



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW REVIEW**

*An International Open Access Double Blind Peer Reviewed, Referred Journal*

---

Volume 4 | Issue 3 | 2025

Art. 16

---

# Human Rights Violations in Manipur: A Critical Analysis of Domestic Legal Frameworks and the Path to Justice

Aayush Pawar

*Law Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year,*

*West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences*

Nimish Ranjan

*Law Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year,*

*West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences*

---

## **Recommended Citation**

Aayush Pawar and Nimish Ranjan, *Human Rights Violations in Manipur: A Critical Analysis of Domestic Legal Frameworks and the Path to Justice*, 4 IJHRLR 224-239 (2025).

Available at [www.humanrightlawreview.in/archives/](http://www.humanrightlawreview.in/archives/).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the International Journal of Human Rights Law Review by an authorized Lex Assisto Media and Publications administrator. For more information, please contact [info@humanrightlawreview.in](mailto:info@humanrightlawreview.in).

---

# Human Rights Violations in Manipur: A Critical Analysis of Domestic Legal Frameworks and the Path to Justice

**Aayush Pawar**

Law Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year,  
West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences

**Nimish Ranjan**

Law Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year,  
West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences

---

**Manuscript Received**  
02 May 2025

**Manuscript Accepted**  
05 May 2025

**Manuscript Published**  
12 May. 2025

---

## ABSTRACT

*“Mum, today I may die or I may live. I don’t know anymore...”, a young Meitei woman, surrounded by aggressive Kuki men outside her home, said to her mother over the phone. In the present world, what would have appeared like a horrific nightmare has become a sobering reality. In 2023, there was a startling increase in violence in Manipur Indian state in the northeast, which led to a serious worsening of human rights abuses. Following the High Court of Manipur's ruling to grant the Meitei community status of ST, the crisis, known as the Manipur violence of 2023, erupted. The Kuki and Naga ST communities, who live in Manipur's hilly areas, objected to this ruling because they felt their long-standing privileges would be violated. Under the auspices of the ATSUM, these tribal communities planned a protest march on May 3, 2023, which infuriated the Meitei people. Serious human rights violations, mass displacement, property devastation, and a collapse in social harmony were the outcomes of this dispute, which turned into widespread violence. There were serious criticisms of how the government has handled the violence, including claims of disproportionate militarisation and an excessive use of force. As a result of the forcible relocation of thousands of civilians, which significantly restricted their access basic facilities like education and healthcare. This essay aims to assess the origins and effects of the 2023 Manipur violence as well as its wider ramifications in light of international human rights standards and commitments. With an emphasis on the power dynamics between the Meitei and tribal tribes, the study also*

*investigates whether the conflict can be comprehended via the prism of a majority-minority conflict model.*

### KEYWORDS

*Human rights violations, minority rights, displacement, communal violence, gender-based violence, state accountability, freedom of expression, civil liberties, discrimination, right to life.*

### INTRODUCTION

Human rights are the fundamental rights that all people are born with. The enjoyment of fundamental rights is never contingent on a state or culture. All people are born with equal rights and dignity, according to the 1948 UDHR.<sup>1</sup> Any state or international organisation that wants to advance and defend fundamental freedoms and human rights must draw inspiration from it.<sup>2</sup>

India, the world's largest democracy, upheld human rights according to the UDHR after gaining independence. To defend the people's fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary and other institutions were set up. The Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993<sup>3</sup> also established human rights at the state and national levels commissioners and human rights courts to protect people's life, liberty, and dignity. Nonetheless, incidents of different human rights abuses are becoming more frequent in India.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of caste, creed, nationality, race, language, religion, or any other status, everyone in a liberal democracy is entitled to their human rights. Every state's primary goal is to advance and protect human rights for all.<sup>5</sup>

After seventy-seven years of independence, Indian society continues to practise a variety of social evils that are incompatible with human dignity, which is extremely degrading. Despite the provision of constitutional protections, India has seen human

---

<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc. A/810 at 71 (Dec. 10, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> What are human rights? available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>

<sup>3</sup> The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, No. 10 of 1994, India Code (1994).

