that upended their lives.

“The government has failed to do their duty,” said K. “If they did, then the policeman would have helped us. Our only hope for justice is from the Supreme Court.”

On 7 August 2023, the Supreme Court, admitting a petition from 10 petitioners, ordered an “expeditious investigation and trial” into the gangrape and viral video. The next hearing of the case is scheduled for 29 April.

'Kill Them, Kill Them'

N and K's cases are among 15 of 29 cases of sexual violence, physical assault and mob lynching where the Kuki Zo are the complainants or victims, being investigated by the Criminal Bureau of Investigation

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(CBI), which took charge of the probe on orders of the Supreme Court on 28 July 2023.

These cases are also being monitored by a three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, who also ordered 42 special investigative teams of the Manipur police and a judicial commission of three former women High Court justices to “enquire (sic) into the nature of violence against women” in Manipur from 4 May 2023.

The chargesheet in the viral video case, involving the rapes of N and K, reveals how police failed to protect them, fled and handed over N’s father and brother to the mob.

A Meitei mob attacked B Phainom and surrounding villages in Churachandpur district on 4 May 2023, after a Kuki-Zo rally opposed a high court order to the government to consider scheduled tribe status for the Meitei (an order the court withdrew later), according to the police case diary.

“Despite the police’s efforts to disperse the mob using tear gas, the mob persisted in burning down the houses,” the diary said, quoting the mob as shouting, “The way you people in Churachandpur treated us (Meitei), we will do the same thing to you.”

This was followed by chants of “kill them kill them”.

The investigating officers said not all members of the mob were out for blood. A few tried to help the victims.

Some In The Mob Helped, Not Police

Some in the mob directed N’s brother and father to a police vehicle parked nearby and though the two were separated, N and the third victim reached and got inside the vehicle, a Maruti Gypsy, said the chargesheet.

Investigators said two policemen and a driver were in the Gypsy and three to four policemen were outside the vehicle. N’s brother repeatedly requested the policemen to start the vehicle, but the driver, according to the chargesheet, said, “There is no key”.

N and her brother begged the policemen to help them and save their father, who was being brutalised by the mob, but the police did not, said the chargesheet.

“Meanwhile, the mob asked the police to hand over the victims and kept shouting, “Pithok rak o! Pithok rak o (Give them to us! Give them to us!),” said the chargesheet.

The driver of the Gypsy “suddenly started the engine” and stopped the vehicle near the mob of more than 1,000, said the chargesheet. Her brother again requested the driver to start the vehicle, but, according to the chargesheet, he said, “Tumin na lei o (You stay silent).”

By then, her father had stopped breathing.

‘Policemen Pushed Her Away’: Chargesheet

As soon as the mob approached the Gypsy and pulled out both victims and N’s brother, the policemen fled, said the chargesheet.

As the mob began tearing her clothes off, the chargesheet said, the mob smashed wooden logs on N’s brother’s body. He died that day.

N and K were then paraded naked on the roadside near a village called Tuoubul village and taken to the paddy fields, where they were gang raped.

The chargesheet found that the police had abdicated their duty in the third gang rape as well. After the mob separated her from her grandchildren, she was dragged to the main road of B Phainom village where a police vehicle was parked.

“She pleaded the (sic) policemen to rescue her husband and family but policemen did not listen to her request,” said the chargesheet. “She also

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attempted to get inside the police vehicle but the policemen pushed her away.”

Aside from her and the other two victims, N said she also wanted justice for her family’s murder. “I could easily identify the man who killed my brother and father,” she said, basing her conclusion on what the CBI told her. “But he hasn’t been caught till now.”

The chargesheet names nine accused who appear in the video, including one called “Mr Loya”, who hit N’s brother on his head with a wooden log, after which he fell on his father’s body and died. Apart from Loya, two other accused are currently absconding.

Six of them have been charged under 16 sections of 11 laws, including criminal conspiracy, rape (including during communal or sectarian violence), and atrocities against scheduled tribes.

Alleged Involvement Of Meitei Groups

A lawyer in Manipur, who spoke to Article 14 on condition of anonymity, said that Loya has joined the Arambai Tenggol, an armed extremist outfit named as one of the groups in the FIR filed by K’s husband on 18 May 2023.

All accused are “unknown miscreants suspected to be” from Meitei youth organisations, the Meetei Leepun, Kangleipak Kanba Lup, Schedule Tribe Demand Committee and World Meitei Council.

The mob carried AK rifles, SLR, INSAS and .303 rifles, all normally issued to police and security forces, when they attacked the village, according to the FIR.

The chargesheet said that “the accused individuals, part of ethnic clashes between the Meiteis and Kukis, conspired with a large group of unidentified miscreants from the Meitei community to execute a series of pre-planned criminal acts, including violence, arson, sexual assault, and murder, with a clear intent”.

