

# Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



## Changoubung RELIEF CENTRE

Changoubung, Sadar Hills  
(Camp Code: KPI-1-03)

Managed by  
District Administration &  
Kuki CSOs Sadar Hills

**Total Inmates Registered: 190\***

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| ■ Male: 90 | ■ Female: 100 |
|------------|---------------|



## KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 27.01.2024



**159**  
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.

# ONE KUKI-ZO VOLUNTEER KILLED IN SATANG ATTACK, KUKI'S TOP BODY CONDEMNS, DEMANDS NEUTRAL OFFICIALS IN PERIPHERAL AREAS

Barely a day after Indians celebrated the momentous Republic Day, a Kuki-Zo Satang village in Saikul Sub Division of Kangpokpi district came under attack early this morning leading to the death of one Kuki village volunteer in the incident.

The deceased has been identified as Tilminlun Khongsai, 26, from Ng. Phainom village, who was on duty at Satang village which shares a boundary with Meitei villages.

Manipur Yaiphare, a social media handler, first shared the information on a Facebook post claiming that the UNLF-MPA cadres launched a successful attack with the support of Col. Akash Oinam, Commanding Officer of 18th Assam Rifles posted in the area.

In the viral video, a well-armed group of people who claimed themselves to be senior UNLF-MPA cadres said they had successfully launched the attack at around 4:30 am and killed as many as 20/30 Kuki-Zo people while sending out a congratulatory message to their fellow communities that they could have a victorious sumptuous dinner.

However, contrary to their claim, only one Kuki-Zo volunteer was buried at the Kuki-Zo Martyrs' Cemetery at Phaijang this afternoon.

The Committee on Tribal Unity, or the CoTU, Sadar Hills vehemently condemned the attack in Satang village this morning allegedly by the prescribed UNLF-MPA and Meitei militia, the Arambai Tenggol and condoled the death of its village volunteers, Tilminlun Khongsai while defending the Satang area.

The Kuki-Zo people also accused Col. Akash Oinam, the Commanding Officer of the 18th Assam Rifles of helping the Meitei militant group in attacking Satang Kuki village the day after he received the prestigious 'Mentioned in Dispatches' Military Gallantry Award at the 75th Republic Day celebration.

How the Meitei militia and secessionist UNLF-MPA could trespass into the Kuki-Zo-dominated areas despite heavy deployment and the presence of centre security forces, especially, the 18th Assam Rifles wondered the Committee on Tribal Unity, Sadar Hills.



Perhaps, it is construed that the presence of a Meitei officer, Col. Akash Oinam, CO of the 18th Assam Rifles within the Kuki-Zo areas is the possible reason for the attack, alleged CoTU.

Considering the circumstances, the Committee drew the attention of the Centre Government to depute a non-Manipuri officer in all sectors, the AR, BSF, GR, CRPF, and other central forces covering Kuki-Zo dominated to maintain neutrality and sanctity of the force.

The Committee also paid the highest funeral homage to Tilminlun Khongsai at the Martyrs' Cemetery at Phaijang while assuring the bereaved family that the sacrifice made by the braveheart volunteer would not go in vain.

Meanwhile, the apex body of the Kuki tribes, the Kuki Inpi Manipur also condemned the Satang Kuki village attack by the alleged Meitei militants this morning and considered it as instigating a state of fear and unrest among the Kuki civilians in the region.

The Kuki top body also alleged that the Meitei militants successfully breached the buffer zone with the assistance of Col. Akash Oinam, Commanding Officer of the 18th Assam Rifles. Notably, Col. Akash Oinam, a Meitei officer, has been engaging in unwarranted hostilities against the Kukis in the operating zone of the 18th Assam Rifles,

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it alleged while adding that prominent Kuki civil society organizations have been advocating for the replacement of Col. Akash Oinam due to his biased operations against the Kukis.

KIM also stated that, it is essential to note that the attack on Satang Kuki village occurred following the Manipur state Government's surrender to the Meitei militants at Kangla Fort on January 24.

It stated that the Meitei legislators from Manipur comprising 37 MLAs, including the Chief Minister, and the two MPs took an oath under the Arambai Tengol, the Meitei militant group responsible for orchestrating ethnic cleansing against the Kukis.

"This implicit commitment signifies their intent to wage an all-out war against the Kukis", KIM stated.

KIM also called for decisive action against Col. Akash Oinam who allegedly appears to be derelict in his duty and responsibility as the Commanding Officer of the 18th Assam Rifles.

Similarly, the supply of arms and ammunition by the Manipur state Government to the Meitei militants and the subsequent surrender of law and order, directly responsible for the incessant attacks on the Kukis, must be dealt with resolute order and safeguard the rights and security of the minority Kukis, stated KIM.

The Kuki top body further stated that the undemocratic and unconstitutional development unfolding in the Manipur region, particularly under the Meitei-dominated Manipur state Government could set a devastating precedent, potentially triggering state-sponsored terrorism and lawlessness in other states of the country.

