

VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR, NORTH-EAST INDIA: ONE YEAR ON

SECOND INVESTIGATIVE REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF BELIEF ALLIANCE (IRFBA)



MAY 2024

Cover image: St. Joseph's Parish, Sugnu which was burnt down due to the ethnic violence. Archbishop of Imphal, Most Rev. Linus Neli praying inside the Church. © Diocecan fraternity

"The original question was about the situation in Manipur. A very good report on that has been written by David Campanale, which I have studied. It is right to say that we should not downplay the religious aspects of some of this strife. Sometimes it is communal, tribal or ethnic, but in many cases, there is a clear religious part of it. We should be clear about that."

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton
British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 16 April 2024

PREFACE

The deeply disturbing situation that continues to unfold in Manipur, is a tragic reminder of the fragility of religious freedom and the urgent need for global solidarity in defending this fundamental human right. The targeting of Christian communities, both Kuki-Zo and Meitei, underscores the religious dimension of this conflict that cannot be ignored.

The church in Manipur is suffering immensely, with hundreds of church buildings destroyed and countless lives upended. Yet amid this darkness, their resilience and steadfast faith continue to shine.

Instances of religiously driven violence, hate and discrimination may be found in other places across India, with Christians and Muslim victims. It is therefore crucial that the international community maintains pressure on the Indian government to fulfil its duty to protect all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation. We must also support efforts towards peacebuilding, reconciliation, and interfaith understanding to counter the divisive forces that seek to tear communities apart.

May this report serve as a clarion call to action, reminding us of our shared responsibility to uphold the dignity and rights of all people. Christians everywhere should join in the prayers of those of the body of Christ in Manipur for an end to the violence. As we do so, let us also reaffirm our commitment to being agents of peace, justice, and healing in our fractured world.

Rt Rev Philip Mounstephen

Bishop of Winchester

Author of the 'Truro Review' for the FCDO

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INTRODUCTION

On 21 June 2023, a report on the violence in Manipur, north-east India, was circulated to the IRFBA Plenary and wider Council of Experts as compiled by members of the Council. This report was released two days after a graphic viral video of two Kuki-Zo women was released on the internet showing them being sexually assaulted.

That report sought to document the violence that had broken out seven weeks earlier, as testified by individuals on the ground in Manipur. It included first-hand accounts from Meitei and Kuki-Zo eyewitnesses, as well as journalists and political leaders, that had been presented live to the Council of Experts via a webinar I chaired on 1 June 2023.

The first report acknowledged several underlying factors behind the violence that had erupted between 3-6 May 2023, that had thus far led to the loss of over 100 lives, the destruction of at least 228 churches, 300 people being injured and tens of thousands displaced.

We concluded there were strong reasons to believe that the violence could in part be characterised as driven by religious motivations. In September 2023, a short update was circulated to the Council of Experts, which reported that the situation on the ground remained unresolved, and at that time an estimated 60,000 people had been displaced.

This report is produced again for the Council of Experts to the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, which meets in May 2024. It is written to provide an outline of some of the key facts and updates that mark the year anniversary since the intense violence in May 2023.

Several sources have been consulted:

- Testimonial evidence from the ground of people from the Manipur region
- News reporting of the situation
- International diplomatic responses
- Police investigations and litigation efforts.

The report finishes with recommendations, and an annex of photographic evidence.

One year on, our conclusion is that the situation remains dire for the thousands of people whose lives have been altogether altered, especially

Christians from the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people groups. Their churches have been systematically targeted and destroyed, pastors threatened and assaulted, and families forced to flee their homes. The trauma inflicted upon these communities may take generations to heal.

Repeated calls by a range of international bodies for the Indian federal government and Manipur state authorities to take command of the situation and protect vulnerable minorities seem not to have secured the action required. The blame for the ongoing crisis lies squarely at the feet of those in power. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government's alleged complicity in fomenting religious divisions, combined with the slow and inadequate response from law enforcement, has allowed the violence to spiral out of control.

In summary, it is imperative that the Indian federal government acts to end the violence, bring the perpetrators to justice, and end inflammatory statements by state actors and their distribution through print and social media, which are fuelling the conflict. These steps must include ensuring the security of all citizens, providing unhindered access for humanitarian aid, journalism free from interference and an inclusive reconciliation process.