<sup>4</sup> Amartish Kaur, PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA: A REVIEW, Jamia Law Journal.

<sup>5</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA - AN OVERVIEW, available at [https://www.ihra.co.in/uploads/pdf/Human\\_rights\\_law\\_in\\_India.pdf](https://www.ihra.co.in/uploads/pdf/Human_rights_law_in_India.pdf).

rights violations in a variety of contexts and ways. Minorities face a challenging situation due to government's inaction and polarising approach towards society.<sup>6</sup> The people of Manipur were suffering from the most recent addition to human rights violations. Therefore, the human rights violations that have occurred in Manipur during recent ethnic confrontations will be the main focus of this paper.

### **WHAT CAUSED THIS VIOLENCE**

Tracing the historical origins of these societies' interactions with one another is essential to comprehending why there has been such a high level of animosity.

Significant historical relationships exist between these two communities i.e. Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur, Myanmar, and the neighbouring areas. The Kukis are majorly Christians who are spread all over the northeast India. Many of them have roots in Myanmar, whereas the Meiteis are predominantly Hindu with some Sanamahi adherents.<sup>7</sup>

When the Kukis objected to the Meiteis' claim for formal tribal status, tensions increased. The Kukis contend that giving the Meiteis this status would enable them to purchase land and establish themselves in mostly Kuki districts, enhancing their already significant influence over social and governmental matters.<sup>8</sup> The conflict's fundamental causes, however, are intricate and varied. The Meitei-led government's war on narcotics, according to the Kukis, is really a front for uprooting their communities, while illegal migration from Myanmar has put additional strain on land resources. Many young people have also been drawn to various armed groups as a result of unemployment.<sup>9</sup>

The main parties to the dispute are the Meitei, Kuki and Naga groups, which have a history of fighting over religious differences

---

<sup>6</sup> Dr. N. Pramod Singh, Human Rights Movement in Manipur, Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science Volume 11 ~ Issue 10 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Anshuman Behera, The Social and Political Dimensions of Ethnic Conflicts in Manipur available at <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-social-and-political-dimensions-of-ethnic-conflicts-in-manipur>.

<sup>8</sup> Manipur violence: Who are Meiteis and Kukis? What are they fighting over? available at : [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/how-to/manipur-violence-who-are-meiteis-and-kukis-what-are-they-fighting-over/articleshow/100038719.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/how-to/manipur-violence-who-are-meiteis-and-kukis-what-are-they-fighting-over/articleshow/100038719.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst).

<sup>9</sup> The Unfolding Kuki–Meitei Conflict in Manipur, available at <https://www.idsa.in/publisher/issuebrief/the-unfolding-kuki-meitei-conflict-in-manipur/>.

and competing claims to their territory. However, the Meitei and Kuki populations are primarily involved in the most recent wave of violence, which has its roots solely in ethnicity rather than religion.<sup>10</sup>

In the midst of the ongoing conflict, women have unfortunately been the focus of assault and humiliation. A lethal spiral of retaliatory violence by Meitei mobs against Kuki tribal women was sparked by the recent attack on Kuki women, which came after false claims of a Meitei lady being raped by Kuki militiamen.<sup>11</sup>

The region is separated into two main halves, with the Kuki population primarily residing in the hills and the Meitei community controlling the valley.<sup>12</sup> Manipuri nationalists argue that these issues stem from the forced 1949 union of the kingdom of Manipur with the Indian state. Following this union, the Indian government gained authority over Manipur's diverse ethnic composition, which comprised many distinct ethnic groups with unique identities, objectives, and concerns. Two prominent ethnic groups, the Nagas and the Kukis, have a turbulent past marked by episodes of premeditated violence, especially in the early to mid-1990s. Since the underlying issues between these groups have never been fully resolved despite numerous attempts to foster peace, there has always been a continuous atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust between them. The main causes are competition for resources, land disputes, and problems with political representation.<sup>13</sup>