KIM then opined that the Government of India must initiate immediate measures to end the egregious violation of human rights in Manipur and the Government must put an end to this state-sponsored terrorism - the collusion of the state Government and the Meitei militants against the Kukis.

KIM also stated that the unending hostilities between the Meiteis and the Kukis is an urgent call for a separate administrative unit for the two communities and the Government of India must no longer wait to restore peace, security, and justice in the region.

## OBITUARY



Thinkkho Le Malcha  
KSO Media & Documentation Cell

### OUR FALLEN HEROES IN DEFENCE OF OUR ANCESTRAL LAND & FREEDOM



#### TILMINLUN KHONGSAI

s/o Pu (L) Thangkohen Khongsai

Ng. Phainom Village  
Saikul Sub-division, Sadar Hills



27.01.2024  
Saturday

Having survived the Meitei ethnic cleansing pogrom in the valley and refusing to yield any inch of his ancestral land he stood his ground to defend it. Refusing the safety and comfort of faraway cities, he stayed on the battlefield. A true son of the soil who embodied true love of his land and its people. From his beloved post on the frontlines, today he joins the hallowed ranks of heroes who watch over us from above.

His indomitable spirit, patriotism and supreme sacrifice will live on forever in our hearts.

Rest in Peace, Brave soul!

KSO Media & Documentation Cell

27.01.2024 (Saturday)

# KUKI CHIEF ASSOCIATION OPPOSES SCRAPPING OF FMR AND INDO-MYANMAR BORDER FENCE, REQUESTS GOVT TO RECONSIDER DECISION

The Kuki Chiefs Association Manipur has opposed the scrapping of the Free Movement Regime and the proposal to fence the Indo Myanmar border.

Kuki Chiefs Association in a release issued on Saturday stated that the decision of the Indian government to permanently scrap the Free Movement Regime with Myanmar is unacceptable to the Kuki people who straddle in the Indo-Myanmar border.

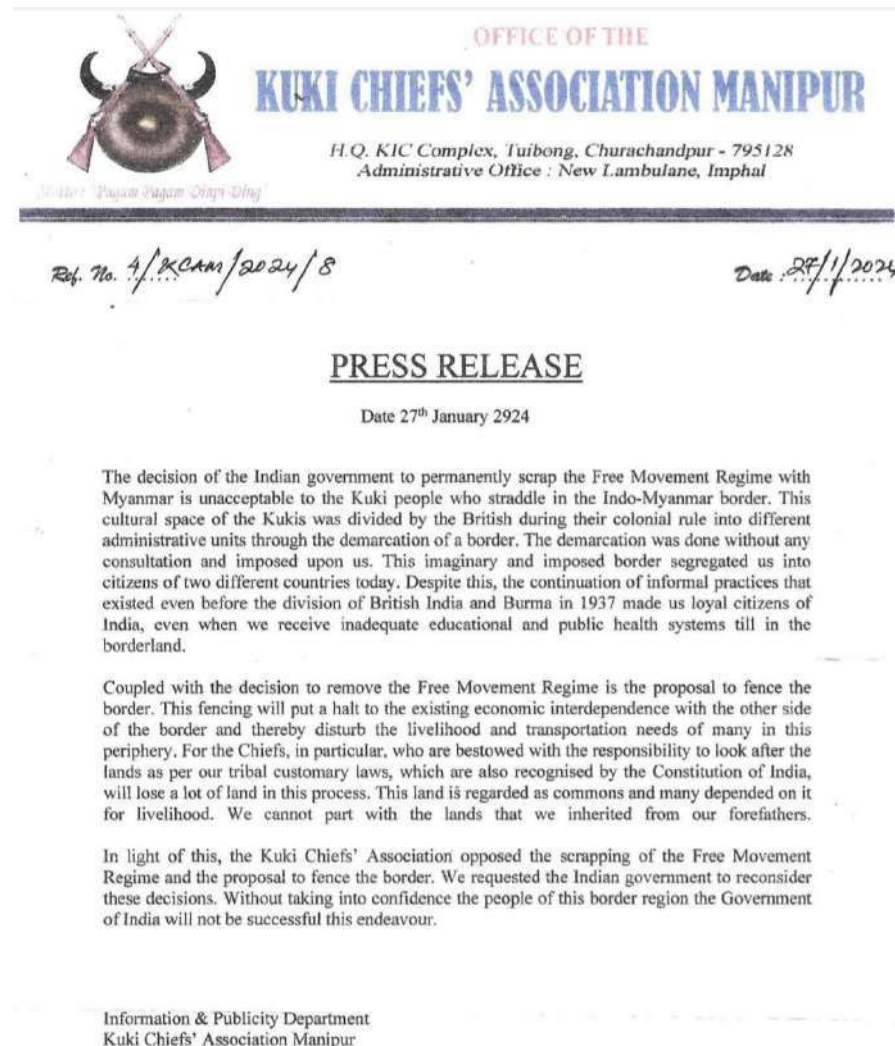
KCA requested the Indian government to reconsider the decision and claimed that without taking into confidence the people of the border region, the government of India will not be successful in its endeavour.