As the international community marks one year since the start of the Manipur crisis, it must not be allowed for this tragedy to fade from view. Sustained pressure on the Indian government, coupled with support for grassroots peacebuilding efforts, is essential to chart a path towards lasting peace and justice for all the people of Manipur.

David Campanale
Member of the Council of Experts to IRFBA

TESTIMONIAL EVIDENCE FROM THE GROUND

The Council of Experts participated in or led several evidence gathering sessions with people from Manipur following the events of 3-7 May 2023. Some of the transcripts are provided below.

EVIDENCE GATHERING NO.1

On 16 April 2024, a group of Kuki-Zo Christian leaders met online to share testimonials with members of the Council of Experts.¹ Some of their recorded stories are as follows:

a. Reverend Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi, Assistant Executive Secretary of Kuki-Zo Christian Church Manipur Synod

"All the Kuki-Zo people in Imphal were forced to flee the capital city of Manipur [as a result of the violence and destruction in May 2023]. Tens of thousands of us have been rendered homeless and have had to seek shelter in relief camps with abysmal facilities located in nearby towns and villages. Imphal city is now devoid of our presence as all the Kuki-Zos in Imphal, dead or alive, are not there anymore.

Ever since leaving Imphal city, the divide between the hills and the valley grew, and buffer zones were created. The Meiteis who live in the valleys cannot go to the hills, and the hill people cannot go to the valley. Hundreds of our villages in the periphery of Imphal city have been burnt, and many villagers have been mercilessly butchered. Even children, women, elderly, the sick and mentally ill people have not been spared. The gender-based violence, targeting our women and girls of all ages, has included gang rape, parading women naked

in the street, and burning women alive or when already dead.

Many village volunteers who wanted to defend their village with rudimentary, simple handmade guns have been killed, and the inhumane killings have been justified by the other side labelling them as narco-terrorists and enemies of the state. The Chief Minister of Manipur has also repeated these lines, so that he can use all state forces to annihilate the Kuki-Zo tribe. The state and local media are continuously trying to justify the horrific carnage through lies and deceit. The state has actively controlled the media narrative and the truth is being suppressed to allow only the state's narrative to reach out.

There is also no room for site inspection and verification of news by independent media personnel and responsible human rights or neutral organizations from the outside. I believe that the official media in the capital city Imphal is totally besieged and controlled by the majority community. The internet was shut down by the state government for almost ten months.

Dead bodies were only given to us after seven months of death for a proper burial ceremony. All the Kuki-Zo and kindred people killed in Imphal were buried together in two Kuki-Zo Martyrs' Cemeteries, one in the North and another in the South. I administered the burial ceremony of the north on 15 December 2023 where more than 32 dead bodies were buried together.

¹ Participants of an online webinar organized by Kailean Khongsai, Ordinand in the Church of England, included: Dr. Satkai, The General Secretary of Kuki-Zo Organization for Human Rights (Kuki-Zo Inpi, Apex body of Kuki-Zo tribe) & former Executive Secretary of Kuki-Zo Christian Church Manipur Synod (KCCMS); Rev Dr. Thongkhosei Haokip, General Secretary, Kuki-Zo Baptist Church, Chairman of Kuki-Zo Christian Relief; Revd Stephen Zou, Zou Synod Relief coordinator, Outgoing Secretary of Presbyterian Church of India; Revd Dr. Robert Vaiphei, Director of Ministries, Evangelical Organisation Church (EOC); Revd Prim Vaiphei, former Director of Gospel for Asia; Bishop Paothang, The Good Shepherd Church; Revd Kamkhohau Gangte, General Secretary, Moreh Pastor Fellowship; Revd Jamson Mate, Chairman, Moreh Pastor Fellowship; Revd Lama Vaiphei, Moderator, Presbyterian Synod; Pastor LamKeng Lhouvum (Relief Centre Co-ordinator); Pastor Onkho Haokip (Head, Relief Centre Co-ordinator); Pastor Letlal Haokip, Journey Church, Delhi; Revd Dino Touthang, For executive Director of the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR); Former Chief Executive, Habitat for Humanity, HFH, India, & former Asia Regional Director, Compassion International.