The Meiteis have a demographic and political edge in addition to superior education. Many Meitei people enjoy the privileges of being classified as SC, OBC, or EWS, and their language is listed in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule. Kukis and Nagas noted that although 90% of the state's land is made up of tribal territories, the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley receives the lion's share of funding and development efforts, which is unjust to the tribes that have lived in the state since its founding.<sup>14</sup> According

---

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Data | Kuki-Meitei ethnic violence: The sharp hill-valley divide that is Manipur's burden available at <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-kuki-meitei-ethnic-violence-the-sharp-hill-valley-divide-that-is-manipurs-burden/article66835876.ece>.

<sup>13</sup> Jaideep Mazumdar, *Chronicles Of Clashes: Why The Kukis Have Been At War With Other Ethnic Communities* available at <https://swarajyamag.com/north-east/chronicles-of-clashes-why-the-kukis-have-been-at-war-with-other-ethnic-communities>.

<sup>14</sup> Navigating the Kuki-Meitei Conflict in India's Manipur State available at <https://thediplomat.com/2023/08/navigating-the-kuki-meitei-conflict-in-indias-manipur-state/>.

to the Kukis, giving Meiteis ST status would cause them to miss out on employment opportunities, give them access to land in the hills, and force the tribal people to leave, ultimately causing them to lose their homes, means of subsistence, and sense of self.<sup>15</sup>

The Kuki tribes have also lately begun to call for independent administrative structures and a separate homeland. Additionally, Kuki Innpi Manipur (KIM), the Kukis' highest body, has been advocating for a distinct Union Territory or state with the support of the ITLF. Meanwhile, a number of other state groups are calling for greater freedom and autonomy. Political instability has resulted from these demands from both the state's hills and valleys.<sup>16</sup>

Since 2012, the Meiteis have been clamouring for Scheduled Tribe (ST) designation in order to obtain the extra benefits that Article 342 of the constitution<sup>17</sup> stipulates for STs. The Kuki tribes felt endangered after the state administration was ordered by the High Court to think about extending the special advantages and other quotas granted to the tribal communities to the majority Meitei population.<sup>18</sup> The Meiteis would have more access to better employment and educational possibilities if these benefits were extended to them. There was clear and palpable discontent within the Meitei group because they already had an advantage over the Kuki tribe in these areas. This resulted in increased violence between the two communities, particularly during the "Tribal Solidarity March" on May 3, 2023. Since then, this has resulted in the expulsion of about 60 thousand people, who are now compelled to live in makeshift shelters.<sup>19</sup>

## **REPORTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN MANIPUR**

Following a tribal unification march headed by Kuki in 10 out of the 16 districts of the state, violence broke out in Churachandpur, on May 3, 2023.<sup>20</sup> As the Meitei voiced their concerns through

---

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Kuki-Zo forum reiterates demand for separate administration in Manipur available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur/tribal-forum-reiterates-demand-for-separate-administration-in-manipur/article68951595.ece>.

<sup>17</sup> Constitution of India art. 342.

<sup>18</sup> Mutum Churamani Meitei v. The State of Manipur, 2023 SCC OnLine Mani 156.

<sup>19</sup> Sachi Jain, HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER SIEGE: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR available at <https://theamikusqraie.com/human-rights-under-siege-communal-violence-in-manipur>.