The KCA stated, "This cultural space of the Kukis was divided by the British during their colonial rule into different administrative units through the demarcation of a border. The demarcation was done without any consultation and imposed upon us and this imaginary and imposed border segregated us into citizens of two different countries today".

"Despite this, the continuation of informal practices that existed even before the division of British India and Burma in 1937 made Kuki-Zos loyal citizens of India, even when they received inadequate educational and public health systems till in the borderland." stated the release.

Coupled with the decision to remove the Free Movement Regime is the proposal to fence the border. The fencing will put a halt to the existing economic interdependence with the other side of the border and thereby disturb the livelihood and transportation needs of many in this periphery, KCA added.

The release added that for the Chiefs, in particular, who are bestowed with the responsibility to look



after the lands as per their tribal customary laws, which are also recognised by the Constitution of India, will lose a lot of land in this process.

"The land is regarded as commons and many depended on it for livelihood and the Kuki-Zo cannot part with the lands that they inherited from their forefathers." stated the release.

# PROTEST ERUPTS IN MOREH AGAINST BURNING OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS; DEMANDS REMOVAL OF POLICE COMMANDOS

Large numbers of students, teachers, members of Moreh Private Schools Association (MoPSA) and womenfolk today held a sit-in-protest against the burning down of educational institutions by police commandos in Moreh town. A similar protest was also held in Tengnoupal district headquarters.

The agitating students, teachers and members of MoPSA held placards - "Give Us Chance To Go To School By Removing CDO from Moreh," "We Want Peace, Not Commando," "PM Modi Ji, Please Open Our School," "Education Our Birth Right," "We Want Re-opening of Schools," "Burning of Educational Institutions is Hatred Towards Mankind," "Save Our Schools By Removing Commando" and they also shouted slogans like "We Want Normalcy In Moreh," "Pu Modi Open Our School," "Pu Union Home Minister fulfill Our Memorandum" and "No To Meitei Commandos."

On 17 January, 2024 a fierce gunfight broke out between police commandos and suspected village volunteers in Moreh following which the police commandos torched several civilian houses including three educational institutions - Mt. Moreh Public School (Canan veng Moreh), Bethsaida Academy (Phaicham veng Moreh) and Dr. Colvin Academy (Phaicham veng Moreh).

On December 30, 2023, the police commando abducted a teacher from Moreh bazaar and mercilessly thrashed and tortured him. On the said day, a gunfight broke out between police commandos and village volunteers near JJ Children Home, Moreh. Peter Holkholal Mate who is an assistant teacher at Bethel High School, was unaware of the gunfiring as the school is located at Mission Veng which is over 3km away from the gun fight area. Being unaware of the gun fight he was on his way home when he was abducted by the police commandos at Moreh bazaar. Peter Holkholal Mate son of Tinnu Mate is also said to be the Joint Secretary of the MYC (Moreh Youth Club) Unit - IV and an executive member of the St. George Parish Youths, Moreh.

Deliberate attacks on teachers and members of the students community and burning down of educational institutions has forced students, teachers, members of MoPSA and



womenfolk to demand removal of the perpetrators – the police commandos – from Moreh town.

Banners at the protest site read, 'The deliberate attempt to destroy the educational institutions by burning down 3 High schools in Moreh town by Manipur state forces,' 'The total disregard and disrespect towards the future of the children of Moreh and its surroundings trampling the students' right to education by the state and central government' and 'The delay tactics of removal of Manipur police commandos from Tengnoupal district despite the strong appeal from the people of the district'.

The Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) Moreh Block, Kuki Women Union for Human Rights (KWUHR) and Moreh Private Schools Association (MoPSA) submitted a joint memorandum to the Home Minister demanding the HM to remove police commandos from Moreh so as to bring back normalcy and to re-open the educational institutions in the border town.

Burning of schools and deliberate attack on teachers and students community amidst the intermittent gunfight has instilled a sense of fear and insecurity to parents and Moreh residents who are now refusing to send their children to schools. Moreover, scared by the targeted attacks, the teachers and school proprietors are reluctant to resume their normal functioning and the schools have remained shut since May 3, leaving thousands of students staring at an uncertain future.

# KUKI INPI JIRI-TAMENGLONG-NONEY OPPOSES STATIONING OF IRB UNIT AT JOUJANGTEK VILLAGE

The Kuki Inpi Jiri-Tamenglong-Noney has advised the state government that any plan or initiative to set up or establish camps of state forces in Joujangtek village or nearby village should be halted immediately.

The Kuki Inpi Jiri Tamenglong and Noney stated that they are dismayed to have heard that Manipur government is planning to station a unit of state force i.e. Indian Reserve Battalion at Joujangtek Village under Noney district.

In a release issued on Saturday, the Kuki Inpi Jiri Tamenglong stated that such plans to set up the camps of state forces should be halted as it would be detrimental to interests of the people in the area rather than doing any good.