Our hospitals were left in Imphal and now we do not have even 50 hospital beds for the sick in the hills. We want peace and normalcy to return to our land. We need our churches rebuilt in safe locations. We need schools and colleges for our children and hospitals for our health care".

b. Revd Dr. Thongkosei Haokip, General Secretary of the Kuki-Zo Baptist Convention and Chairman of the Kuki-Zo Christian Leaders' Fellowship

"It is still a challenge to provide relief material to people who need them due to the border security on the roads and the small, winding roads. Another problem is since the Kuki-Zos in Manipur are living almost all around the valley, West, East, North and South communication is an issue. Roads that have been used just for trucks are now being used as a kind of day-to-day communication from one place to another. So, it is really challenging to deliver some food basic items to the other side, despite the heavy security presence.

Now, people in the relief centres are being asked to go back to their hometowns. While they want to return, three things are needed for this. One is physical security, so that the Meitei people cannot attack them. Second, basic things like food and clothes are needed, which people need not only for the village volunteers but also for their families. Third, physical, mental and even psychological support for the village volunteers is needed.

More than 60,000 people have been pushed away from the valley and its adjoining areas to the hills, where there is a lack of good hospitals. Many people have died in hospitals and in the relief camps. Medicines, basic medical supplies and doctors are also very, very limited".

c. Revd Dr. Robert Haulemsang Vaiphei, Director of Ministries, Evangelical Organisation Church

"I am told after interviewing people in relief camps, of whom are suffering, that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) would like to leave the relief camps, but they are in a dilemma, saying 'Where would they find their livelihood?' I think that providing relief is very essential. At the same time, we want to provide a means of livelihood to the displaced people who are in the relief camps, so that they might make their own way back, whether to their village where they find some safety."

d. Revd Lamkeng Lhouvum, Relief Centre Coordinator

"One of my main concerns is for the displaced people in Kangpokpi, Churachanpur and some other areas and how to give counselling because people living in close quarters with other family members. There is very little privacy, and people cannot go out or settle in other venues".

EVIDENCE GATHERING NO.2

A few Meitei Christians shared their stories with a member of the Council of Experts:

a. Mohan (whose real identity has been hidden) is a Meitei Christian and a pastor in Imphal who was affected by the violence

"Around 700 persons had attacked during the night hour [on 4 May 2023] ringing bells, banging electric posts and shouting 'Vandalize, burn & destroy' and ambushed the church and started to burn the property. My house was next to the church building, so it was also set on fire. My wife on seeing the attack begged the attackers to spare the church, but they pointed a gun at her chest and a knife to her nose and said 'Do you want me to kill you? Be silent or you will be dead.'

My father is old and weak. Without showing any mercy, they attacked him, threatened him to renounce Christ, when he denied it, they took hold of his neck and punched him in the face, and pushed him to the ground. He had suffered injuries and is still in pain".

b. Thang (whose real identity has been hidden) is a friend of a Kuki-Zo man who was beheaded and hung on a fence made of bamboo

"On 2 July, our village was attacked by Meitei people, known as Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol, together with the police commandos. They attacked our village and burned our houses, churches and everything. In that incident, one of my friends was brutally murdered and beheaded. We are six in the family, and half of my mother's body was paralysed. I took my family to a nearby district before the incident took place. I was sad and it was very painful for me. On that day, I prayed to God.

I had nothing with me. Me and my family just ran for our lives. Today, the clothes I wear are also given by others but there is no deep sorrow. The experience and losses are big, but God says that He will not let our hearts drown in pain because we have hope. Hatred will only create more problems; we need to grow out of this. Still, many people don't understand this, and that is why the fight still goes on. Our men are dying every day on the borders. We want justice, but we want peace all the more. Because of this war, I fear for my children's future. I don't want them to grow up and be a part of such a war. I just want to say that I don't hate the attackers, I just want to have peace and no more war. God will bring justice to everyone. This attack is upon the Christian community."



Thang reading his Bible

c. Kiran (whose real identity has been hidden), a Meitei pastor from Imphal

"I must go meet the church believers secretly. It is disheartening that we are unable to freely gather and worship, we are hated by the Meitei community and not welcomed by the Kuki-Zo tribe.

There was a time when the Kuki-Zo and Meitei lived in harmony and worshipped together, but sadly today we are at each other's throats."