<sup>20</sup> Days after peace deal, clashes break out in Manipur; one dead, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur/fresh-clashes-in-manipurs-churachandpur-several-injured-in-pelting-of-stones/article69347566.ece>.

blockades and counter-protests, tensions rose and skirmishes broke out across Manipur. At 10:30 a.m., forest offices were already being burned at the Churachandpur rally, which was defended by Kuki militants, and descended into violence from the start. It is unclear whether the burning of these forest offices was a protest against the state government's eviction effort against immigrants and illegal encroachers in Protected Forests (PF), Reserved Forests (RF), Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Protected Sites.<sup>21</sup>

According to Phanjoubam, the Nagas had disassociated individuals from the Kuki cause in this conflict, making useless the well-known conflict models of Christians versus Hindus, tribals versus non-tribals, and minority versus majority that were easily embraced by crisis reporters and commentators, including the European Parliament in its resolution on Manipur. Eventually, it should be acknowledged that Kukis and Meiteis only they, and not the egotistical voices from the outside, can stop their suffering by re-establishing their previous connections.<sup>22</sup>

Since the beginning of the ethnic violence, over 100 individuals have been killed and were gravely injured. A total of 349 refugee camps were established to house the more than 50,000 displaced individuals. Many houses and properties were plundered, vandalised, and burned. The communities were terrified and heartbroken by this. Following the disturbances, the state administration also restricted internet access. The 'no-go' areas in Manipur were essentially separated and protected by both security forces and community groupings. Meitei people were prohibited from travelling to the hill regions, and Kuki people were prohibited from travelling through Meitei-controlled parts of the Imphal valley.<sup>23</sup> Amnesty International spoke with a hill tribe of victims of violence who were ambushed by a mob on their route to a camp for refugees on May 4. The attack claimed the lives of two of the family members. Significant injuries were also sustained by other family members. According to the victim, the mob outnumbered the police and blocked their entry, making it impossible for them to get to the scene of the crime. They were forced to flee their house, which was then demolished and

---

<sup>21</sup> Protesters torch forest office in Manipur's Churachandpur available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/imphal/protesters-torch-forest-office-in-manipurs-churachandpur-as-violence-escalates/articleshow/99879719.cms>.

<sup>22</sup> Manipur's Naga angle available at <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/manipurs-naga-angle-nagas-have-distanced-themselves-from-the-kuki-cause-in-this-fight/cid/1954475>.

<sup>23</sup> Tens of thousands displaced by ethnic violence in northeast India suffer squalid conditions in camps available at <https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2024/tens-of-thousands-displaced-by-ethnic-violence-in-northeast-india-suffer-squalid-conditions-in-camps>.

stripped of all they owned. Additionally, the deceased members of the family have not been able to have their remains returned or have their funerals performed.<sup>24</sup> Claims of bias have been rejected by the Manipur police. Furthermore, the media reported that 17 temples were destroyed. A throng also attacked a Kuki MLA and his Kuki driver. The driver passed away, but the MLA was sent to the hospital.<sup>25</sup>

In areas under Kuki's control, Meitei residents were also attacked and compelled to leave their houses. Amnesty International conducted an interview with a Meitei community victim of violence in a highland district on the evening of May 3–4. After midnight, members of the victim's relatives, including the elderly, were forced to leave their houses. A family member was wounded after being shot. Nonetheless, the consequences of the government's inaction and delay were felt by victims in all areas.<sup>26</sup>

All district magistrates in the state were given a "shoot-at-sight" directive by the Manipur State administration on May 4, flagrantly breaking international human rights legislation and norms that permit the use of force in dire circumstances when all other options for warning, persuasion, and proportionate force have been used and the situation is uncontrollable.<sup>27</sup>

It is an intended fatal force to shoot at sight. Officers are only allowed to use such force in cases where it is absolutely required to prevent an immediate risk of death or severe harm, according to international law and standards but because these conditions were not explicitly stated in the order, it essentially permitted the wilful and capricious murder of anyone who did not represent a threat. Members of the Central Reserve Police Force's specialist Rapid Action Force (RAF), vandalised private persons' automobiles in Imphal West on June 12. CCTV cameras captured the event. An individual whose automobile was vandalised was interviewed by Amnesty International.<sup>28</sup> The individual attested to the staff

---

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> What is happening to Christians in Manipur? available at <https://www.opendoors.org.au/frontline-faith/understanding-manipur-what-led-to-the-recent-violence-against-christians-in-india/>.