It is needless to say that at this critical juncture of the ongoing ethnic violence, the tribal particularly the Kuki-Zo people in Manipur have completely lost trust in the state machinery, particularly that of the police department which could not protect its own head from present ethnic violence, it added.

Also, the recent developments in Moreh are clear examples that the presence of state forces and their untimely reinforcements escalates violence in the hills stated the release.

The Kuki Inpi Jiri-Tamenglong-Noney with its good intention and moral responsibility is giving a tangible suggestion to the government. As such any matter



OFFICE OF THE KUKI INPI  
JIRIBAM, TAMENGLONG & NONEY DISTRICTS, MANIPUR  
(Apex Body of Kuki Tribes)  
HEAD OFFICE : PHAITOL VILLAGE TOUSEM SUB-DIVISION, TAMENGLONG DISTRICT  
MANIPUR, PIN – 795115

Ref. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### PRESS RELEASE

Date : 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (Friday)

The Kuki Inpi Jiri-Tamenglong-Noney is dismayed to have heard that Manipur government is planning to station a unit of state force i.e. Indian Reserve Battalion at Joujangtek Village under Noney district. It is needless to say that at this critical juncture of the ongoing ethnic violence, the tribals particularly the Kuki zo people in Manipur had completely lost trust in the state machinery particularly that of the Police Department which could not protect its own Head from present ethnic violence. Also, the recent developments in moreh are clear example that the presence of state forces and their untimely reinforcements escalates violence in the hills.

As such, the Kuki Inpi Jiri-Tamenglong-Noney strongly advises the state government that any plans or initiative to set up or establish such camps of the state forces in Joujangtek Village Or nearby villages should be halted immediately as it would be detrimental to interests of the people in the area rather than doing any good. The Kuki Inpi Jiri-Tamenglong-Noney with it's good intention and taking moral responsibility is giving a tangible suggesting to the government and any matter arising out of their insensitivity to the people will be the sole responsibility of the government.

Henminlal Singson  
Department of Information & Publicity  
Kuki Inpi Jiribam , Tamenglong & Noney District.

Head Office : Phaitol Village Tousem Sub-Division, Tamenglong District Manipur, Pin – 795115

arising out of their insensitivity to the people will be the sole responsibility of the government, it added.



**Without victory,  
there is no survival.**  
– Winston Churchill



# NINE POINTS DECLARATION MADE DURING 5TH ITLF PUBLIC CONSULTATION; KUKI-ZO MLAS SHOULD RESIGN IF NEED ARISES, OBJECTION TO SCRAPPING OF FMR BORDER FENCING AMONG NINE POINTS DECLARATION

The Declaration of Nine Points was made in the 5th Public Consultation organised by Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum at EBC Gospel Centenary Hall, New Lamka on Saturday.

The public consultation held with the theme 'Way forward for our movement' was attended by various Kuki Zo CSO leaders and public from different, at EBC Gospel Centenary Hall, New Lamka on Saturday.

The Nine Points Declaration includes approaching the Mizoram government for the Kuki Zo future political way forward, objection to scrapping of FMR and construction of border fencing, and to continue any form of agitation and action as needed. It also includes supporting and cooperating with any plans, projects and policies made by ITLF to strengthen the Kuki Zo movement.

It was also agreed that the Kuki Zo cannot be under the government who killed, destroyed churches and properties, who separated Kuki Zo physically and demographically and also who took an oath under militia group Arambai Tenggol. And as such, the Centre government should directly administer Kuki Zo from Delhi.

The SoO should not sign for the integrity of Manipur and should stand firm with the Kuki Zo demand for a Union Territory with a legislature. Concerning future political movements, a meeting should be held as soon as possible with SoO groups and Kuki Zo MLAs, with the initiative of Zo United.

In the meeting, it was also agreed that the Ministry of Home Affairs should be questioned on the status of Kuki Zo political demand by joint signatures of SoO, MLAs and CSOs.

The Kuki Zo MLAs cannot be part of the Meitei government who killed Kuki Zo people and who took oath under the militia Arambai Tenggol.



## ITLF 5th PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### DECLARATION 27th January 2024

1. For our future political way forward, the Mizoram government should be approached.
2. We cannot be under the government who killed and destroyed our churches and properties, who separated us physically and demographically and also who took an oath under militia group Arambai Tenggol. Centre should directly administer us from Delhi.
3. Objection to scrap FMR and border fencing.
4. To continue any form of agitations and actions as the need arises.
5. To support and cooperate with any plans, projects and policies made by ITLF to strengthen our movement.
6. SoO groups should not sign for the integrity of Manipur and stand firm with our demand for UT with legislature.
7. For our future political movement, meeting with SoO groups and our MLAs should be held with the initiative of Zo United as soon as possible.
8. MHA should be questioned on the status of our political demand by joint signatures of SoO, MLAs and CSOs.
9. Our MLAs cannot be part of the Meitei government who killed us and who took oath under the militia Arambai Tenggol. They should work according to the wishes of the people. They should counter the Biren government in favour of our people. They should resign if the need arises.