Kiran continues, "Our heart desires to have a place to worship freely, have stability in the state, and live in unison with each other. The body of Christ in Manipur is suffering. There is division, hatred, and enmity, I believe that with patience, the God of all understanding will restore the peace and goodwill in Manipur."

d. Mohan (whose real identity has been hidden), a Meitei pastor, whose house and church were burned down by Meitei extremists

"It is hard to live without any income, previously I used to survive with the tithe and offering that I received from the church believers, but now since we are not gathering and are scattered, it is difficult to survive. I am currently living with my younger brother's family. My brother, father, and I go to fetch river vegetables and sometimes we must go deep into the water to gather vegetables. There are days we do not find any vegetables; we are only able to earn monthly around an INR of 400 to 500 (£4-£4.80)."

e. Inter-community married families are separated and continue to live separately, they long to be united but do not see any hope or situation where they can be united. Zozam (whose real identity has been hidden), a Kuki-Zo displaced lady married to a Meitei man for than 30 years, has been living separately since the violence broke out and longs to be with him along with her children

"Every day I speak to my husband over the phone he is alone and cries to be with us, even my children are unable to live with him. We only knew that death would tear us apart, but never imagined a violence like this kind would separate my family. Our only desire is to live together, and we are unable to find a way and there seems to be dim hope given the ongoing violence."

f. When churches and Christian villages were set on fire by Meitei Hindu extremists on 3 May 2023, Istuti, a Meitei Christian (whose real identity has been hidden), was in a neighbouring city conducting a training with other believers

"There was lots of tension that night. The people were struggling... Our volunteers and believers kept on calling me all night. They couldn't sleep! I was on the phone all of 3 May, 4 May – they told me

that they [the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun Hindu-extremist groups], were forcing them to convert. 'They are going with guns!' they would tell me. They were even beating women and children."

[What's worse for Istuti is that members of her family carried out these attacks] "That hurt me the most. They burned my church. After they burned the church, they forced [the Meitei believers] to reconvert... All my relatives, they are the ones who destroyed my church. My neighbours, my relatives, all of them are all included in destroying the church... They feel that Meitei Christians support the tribal Kuki-Zos, so they want to erase all the Meitei Christians and they want to destroy Meitei Christian churches."

The [extremists] told them, they should stop being Christians, that they should come back to being Hindu. And they cannot build churches anymore. That's what they stipulated on paper and told them to sign. They are beaten if they don't sign the paper." [The paper is a document that the extremists have been forcing Meitei followers of Jesus to sign, indicating they are renouncing their Christian faith, and are reconverting back to their Hindu-folk religion, Sanamahism.]

"I wanted to go [to help the Kuki-Zos] but I cannot go, I cannot go [to the Kuki-Zo villages that have been burned] because I belong to the Meitei. So, if they know that I'm Meitei, then it would be a problem again."

"I cannot go and hold our believers who are still struggling in Imphal. I was lost, I just prayed – 'Lord, please heal our people, heal our people.'"

"It was so difficult for me. After two days, I needed to go to another city. I could not go [back] to Manipur because of the problem... I was on the train, and then, when I reached home, blood came through – so much so that I had to be rushed to the hospital. They told me that my baby was gone."

"I want to be a voice for Meitei Christians because they are struggling. Everybody hates them because they are Meitei, and people don't see how they are struggling internally. Behind the curtain, the Meitei Christians are struggling. They are struggling from their family, from their relatives, and those who are pastors, they are facing being beaten, and are threatened to be killed."

"Even in my community, when I became a Christian,

they told me to reconvert! My family, my relatives, all of them! But I strongly stand because I know that the Lord will be with me. Jesus died for me, why do I need to reject [Him]? I cannot deny Him. I cannot leave my faith, even if they kill me."

"I want everybody who's praying for Manipur to know that [Meitei Christians] are facing lots of suffering. I want to give them a voice, to pray and stand with them."