“Their deliberate actions, which specifically targeted victims from the tribal community, included threats,

violence, and various unlawful acts aimed at promoting enmity between different groups,” said the chargesheet.

N said that the authorities must “make every effort” to arrest all the men in the mob. “The chargesheet should be filed against each and every one of them,” she said, “not just the six”.

Video, A ‘Conspiracy’: CM

On 20 July 2023, 79 days after violence first broke out in Manipur, Prime Minister Modi finally broke his silence.

When he did, he refused to acknowledge the sectarian nature of the sexual violence. “The number and identity of the criminals is one thing,” said Modi, “but the crime is an insult to the entire country and a huge embarrassment to 140 crore Indian citizens”.

It was not as if accounts of sexual violence had not been reported until then.

As I had reported in the SAAG Anthology in October 2023, videos of gender-based violence had been doing the rounds on X (formerly Twitter) for weeks.

On 1 June 2023, Hoihneihling Sitlhou, a sociology professor at the Hyderabad Central University, was the first to speak to the viral video victims and document other cases of sexual violence for the website Newsclick.

Yet, it took at least four weeks for even independent digital media to report the sexual violence in Manipur. The mainstream media, national and international, took real notice of Manipur’s civil war after the video went viral.

Manipur and India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed the video to be a part of a political conspiracy.

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On April 8, during a campaign for the general elections, chief minister N Biren Singh alleged that the video was “made viral” by the Congress and other opposition parties to “defame” the BJP and Prime Minister Modi.

“The two women were rescued by the youths and women of the Meitei community of the area, but the full narrative of the incident was avoided by those who wanted to defame the BJP government,” said Biren Singh.

Sitlhou said it was “unfortunate” that the chief minister was concerned more about the video becoming viral and the damage it did to his image than the fact that such a crime occurred on his watch.

“The perpetrators are not just the ones seen in the viral video groping the women but also those who had emboldened the perpetrators to commit such an act,” said Sitlhou.

A Tangled Investigation

Biren Singh’s remarks contradicted the chargesheet filed by his own police force, which says that the survivors found refuge in nearby Naga villages.

Almost a year since his government failed to control the violence, he continues to make sectarian remarks (here, here and here), and questions swirl over the role of militant groups and the police.

The chargesheet said while the investigation would continue towards the arrest and custodial interrogation of the absconding accused, the CBI was also looking into the “identification of other accused present in the mob, role of police officers during the incident, involvement of groups or organisations etc. in the interest of justice”.

In an order on 7 August, the Supreme Court said that, “those who are responsible for a breach of public duty must equally be brought to account, regardless of their rank, position, or post. Every officer of the state or other employee of the state who is guilty not only of the dereliction of their constitutional and official

duties but of colluding with perpetrators to become offenders themselves, must be held accountable without fail”.

The Supreme Court directed Dattaray Padsalgikar, former director general of police (DGP) from Maharashtra to oversee the investigation of the CBI and Manipur police special investigation teams (SITs), specifically asking him to probe allegations of police collusion with the perpetrators of violence, including acts of sexual violence, during the Manipur conflict.

The Rise Of The Arambai Tenggol

One of the groups named in the FIR filed by K’s husband is the Arambai Tenggol, which has lately gained notoriety for pressuring or threatening government officials, and popularity among the Meitei Hindus in the Valley.

An armed militia that aims to culturally revive Manipur’s indigenous Sanamahi religion and glory of the former Kangleipak kingdom, Arambai Tenggol is headed by the titular Manipuri King and member of Parliament (MP) from the Rajya Sabha (the upper house), Leishamba Sanajaoba.

The right-wing group came to prominence in January 2024 when its members rounded up more than 37 Meitei members of Manipur’s legislative assembly across party lines and two MPs to take an oath in the name of Sanamahi, an indigenous Meitei deity.

These demands, which the elected representatives signed off on, Scroll reported, were an update of the National Register of Citizens (a list that purportedly verifies citizenship based on documents predating 1951 as the base year in Manipur, as opposed to 1971 in Assam), abrogation of a peace agreement with Kuki armed groups, relocation of Myanmarese refugees to Mizoram, border fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border, withdrawal of the Assam Rifles and delisting of “illegal migrants” from the

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scheduled tribes list.

A day before the oath-taking ceremony, the group held talks with a team from the ministry of home affairs at Sanajaoba's residence, The Hindu reported. Despite forcing an unconstitutional oath on those sworn to protect India's constitution, the group appears to enjoy immunity from action by the state and union governments.

"Even by the logic of India's anti-terror law, Arambai's actions from 3 May onwards (and, specifically the January 2024 event) amount to "terrorist act(s)" and a threat to national security," lawyer John Simte and researcher Anghsuman Chowdhury wrote in The Wire on 11 February 2024. "Their actions fall squarely within the four corners of what is punishable under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967."