  
Letpu Haokip,  
Moderator

  
Thangzang,  
Moderator

The Kuki Zo MLAs should work according to the wishes of the people, counter the Biren government in favour of Kuki Zo people, and they should resign if the need arises.

During the consultation, representatives of Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum, Kuki Inpi Manipur, Hill Tribe Council Moreh, Zo United, other leaders, and a few among the public were also given a chance to share their ideas.

The Nine Points Declaration was made after taking into account the suggestions and feedbacks given by the leaders and people attending the consultation.



# AICC PREZ WRITES TO HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH, CITES COLLAPSE OF ADMINISTRATION IN MANIPUR

President of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), Mallikarjun Kharge, has written to the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, stating that all the events in Manipur point to a complete collapse of administration in the state.

The AICC president wrote to Amit Shah on Saturday regarding the latest developments in Manipur and mentioned that it has been almost nine months since Manipur erupted in violence, and the situation has only turned from bad to worse.

In the letter, Mallikarjun stated that on January 24, 2024, a meeting was convened with ministers/MPs/MLAs in the historical Kangla Fort in Imphal, a place heavily guarded by the Central and State Security Forces.

Many members present in the meeting were compelled and coerced to attend the meeting by an armed group. Not only that, the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee President and MLA from Wangkhem, Keisham Meghachandra, was brutally assaulted and tortured during this meeting, stated the letter.

Kharge mentioned that this shocking incident occurred despite the heavy presence of Central and Security forces, and intelligence personnel. Till date, there has been no action from the Manipur chief minister and the Home Ministry on the very disturbing subversion of democratic processes by a non-state actor, the AICC president added.

Kharge went on to state that it is shameful that the Prime Minister's eloquent silence when it comes to Manipur seems to be the prevailing strategy from all important stakeholders in both the State and the Centre.



Sharing his experience during his visit to the State this month, Kharge added that Manipuri society remains bitterly divided, and no concrete steps have been taken towards peace, relief, and justice for those still suffering from the aftermath of the violence in the state since May 3, 2023.

“All these events point to a complete collapse of the administration in Manipur,” Kharge stated, adding that the continuing silence and inaction of the Prime Minister are an injustice to the people of Manipur.

“Governments come and go, but it is the responsibility of Constitutional functionaries to ensure that democratic structures, institutions, and processes are protected and preserved,” said Kharge.

The AICC president urged Amit Shah to take urgent action to ensure that democracy and the rule of law prevail once more in a very important and valued part of our wonderfully diverse country.

# EMPOWERMENT OR EXPLOITATION: MEITEIS' 'NARI SHAKTI' IN MANIPUR RAISES CONCERNS FOR MAINLAND INDIANS

With Nari Shakti as a theme on Republic Day 2024, Manipur Tableau featured a women-run market 'Ima Keithel' and a lotus silk-making process that highlighted women's roles in the socio-economic development. However, their Nari Shakti ideology is a threat to their kind belonging to different communities, its women empowerment is not for all but only Meitei women-centric.

Then, Meitei women folk surrendered Kuki women to be paraded naked, raped, tortured, and even staged a drama to save the rapists from police custody. Now they can be seen openly extorting money with a threat that they can go back to MAINLAND if they find them a nuisance when a woman shopkeeper asked their rights to openly extort the money so frequently. Their display of the Nari Shakti Theme tableau is such a hypocrisy, An empowerment for one to torture and bully the other is not an empowerment, but still is an oppression and discrimination.

The hatred and enmity for whom they called Outsiders or Mayang, a term they used to refer to people from Mainland Indians is a more than a decade-long history. Kangla Karbar, a Manipuri movie will give you a glimpse of how they think of the mainland people. Fraternity is never the ideal they cherish and encourage, but secession from India is always their goal.

Thus don't be fooled by "the Hindu is in danger card". It's the camouflage they wear to take advantage of the influence of The popularity of right-wing Hindutva extremists in India today. Ex-mainlanders residing in Manipur can give you an account of their cruelty. Grabbing off their lands, extortion, physical violence, mob terrorizing their localised locality and sometimes kidnapping even for ransom will be the experience of most of them. They will be Sanamahis and Meiteis first



*PIC: Screenshot of a Meitei woman abusing Non-Manipuri shop-keeper.*

always, Hindu cards will see the light only when they feel threatened and when they want to be accepted. Will the High Court of Manipur take suo moto cognizance of the incident that violates the Fundamental Rights of these traders and businessmen in Manipur provided under Article 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution of India that provides the Right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, provided the trade or occupation is not illegal or immoral and has technical or professional qualifications when necessary, as the police themselves who are

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controlled by Arambai Tenggol will never entertain an FIR even if the victim knocks on their doors.

Application of ILP in the state is not a reasonable restriction since they carry out the business after securing the permit from the state authorities. So who are these women folk to disrupt and illegally extort others' money at their will? Or is this an act to send out the message to India, that it's their land now thus their way and the state government that exists is just a puppet?