<sup>26</sup> India: Authorities 'missing-in-action' amid ongoing violence and impunity in Manipur state – New testimonies available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/india-authorities-missing-in-action-amid-ongoing-violence-and-impunity-in-manipur-state-new-testimonies/>.

<sup>27</sup> Many killed in Manipur riots; State government issues shoot-at-sight order available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/manipur-violence-government-issues-shoot-at-sight-orders-in-extreme-cases/article66812131.ece>.

<sup>28</sup> India: Authorities 'missing-in-action' amid ongoing violence and impunity in Manipur state – New testimonies available at



members' vandalism. Two employees were reportedly suspended as a result of the incident. Three RAF members were arrested in a different incident for attempting to burn down a local business.<sup>29</sup>

The main issues of contention between the Naga and Kuki groups are self-determination and land invasion. In May 2023, for the first time, the Meitei-Kuki conflict gained a significant religious edge when churches were burned and a call for Hindu unification was made, bringing the Meiteis and the Hindus of North India together.<sup>30</sup> In Manipur, these intercommunal dynamics have led to a number of difficulties and conflicts. Following the destruction of their churches and colonies/settlements, the KIM claimed in a media statement that the "hounding" of "all" of the Kukis served as justification for the demand.<sup>31</sup>

A video went viral showing two Kuki women, being snatched from their houses, being publicly nude, and being sexually assaulted by men who appeared to be from Meitei community went viral on July 19. The women were ejected from the police station after attempting to seek refuge there. When the younger girl's father and adolescent brother attempted to help her, the mob allegedly killed them and gang-raped her. Before the video came to light, officials did nothing for more than two months after the complaint was made. According to the Kuki, the police are siding with the Meitei.<sup>32</sup>

Over 50 thousand in Manipur and the other northeastern states, people are currently residing in relief camps after being forced to flee their homes. A Manipur survivor told Amnesty International that their family didn't have enough shelter or housing in the camps where they lived.<sup>33</sup> The survivor voiced concerns about the lack of sanitary facilities and compared the conditions to a shed. One victim who had been assigned to another camp, reportedly went two days and nights without food or drink in the early aftermath of the incident. It's also becoming difficult to get

---

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/india-authorities-missing-in-action-amid-ongoing-violence-and-impunity-in-manipur-state-new-testimonies/>.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> Constitution of India art. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Manipur violence | After Kuki Inpi hardens stance, signs of fissures among groups demanding separation available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/manipur-after-kuki-inpi-hardens-stance-signs-of-fissures-among-groups-demanding-separation/article67091479.ece>.

<sup>32</sup> Manipur: Shocking Video Shows Two Kuki Women Paraded Naked; One Was Allegedly Gang-Raped available at <https://thewire.in/communalism/manipur-video-two-kuki-women-paraded-naked-gang-raped>.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

medical supplies and services. Amnesty International was informed by another activist who was setting up aid camps in Manipur, It's a hard task. Camps lack proper sanitation. They said, It has not been implemented, to the government's pledges of financial aid for the 36 displaced people. These claims are propaganda. People are not idiots.<sup>34</sup>

These claims of poor housing, sanitation, food, water, and medical treatment do not align with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which compel the government to work to protect and defend the human rights of IDPs.<sup>35</sup> IDP must have secure access to basic shelter and housing, food and drinkable water, adequate clothing, and sanitary facilities, regardless of the situation and without bias from competent authorities.<sup>36</sup>

The significance of governments carrying out their obligation to offer assistance and protection to internally displaced people inside their borders is also emphasised.<sup>37</sup> Children, unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, female heads of household, mothers of small children should all be given the protection, support, and care that is appropriate for their unique situation and takes into account their individual needs.<sup>38</sup>

The Manipur state administration was ordered by the High Court to submit its opinions regarding the Meiteis' application for Schedule Tribe (ST) status is frequently blamed for the deadly skirmishes between the Kukis and Meiteis that broke out on May 3.<sup>39</sup>

Legally speaking, the Meiteis would be able to own the land resources that the Nagas and Kukis today hold most of the authority over thanks to their ST status. The Nagas and Kukis, on the other hand, are concerned that giving the Meiteis ST designation will give them a monopoly over the land, further solidifying their hold on political and financial power.<sup>40</sup>

On May 29, 2013, the Indian government requested a suggestion from the Manipur State Government regarding the inclusion, in

---

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, (U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add2(1998)).