"Thank you so much for listening to my stories and praying with me. When you spent time with me, I felt that I am not alone, I am able to pour out my heart. Thank you for your encouragement from the word of God. Thank you for remembering the persecuted church and supporting them through your constant prayers and help, indeed we are one body of Christ. Thank you for all your prayer support for Manipur."

g. Individuals from a relief camp (names changed to protect identities)

1. "Though it seems that the violence has subsided, strife at the border areas between Kuki-Zo and Meitei people groups still persists. People are afraid to return to their houses, hence they continue staying in the refugee camps".
2. "It's true that when so many people are living together in a small space, it remains a challenge to maintain proper cleanliness and hygiene. Water is limited, toilets are not adequate, drains get clogged, etc".
3. "My name is Esther, I fled while I was eight months pregnant, it was the most difficult time of my life. I had to run through jungles and the roads were very difficult. I also had a four-year-old daughter with me, but I was extremely worried for my unborn child, I wondered whether I would be able to keep him alive. By God's grace I was able to come out of the war zone in good health and I gave birth to my baby recently. It gives me so much joy to hold my baby in my arms and see him safe. Thank you so much for your help with all the relief items, they are so much needed."
4. "For new mothers and babies, the camp can be a difficult place, it's hard to avoid infections. We often have children and adults getting very sick in these camps. There are no good medical facilities here. All good hospitals are in Meitei areas, which are now no more accessible to us"

(shared by a middle-aged woman who sat on the bed next to Esther).

5. *"When the Meitei came to the village, they did not come silently. They came with a lot of noise. They came in thousands! Thousands of people moved so we could not defend ourselves. Thousands of people came to attack our area. They started burning around 4:30 in the afternoon and continued until evening. They first burned the churches, and nobody knew which houses were burned first. They don't even leave a single house. They burned it all and turned it to ashes. Until now, we do not know why they burned churches. Only God knows. So, we left our village and started walking through the jungle around 11.30pm and reached the next village at 4.30am. We kept walking all night. We only brought our phones and carried some blankets for the children. There are kids from under one to two years old. We only stayed in that village for half an hour, they woke us up, gave us food for breakfast and told us that they were also under attack. Then we hired trucks and took shelter in churches. Later, relief committees provided us with shelter at various IDP Camps. Every day looks the same. We eat two meals a day. There was no change of food. Same food and same dress every day. I only have two pairs of long pants, two t-shirts and a sweater. It is cold during the nighttime. We feel bad knowing winter is approaching".*

EVIDENCE GATHERING NO.3

Violence against minority communities in Manipur:
CH Mang.

The unanswered question:

When the violence was not stopped in the largest democratic country even after one full, long month of mob violence against minority... Christians, there was a general public opinion and hope that peace would be restored by the time of the then forthcoming Lok Sabha election which is going on now (April 2024) but nothing has happened. In fact, the situation is getting worse day by day since the election began.

On the eve of polling day in Manipur, two Kuki-Zo village guards were killed in the attack, their

bodies were mutilated, parts of their bodies were hung on the trees and the rest of their bodies were dragged around, as a viral video shows. Moreover, the culprits refused to give us the bodies for burial until the present day. Referring to the hands of the deceased being chopped off, many people abstained from voting in expression of their anguish with a placard that reads 'we have no hands to vote'. In such a situation, the minority tribal Christians were expected to vote without security. What's more, this was after the Kuki-Zos serving in the Manipur Police were sent to Central India for election duty – which has never happened before.

On this day, 29 April 2024, we witnessed that the central government forces have started to leave some buffer zones as the result the Meitei militants have free movement for massive attacks on the Kuki-Zos. The basic unanswered question is 'why the violence has not been stopped even after one full year?'

The context of the ongoing Manipur violence:

The director of Centre of Study of Society and Secularism, Advocate & Dr Irfan Engineer observes that the change of government in 2014 relates to contemporary minority sufferings. He writes, "Under the BJP rule, Indian state has taken significant steps towards becoming a majoritarian Hindu cultural state."² His observation is based on the examination of changes in legislations, physical violence and hate crimes in India since 2014, a study he and his team conducted this year. The ways in which the present government works out their ideology, Engineer argues, are as follows: "Hindu religion is a tool to deepen the communal nationalist consciousness of pride in superiority of their religion and consequent claim to privileged citizenship. It also uses the tool of fear of minorities, using exaggerated claims about their population growth rate and religious conversions and consequently being overwhelmed."³

There seems to be a direct correlation between the situation that Dr Engineer described here and Manipur's experience since 3 May 2023. The image of Manipur as the land of Hindu-majority Meiteis, and the consideration of others like the tribal communities in the hills (including Nagas), and Panggal Muslims in the valley as non-native

² Irfan Engineer, *The Status of Freedom of Religion or Belief in India Since 2014: A report* (Delhi: Media House, 2024, p.239). This detailed report examines the changes in legislations, physical violence and hate crime under the regime. The latter two are based on newspaper reports.