It was only in late February 2024 that the Manipur police booked militants under the UAPA, after 200 members of the Arambai Tenggol kidnapped a police officer and his escort that the Manipur police staged an "arms down" protest.

The police, Meitei Muslims and Nagas have accused the Arambai Tenggol of extortion and murder. The group kidnapped the officer, an assistant superintendent of police, the police said, because he had arrested a few members of the group for stealing a car.

Though Arambai Tenggol members have been named in the FIR filed by the police after the abduction of police officials, no arrests have been made.

'Absolute Breakdown Of Law & Order': SC

On 11 March 2024, the Supreme Court asked for status reports from all the investigating teams to see if the cases were "ripe for trial".

Last year, on 25 August, the Supreme Court ordered court proceedings related to the investigation of some of the Manipur violence cases be shifted to neighbouring Assam.

Advocate Nizam Pasha, who represents the rape survivors in the Supreme Court, said that if the final chargesheet does not arraign any of the policemen as accused despite detailing their role, the victims or the complainant could file a protest petition.

"But that will be filed in the trial court, and the trial court has the power on that protest petition to direct further investigation," he said.

Pasha said that if the trial court did not entertain these protest petitions, then the high court and Supreme Court were options.

After taking suo-motu cognisance of the viral video in July 2023, the Supreme Court questioned police inaction and complicity. Three months after the video surfaced, during a hearing on 31 July, the court expressed "astonishment" that the State "lacked facts" about the FIRs filed.

In later hearings, the Supreme Court questioned solicitor general S G Mehta, who represented the state of Manipur, about police failures. On 1 August 2023, the Supreme Court criticised the Manipur police investigation into the ethnic violence as "lethargic," calling the conflict an "absolute breakdown of law and order and state machinery".

FIRs were delayed for nearly three months after the violence, with only a few arrests made, based on over 6,000 FIRs filed.

"A speedy investigation is necessary to secure a just and proper outcome in a trial and to instil and maintain confidence in the administration of criminal justice in our country," the Supreme Court said on 7 August.

A speedy investigation also serves a preventive function in that the persons who witness the swiftness and accuracy with which the criminal justice system punishes the perpetrator, will be deterred from committing similar crimes."

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Last but not least, an expeditious investigation and trial ensures that the trauma of victims / survivors is not prolonged because of the length of the proceedings.”

‘The Supreme Court Is Silent’

Legal experts and lawyers familiar with the course of the hearings in the matter, argued that the interventions of the Supreme Court had become less regular, after the initial furore over the viral video.

On 18 April, Colin Gonzalves of the legal advocacy Human Rights Law Network, representing the Manipur Tribal Forum Delhi, filed an interim appeal expressing the Kuki-Zo community’s “deep discontent” with the way the Supreme Court has handled the issue.

The appeal was filed “for urgent reliefs in respect of series (sic) of very brutal attacks on the Kuki-Zo community in respect of which repeated notes have been submitted to the respected DGP Padsaligikar and despite the passage of time, no actions seems to have been taken”.

The appeal referred to the 13 April 2024 killing of two Kuki village volunteers, allegedly by the Arambai Tenggol, Meitei Leepun and the militant group, United National Liberation Front.

“Their feet were tied by ropes and they were dragged down the hillside,” said the appeal. “Then the videos shows (sic) that their arms and limbs were hacked into pieces with a machete and paraded in-front of the videos which went viral.”

“We have had 170 people killed,” said Gonzalves. “We don’t know even one year after the crime if FIRs have been registered, arrests have been made or any chargesheets have been filed.”

Gonzalves said they had filed several complaints and offered “evidence” against the Arambai Tenggol and other accused to the DGP, who had forwarded them to the Manipur police.

“The Supreme Court has let down the Kuki Zo community again and again,” said Gonzalves, on behalf of his client. “We find it inexplicable and have no words to express our disappointment. The only institution to protect us is the Supreme Court, and they are silent.”

Overflowing Morgues & Partisan Inquiries

One of the inquiries into the Manipur conflagration, for instance, is led by former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Justice Gita Mittal. Issues in its remit included the nature of violence against women, ensuring compensation and other needs of victims and ensuring dignity in relief camps.

The commission has focussed in large part on the role of Kuki-Zo civil society groups (CSOs) in allegedly advancing “vested interests”. In report no. 13 submitted to the Supreme Court on 28 November 2023, the committee said, “Some CSOs are opposing and obstructing the performance of the last rites by relatives” to “derive mileage and to compel the authorities to meet unwarranted demands from the situation”.

The Mittal committee was referring to 115 Kuki Zo bodies lying in morgues in the Imphal Valley for almost eight months. Tribal bodies had proposed to bury the dead together at a common site identified in Churachandpur district, ground zero of the ethnic conflict.