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> Roberta Cohen, Introduction to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> ST tag for Meiteis | Manipur High Court withdraws contentious part of its order available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-hc-modifies-contentious-order-on-st-status-for-meiteis/article67871656.ece>.

<sup>40</sup> Supra note 29.

the ST list, of the Meiteis.<sup>41</sup> As at the time this brief was written, the state government had not responded. On May 31, 2022, the Union government requested a recommendation once more.<sup>42</sup>

The High Court was asked by Meitei Mutum Churamani to request that the state government offer its recommendations.<sup>43</sup> On April 4, 2023, the state government was ordered by a one-member High Court bench to submit their response within four weeks. Since then, the emergence of conflicts has eclipsed any response from the state government.<sup>44</sup>

Significantly, months after the verdict provoked violence in the state, the Manipur high court changed its order and removed its directive to the state administration to consider adding the Meitei people to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) list.<sup>45</sup>

According to Justice Golmei Gaiphulshillu, the aforementioned directive went against the Supreme Court's ruling in *State of Maharashtra v. Milind & Ors*,<sup>46</sup> wherein the highest court noted that courts are not allowed to change, amend, or alter the ST list.

The previous directive was a component of a March 27, 2023, ruling by former acting chief judge MV Muralidaran, in which the high court requested that the state take into account adding the Meitei community to Manipur's list of Scheduled Tribes.

Notably, the state was directed to take the petitioners' request to add the Meitei/Meitei people to the Scheduled Tribe list into consideration as soon as practicable.<sup>47</sup>

Manipur's internet has been temporarily cut down due to the current unrest. From May 3rd to July 10th, the Manipur

---

<sup>41</sup>*Id.*

<sup>42</sup> ST status for Meiteis was considered and rejected in 1982 and 2001, government records show available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/st-status-for-meiteis-was-considered-and-rejected-in-1982-and-2001-government-records-show/article67420818.ece>.

<sup>43</sup> *Mutum Churamani Meitei v. State of Manipur*, 2024 SCC OnLine Mani 38.

<sup>44</sup> Manipur High Court deletes its 2023 direction for considering inclusion of Meitei Community in Scheduled Tribe list available at <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2024/02/23/manipur-hc-deletes-direction-for-considering-inclusion-of-meitei-community-in-scheduled-tribe-list-legal-news/>.

<sup>45</sup> Manipur HC deletes order on Meiteis that sparked ethnic violence available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/manipur-hc-deletes-order-on-meiteis-that-sparked-ethnic-violent-unrest/articleshow/107915066.cms>.

<sup>46</sup> *State Of Maharashtra vs Milind & Ors*, AIR 2001 SUPREME COURT 393.

<sup>47</sup> ST tag for Meiteis | Manipur High Court withdraws contentious part of its order available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-hc-modifies-contentious-order-on-st-status-for-meiteis/article67871656.ece>.

government announced an internet shutdown. Regretfully, for more than two months, Manipur's residents have been without internet access. On July 7, the High Court of Manipur directed the State government to consider lifting the internet prohibition in part. The Manipur administration has, however, filed an appeal with the Supreme Court.<sup>48</sup> According to Manipur authorities, the lockdown is meant to prevent anti-social and anti-national elements from planning or carrying out their activities and to preserve peace and communal harmony. However, by limiting their ability to freely express their thoughts, communicate with their loved ones, and receive and share information, the shutdown infringed against the human rights.<sup>49</sup> However, actions that violate international human rights legislation by purposefully blocking or interfering with internet information were categorically denounced by the UNHRC in Resolution 32/13 of 2016.<sup>50</sup> The Indian government has been repeatedly urged by Human Rights Watch to stop its indiscriminate, widespread internet shutdowns.<sup>51</sup> Numerous fundamental rights are adversely affected by the shutdowns, including the freedom to communicate with family members, express political views, receive and distribute information and participate in online banking, business transactions, access medical care and other economic activities.<sup>52</sup>