Extortion undermines the stability of society and the rule of law. It creates an environment of fear and mistrust and can discourage people from reporting crimes or cooperating with authorities. By making extortion illegal, the Indian government seeks to protect the rights and

well-being of its citizens, maintain social stability, and preserve the rule of law as per section 384 IPC.

But the larger question is will they be held accountable for their criminal act? Is the existence of the BJP government even for a namesake more important than the minorities and their citizens except for the Meitei suffering, discrimination and injustice? Lawlessness and anarchy are the new normal in Meitei-dominated areas. It's just a matter of time for both Biren and the Central government to accept the fact. History will not be kind to them either as they are towards the minorities suffering, discrimination and injustice.

## THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ

The Caravan  
@thecaravanindia

#ManipurViolence | It can no longer be disputed that the #Meiteis have the support of the state police, and the weapons they were able to loot from police armouries have played a major part.

@jeegujsa in our August cover story:



From caravanmagazine.in

11:45 PM · Jan 26, 2024 · 6,575 Views

Abdul Quadir - عبدالقادر  
@Northistan

Biren Singh's Deceptive Claims Mask Militant Atrocity: Kuki Tribe Village Targeted in Ruthless Ethnic Cleansing Assault

Chief Minister Biren Singh, backed by the BJP-RSS, deceitfully asserts notorious militants like Arambai Tenggol surrendered weapons. Despite a facade of peace, they ruthlessly attacked a Kuki Tribe Christian village, orchestrating ethnic cleansing. Armed and uniformed, they've morphed into a menacing, illegal paramilitary force.



5:41 PM · Jan 27, 2024 · 1,307 Views

**FEATURED ARTICLE**

## Manipur's Descent Into a Vigilante State Helps No One: Here's Why

**Damudor Arambam**

Amid the backdrop of Kuki-Meitei violence, a distinctive trend unfolded at the heart of Manipuri society, giving birth to a 'society of vigilance,' where the aftermath saw a proliferation of vigilante activities like street patrols, border patrols, and militias, especially in the valley districts of Manipur.

Vigilantes in the valley claimed they would do what the state police and other authorities were either unable or unwilling to: maintain public safety and secure streets and borders against alleged threats from Kuki populations. In the realm of vigilante endeavours, where intimidation tends to outweigh direct violence, occasional instances of brutality and small-scale acts of terror unfold, all in the purported mission of safeguarding society, as advocates rationalise their participation by asserting the government's inadequacy in addressing pressing issues through its established mechanisms and institutions.

In mainland India, vigilantism is primarily associated with Hindu dogmatic religious extreme rightist ideology, particularly against minorities. With the onset of violence in the state, diverse political affiliations in national politics have crafted narratives, each embracing partisan positions in the recurring blame game against the other.

Even the mainstream media did not spare their habitual practice of sidelining, indulging in exacerbated

narratives that often correlate with the unrelated when covering stories from this region. However, the question of how specific cases in Manipur are linked to Hindu right-wing extremism remains an empirical matter that requires further investigation.

While numerous vigilante groups that emerged initially targeted entire categories of "others," often under the pretence of defending the Meiteis, the current vigilantism environment extends its focus beyond specific communities. It encompasses those who dissent against prevailing trends of enmity.

Instances of insulting the minority Pangals (Manipur Muslims), though they remain neutral in the conflict, are frequently found on social media. Furthermore, instances of moral policing targeting Meitei women by vigilantes, including some who are women themselves, have been reported.

Within the domain of public discussion, a series of unsettling events unfolded, revealing a disconcerting pattern where individuals, initially vocal about their convictions, found themselves ensnared in a web of coercion and compelled to retract their statements.

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Babloo Loitongbam, a human rights activist known for challenging the state's immunity for decades, suddenly became a casualty of the ominous trend as violence erupted in the state. The turning point occurred when Loitongbam, who had voiced his concerns through the digital news platform NewsClick when the violence just started, found himself in the crosshairs of public threats following his bold questioning of the BJP central authorities' decision to retain N. Biren Singh.

As the consequences of Loitongbam's words reverberated, it became evident that the reprisals he faced were intricately linked to his audacious challenge to the status quo.

Brinda Thounaojam, a former police officer and daughter-in-law of the former UNLF chief R.K. Meghen, found herself entangled in a web of coercion that extended far beyond the confines of her private life. The pressure to retract personal opinions made through Zoom and telephonic calls became an unnerving ordeal, as she was compelled to do so not once but twice. The consequences of this forced compliance reached a disturbing crescendo, with acts of vigilantism targeting her private properties.

In a parallel incident, the spotlight turned to the progressive singer and lyricist Akhu Chingambam, who became the latest victim of this insidious coercion. His outspoken social media posts and comments triggered a chain of events that saw him forcibly abducted. Despite the gravity of his situation, Akhu later emerged on social media, releasing a statement that seemingly contradicted the apparent threat he faced. He insisted that nothing untoward had transpired and reassured the public of his current safety.