Meitei CSOs opposed the idea of mass burial.

A similar burial in accordance with tribal customs was done in 2016, but the Mittal committee reported that “there are elements interested in maintenance of (sic) tensions between the communities and preventing restoration of peace and harmony in the State”.

Gonzalves accused the Padsalgikar and Mittal committee of inaction.

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“We have been making complaints to the committees for the last 6-8 months but there’s been no action or reply,” said Gonsalves. “And when the reports are filed in court, the Kuki Zo community does not get any copy. It’s only given to the other side.”

‘The Police Must Be Prosecuted Too’

Again in March 2024, the Mittal committee told the Supreme Court of “worrying happenings in Manipur”, a reference to a Kuki-Zo mob burning the district collector’s office, in response to the suspension of a Kuki-Zo police for being photographed with “village volunteers”, armed civilians guarding posts and bunkers along the buffer zone created on the orders of home minister Amit Shah after a visit in May 2023.

The Mittal committee told the court “all relief activities having stopped”, “protests [were] becoming armed protests”. The Supreme Court asked attorney general of India R Venkataramani for instructions from the government on this report.

No Kuki-Zo CSOs, such as the Indigenous Tribal Leaders’ Forum, are named as accused in any police complaints or ongoing investigations, unlike Meitei outfits, such as the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, which the Kuki Zo have identified as accused in cases of sexual violence and murder.

Yet the Mittal committee has never referred to the intimidation of Meitei politicians by Meitei outfits into participating in the oath-taking ceremony we referred to previously or the abduction of the the senior police official and his escort, or when Meitei Leepun leader, Pramot Singh, shot at unidentified people, caught here on CCTV.

In December 2023, writing in Frontline, lawyer Simte wrote how five Kuki Zo men were arrested in less than a week after images of two presumably captured and killed Meitei teenagers went viral in October after they went missing in July. In less than a week, five accused from the Kuki Zo community were arrested.

In a chargesheet filed by the CBI, the four accused (and one absconding) are accused of belonging to “armed Kuki extremists, who have taken to arms to strike terror amongst the minds of the other community”.

Although the chargesheet repeatedly alleges that the accused belong to armed Kuki extremist groups who have “indulged in terror activities”, no terror charges have been invoked in the case diary. The CBI has said bail should be denied because they were a potential threat to key witnesses and likely to abscond.

Meanwhile, the three accused named (and others) in the viral video case remain at large.

That one in particular, Loya, has not been caught, continues to bother N.

“We are quite satisfied with the investigation so far but I’m not happy that he has not been caught,” she said. Article 14 learnt that Loya was a close friend of the brother of one of the victims and well known to N.

K said it was important to acknowledge that the police could not have done what they did without government sanction.

“They (the police) must be prosecuted, too,” she said.

First published by: [Article 14](#)

(Makepeace Sitlhou is an award winning independent journalist writing on politics, human rights and culture. This story was produced as an Asia Pacific Women in Land and Development Media fellow.)



Cheers to the women who raised us with love, grace, and endless strength. Happy Mother's Day!



**THE
NARCISSISTIC
CHIEF
MONSTER**





TEARS OF THE HILLSMEN

A new dawn has come, as usual on May 3rd, 2023.
We awoke from our slumbers to the cock's crow.
The orange sun rises above the eastern hills.
All tribals had their peaceful march in all hill districts.
But, to our surprise, the March turned sour in May.
Only the Kuki-Zo were picked up as targets among all
Hillsmen.

Had we not followed in the footsteps of the father of
our nation?
Had we not used our fundamental rights to peaceful
protest?
What is the business of the valley people to interfere
in it?
Why did police forces fire 'Real Bullets' at our
crowds?
When they used 'Rubber Bullets' on the valley men!
It's like a father giving a knife to his son to stab an-
other son.

The night was worse; sounds of wailing echoed ev-
erywhere.
Kuki-Zo Villages in and around Imphal were attacked
and burnt,
By savagely armed Meteis well-guarded by state
forces!
Women were made to parade and raped; then muti-
lated!
Children's heads were smashed on the road and
burnt alive!
Men were tortured, had their limbs chopped off, and
decapitated!

Innocent Kuki-Zo civilians were hunted
door-to-door!
In Imphal, even learning institutions were
not spared—
Students of MU, JNIMS, RIMS, DM—
Patients in hospitals were dragged out; pub-
licly lynched!
Daily laborers were stoned to death by their
employer.
Neighbors betrayed neighbors; friends be-
trayed friends!

Where's humanity? Where's law? What's our
crime?
Is our birth into this world itself a crime?
The irony is killers walked in peace with law
enforcers.
The police who were supposed to protect its
citizens,
Gave away women to the violent mobs to be
raped and killed.
We won't forget May 3rd; though we don't
want to remember it!

Hillsman J. Tearsworth