According to the NHRC, "the Action Taken Reports (ATRs) that the NHRC requests from the state government are awaited in the majority of the cases relating to human rights violations caused by violence in Manipur." Therefore, it becomes vital to know what steps the relevant authority has done in response to the ongoing disturbances and the sequence of events that have been occurring for a considerable amount of time.<sup>53</sup> The Commission further emphasises the importance of adopting the required actions to prevent communities from participating in ferocious activities in order to safeguard the fraternity values outlined in Article 51-A<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Manipur Government withdraws mobile internet ban in nine districts, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur/manipur-government-withdraws-mobile-internet-ban-in-nine-districts/article68965031.ece>.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 1 July 2016 - 32/13. The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> No Internet Means No Work, No Pay, No Food, available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/06/14/no-internet-means-no-work-no-pay-no-food/internet-shutdowns-deny-access-basic>.

<sup>53</sup> NHRC issues notice to the Government of Manipur over the reported killing of 13 persons in a gun fight in the Tengnoupal district available at <https://nhrc.nic.in/media/press-release/nhrc-issues-notice-government-manipur-over-reported-killing-13-persons-gun-fight>.

<sup>54</sup> Constitution of India art. 51.

of the Indian Constitution.<sup>55</sup>

### **INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE MANIPUR ISSUE**

Serious human rights abuses in Manipur, India, were brought to the attention of UN experts in September 2023. These included signs of torture, ill-treatment, forced relocation, home demolition, extrajudicial executions, and sexual violence. After additional violence broke out in May 2023 between the primarily Christian Kuki and predominantly Hindu Meitei ethnic groups, they denounced the "inadequate humanitarian response" to the terrible situation.

About 160 individuals, primarily from the Kuki group, had been murdered and over 300 injured by the middle of August 2023 as a result of the unrest. Tens of thousands were also displaced by the violence, which also resulted in the destruction of livelihoods, crops, and farmlands. Gang rapes, the parade of nude women in public, severe beatings that result in burning of victims, whether they are living or dead, and death are some of the documented acts of violence, according to the experts.<sup>56</sup> We are particularly concerned about the alleged misuse of counterterrorism tactics to justify repression and violence against racial and religious minorities. The experts went on to say that the events in Manipur represented yet another grave turning point in the continuously worsening circumstances facing India's religious and ethnic minority.<sup>57</sup> We are worried about the Indian government's, particularly law enforcement's, seemingly tardy and insufficient response to halting hate speech and physical and sexual violence in Manipur, according to the researchers.<sup>58</sup> They asked the Supreme Court to keep an eye on how governments and other interested parties respond, giving accountability, justice and reparations top priority.<sup>59</sup> In addition to strengthening relief efforts for the victims, the experts urged the government to act quickly and forcefully to look into the matter and bring charges against those responsible, particularly public servants who might

---

<sup>55</sup> NHRC asks Manipur Government to stop violence and human rights violations Inform on the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of violence Expedite ATRs awaited in specific complaints available at <https://nhrc.nic.in/media/press-release/nhrc-asks-manipur-government-stop-violence-and-human-rights-violations-inform>.

<sup>56</sup> Kanishka Singh, US rights report on India cites abuses in Manipur, harassment of media and minorities.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> Significant' human rights abuses in Manipur after outbreak of ethnic conflict: US report available at <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/significant-human-rights-abuses-in-manipur-after-outbreak-of-ethnic-conflict-us-report-2989674>.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

have incited violence and hatred based on race and religion.<sup>60</sup> The European Parliament has also called on the Indian government to act immediately to bring peace to the religious and tribal conflict in Manipur.<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The disputing communities urgently need to have a meaningful conversation, which can be preceded by steps to foster confidence. However, stopping the violence is the only way to start such a confidence-building action.