Beneath the surface, these incidents uncovered a shadowy reality of unreported cases unfolding daily. The events surrounding Babloo Loitongbam, Brinda Thounaojam, and Akhu Chingambam offered glimpses into a world where coercion, silence, and the manipulation of narratives operated in the shadows, leaving a trail of untold stories waiting to be brought to light.

Amidst the evolving landscape, a poignant question lingers: Is the recent development of vigilantism in Manipur either the consequence of a neoliberal withdrawal of the state from public security services or an extension of the state to counter-insurgency? Delving into the fabric of this societal transformation, a historical exploration becomes imperative, unveiling the intricate threads woven before and after the onset of the ongoing Meitei-Kuki conflict.

### **The Evolution of Vigilantism in Manipur**

Vigilantism, characterised by taking the law into one's own hands without legal authority, holds a longstanding tradition in Manipur. The once-relevant non-state or traditional justice systems among the Meitei inhabitants have waned, creating a contrast with the enduring pluralistic dynamics among the state's tribal communities. The Meitei community tends to perceive any attempt at dispute resolution as having vigilante undertones. This includes various actors, ranging from civic volunteers and insurgents since the 1980s to present-day organisations addressing issues like drugs, substances, and social disputes. This intricate interplay between historical traditions and current challenges emphasises the necessity for a nuanced approach to justice and governance in Manipur.

With the onset of the Kuki-Meitei conflict, several political militias with a strong ethnocentric and religious agenda, are reportedly actively defending Meitei villages in the Manipur Valley from alleged Kuki threats, with some of these groups being accused of having state sponsorship. These entities have played a role in defending the Meitei villages within their neighbourhoods. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that there have been numerous reports of alleged excesses committed by these groups, some of which might have been intentionally omitted due to fear or other reasons.

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Apart from the issue of human rights abuses, these vigilantes often prove to be unreliable, possess inadequate skills, and lack transparency and accountability. In the realm of law enforcement, their shortcomings become evident as they operate outside established systems, raising concerns about their effectiveness and the potential for unintended consequences. The absence of proper oversight and standardised procedures can compromise the overall reliability and integrity of vigilante efforts.

### **Response from the State**

In response to the rise of vigilantism, characterised by a law enforcement approach, the state of Manipur took legislative action to regulate such behaviour. The Manipur State Assembly unanimously passed the “Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Bill, 2018.” This legislation proposes life imprisonment for individuals engaged in mob violence leading to the death of a person.

However, the legislation, while addressing the growing issue of vigilantism, carries an underlying agenda. It aims not only to curb crimes committed by vigilantes but also to challenge the legitimacy of non-state actors attempting to establish a dichotomy. The legislation strategically works to counteract the efforts of these actors, avoiding the systematic development of an alternative legal framework that could challenge the existing state structure.

Amidst the ongoing strife between the Kukis and Meiteis, there is speculation that this may be part of a larger strategic plan orchestrated by the central and state governments to counter Meitei insurgents. The involvement of vigilante militias in this scenario adds a layer of complexity. In the context of armed conflict, vigilantism seems to emerge from para-state organisations aiming to substitute themselves for the central government’s authority. Many define militias, in the context of counterinsurgency, campaigns and civil wars as armed groups linked to the government and separate from the regular forces.

The neighbourhood corps, adorned in uniforms and operating across all local areas in the Manipur Valley,

fulfils formal policing functions. These functions encompass protecting communities, maintaining law and order, responding to emergencies, collaborating with law enforcement personnel, and exchanging information. This is evident from the narrative generated among the public in general. The role of these militias in the current situation remains unclear, contributing to the perplexity surrounding the conflict.

### **Public Opinion**

In the quiet town, a palpable atmosphere of fear and terror had taken hold of the common masses. Strangely, the usual voices of opposition in the media and academic spaces, which should have vocally decried such a phenomenon, seemed to have inexplicably aligned themselves with the state. There was a conspicuous absence of dissent against the vigilante actions and, more specifically, the government of N. Biren Singh.

Within social media, where the breeding ground for hatred and anger is apparent, a diverse array of responses often emerges. This diversity is frequently marked by the conspicuous silence of those who dissent against vigilantism. Although many individuals express sympathy towards vigilante acts, instances of wavering opinions exist. These individuals, however, find themselves unable to openly articulate their changing perspectives due to the fear instilled by groups that assert their role in protecting society. Nevertheless, a considerable number of people advocate for becoming part of larger, more diverse vigilante groups.

Amidst the persistent violence, a prevalent narrative resonates through the valley, emphasising that the current moment is not conducive to blaming the government. Rather, it encourages taking immediate responsibility. The prevailing sentiment urges individuals to wield arms and defend the people, often manifesting in actions directed against their community, thus altering the trajectory from its original course.

*Contd.*

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**Way Forward**

In vigilantism, everyone will participate, whether consciously or unconsciously, independent of the state, until it directly affects themselves. In a society where lawlessness has been ingrained for many years, the normalisation of vigilance is not only extraordinary but rather a progression towards a degraded society.