There have been few successful results from previous attempts to bring the ethnic communities to the negotiating table. The groups' deeply ingrained animosity towards one another has scarcely allowed for constructive discourse that might at least help them come to a shared understanding of the problems they are battling over. Ethnic attitudes against one another are regrettably being strengthened by community-based organisations. In this situation, bringing ethnic communities to the discussion table requires the intervention of academics and like-minded individuals. It is important to keep in mind that disputes settled on social media platforms have more beneficial effects than those handled in politics.

It is imperative that the state and the union government take immediate action to disarm militant organisations (both active and those that have ceased operations) and the people involved in violent acts. These conflicts typically have the ability to provide an environment that is conducive to the operations, recruitment, fundraising, and legitimisation of militant groups. The unlawful crossing of the border and the availability of weapons within the state must be stopped by the governments.

It is necessary to closely examine arguments made by opposing ethnic attitudes on traditional land ownership. The legitimacy of ethnic groups' claims of customary land ownership, which inevitably runs on the 'othering' logic, needs to be discussed and debated. The Kukis and Nagas' assertion that the Meiteis, who comprise more than half of the state's population, should only be allowed to occupy 10% of the land. Likewise, it is necessary to reverse the trend of Meitei monopolisation of state-led development benefits. Therefore, it is necessary to democratise and fairly distribute the available land and other resources.

---

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> EU parliament urges India to act 'promptly' to end ethnic violence in restive state, available at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/eu-parliament-urges-india-to-act-promptly-to-end-ethnic-violence-in-restive-state/2945420>.

Re-examining and rearranging the current political representation, which has historically favoured the Meiteis, would be a positive move. The vast disparity between the hills and the valley would be lessened if the state apparatus unified and rationalised the legislative assembly constituencies. Priority can then be given to tackling the actual problems of governance without being exacerbated by ethnically biased attitudes, allowing the demands for autonomy and decentralised governance to be genuinely addressed.

The existing anarchy of ethnic majoritarianism must be overthrown by prioritising the development of a sense of unity among the ethnic groupings. In this endeavour, the societal consensus and the political will of the state apparatus must come together. It is crucial to note that calls for an ethnic homeland or distinct territorial arrangements are fundamentally majoritarian. India's democratic values are undermined when calls for a separate homeland or claims that a group is the only one responsible for maintaining a state's territorial integrity are entertained. Regardless of the ethnic groups, the ruling class must realise that such demands would almost certainly never stop.

The judiciary, the Manipur state administration, and the Indian national government have all completely failed to bring about peace. In general, the state has not upheld the UNDRIP-guaranteed rights of Indigenous peoples. Given that India presents itself as a fervent supporter of the defence of Indigenous peoples' rights, these shortcomings cast doubt on the legitimacy of the Indian state. India's attempts to position itself as a rising powerhouse would undoubtedly be hampered by this ongoing human rights crisis, which may also undermine the perception that Prime Minister Modi has improved India's standing internationally.

Since there are legitimate concerns that the state administration is not only incompetent but also biased, the central government must implement the president's rule in response to the ongoing conflict. Another reason for concern is that the local forces are also divided along ethnic lines, so in order to restore peace, the central government must also think about deploying additional paramilitary forces made up of regiments from other states to ensure that law enforcement is impartial. The violence in Manipur can be controlled by ensuring that decision-makers and enforcers are not divided by ethnicity. Then, in order to give a path forward, mediation by neutral third parties will be required. India needs to take the required actions to end this heinous human rights situation and keep its promise to respect international law.

Finally, policy-making should transcend the current government's political objective in a state like Manipur that is ethically aware. The process of nation-building has been adversely affected by short-term election agenda-driven policy-making.