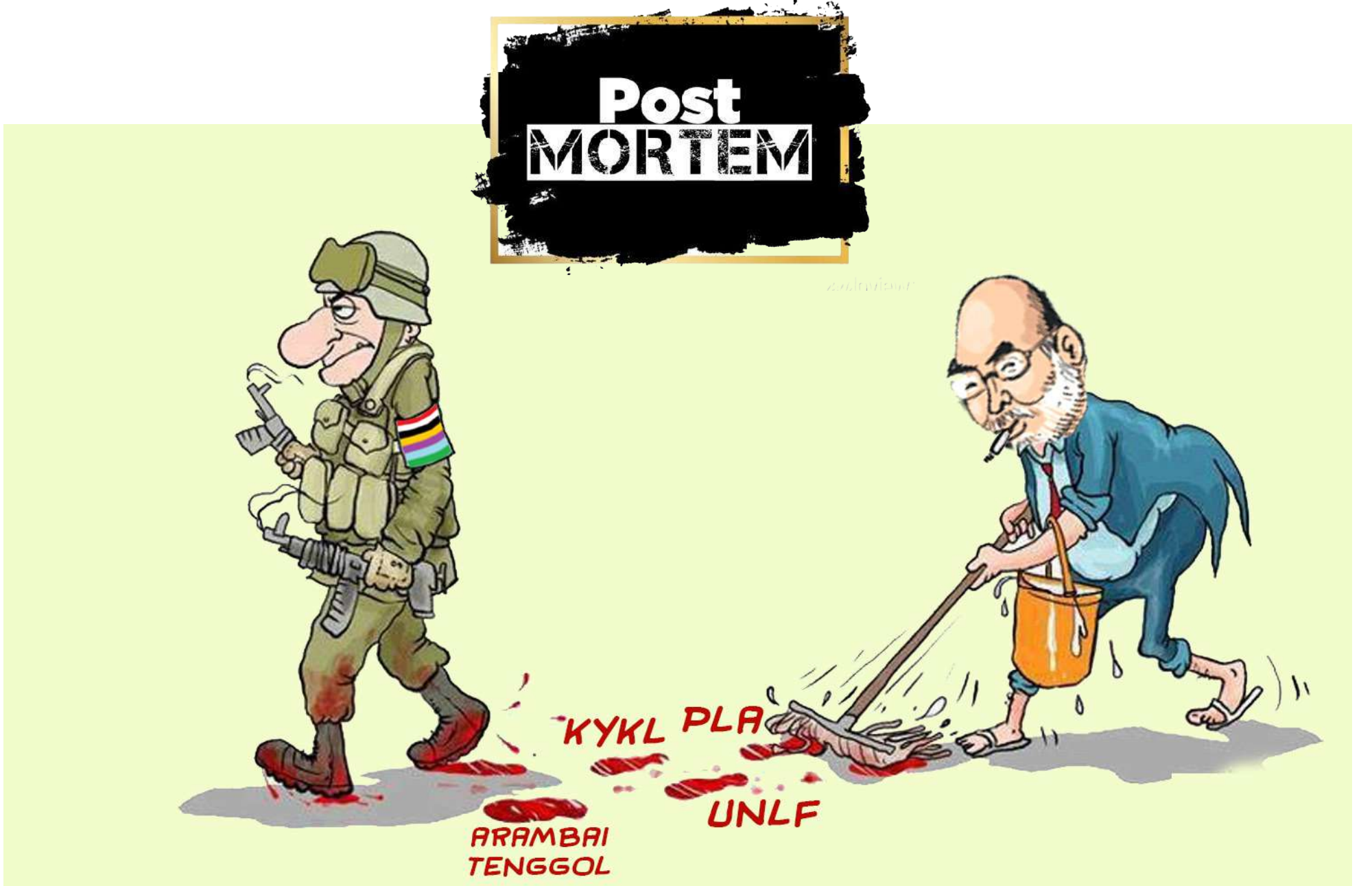
At times, the insurgents in the valley frequently adjudicate disputes concerning the lives and properties of the general populace. However, their departure has resulted in vigilante groups filling the void once occupied by non-state entities. For the

state, it represents a broader strategy of countering insurgency by extending hands to some unorganised groups, allowing them to utilise the apparatus of the state.

In response to the prolonged passivity of the state, civil society, often guided by valley insurgents in occupying these spaces, faces an urgent imperative to assertively engage within the realm of mass consciousness.

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The author is a Meitei PhD. Scholar, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, JNU.



**THE CLEANING BOY**



# The journey

Hatred and vengeance sprouts within the hearts .  
Blood flows like a river, wealth turns into ashes  
Seas become cold, the skies turn dark.  
Years of friendship now is ruined in a blink of an eye

A wound so deep does leave a scar  
A scar to reminisce in every page of life  
Unless time, the master worker mend everything.  
But can time bring back the death?

The living and death together we fight this war.  
Fight until freedom and liberty kisses our feet.  
Our brave heroes who sacrificed their lives  
Our ancestral land welcomes you all, dear martyrs.

*- Lily Kipgen*