³ Engineer, *The Status of Freedom and Religion*, p.221.

inhabitants; false allegations and demonization of Kuki-Zos as illegal migrants, narco-terrorists, exaggerating population growth; claiming to be tribals in order to grab tribal land, resources and reservations.

Is the state waging war against her own citizens? Connecting the ongoing violence in Manipur with India as a whole, the editors of *Viewing Indian Polity from the Prism of Manipur: A Compendium on the Continuing Manipur Conflict and Crisis*, March 2024, write, "... if we fail to take serious note of what is happening in Manipur, we would also miss out all that is happening in India now. An all-round attempt to destroy the Constitution, country and citizens is staring at our face. Hence, we need to examine the factors and forces behind the crisis, conflict and violence in Manipur so that we can understand northeast and by extension, India."⁴

Part of the challenge for the victims including those who stand with them in their suffering is intimidation and threats in various forms. Those who bring relief support to the vulnerable ... in Manipur, as well as those who speak for the victims are closely monitored and as the result, many concerned citizens can no longer support the victims.

Alpha Shah writes, "... all evidence [that she gathered in her documentation] points to a country where inequality is growing, where minorities are being hatefully and barbarically silenced, and where elections have become a mere ritual to hide the terror that could destroy your life anytime. For if you speak out against the government and its policies, you risk being dragged away by the security forces, your liberties stripped from you by incarceration, and your families' lives ruined."⁵ This is the ground reality of Manipur.

The need for a peaceful solution:

Peace is extremely important and urgent. We cannot go on killing each other. The more we harm each other, the longer it will take to heal our wounds. And of course, we gain nothing by killing each other. We can only reach peace through dialogue. So, dialogue must begin now.

In search for peace through dialogue, we must remember that the divide between the two

communities is so deep that one cannot ignore it in the effort to find a peaceful solution. In other words, recognizing the gap itself is a step toward finding a peaceful solution.

Recognizing the gap means the acceptance of an alternative arrangement for the constitutional protection of both the communities. The issue is not communal but political – therefore, it has to be solved politically. Unless the people are safeguarded by the law, there will never be a peaceful solution to the ongoing violence in Manipur.

Suggestions

Both the state and the central government must not forget the place and role of the Kuki-Zos in the freedom movements of India. They must recognize and accept Kuki-Zo culture as unique and is part of Indian culture.

Central government forces must not leave the buffer zones until a peaceful solution is found, as this would leave vulnerable minority tribals unprotected. They must provide protection to Indian citizens equally.

There must be a neutral body who should come and find out facts as this is in the wider public interest. The role of the media so far has been biased and unhelpful in most cases. We need a neutral body to come and find out what exactly is happening in Manipur for the interest of the public.

The Constitution of India was envisioned by its framers as liberal democracy, a secular state, and social welfare for the development of the most marginalised groups must be protected. For Kuki-Zo tribal communities in particular, the message of Christ in Christianity brings them dignity and equality as human beings. It gives them peace and hope as people equally loved by God and promotes social responsibility towards others as responsible citizens of India.

Tribal people in India do not follow the caste system in their society, hence them embracing Hinduism and their incorporation into a caste system is a conversion and not *Ghar Wapsi* (Homecoming). They must be protected by preserving the Constitution of India.

⁴ Syed Hameed, Clifton D'Rozario, eds., *Viewing Indian Polity from the Prism of Manipur: A Compendium on the Continuing Manipur conflict and crisis* (Michigan, USA: Manak Publication, INC, 2024), p.vi.

⁵ Alpha Shah, *The Incarcerations: Bhima Koregaon and the search for democracy in India* (Gurugram: Harper Collins Publishers, 2024), p.47.

NATIONAL NEWS REPORTING

a. Kuki-Zo Inpi Manipur report, 25 April 2024

This report detailed the ongoing "attacks on Kuki-Zo villages and the recent attempt to disrupt the crucial economic lifeline of the state before the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency by the combined forces of the valley-based insurgent groups, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and MP Sanajaoba's private militias like Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun". The group claims that there needs to be accountability, as they allege that "the ongoing crisis in Manipur is all about annihilation and grabbing of land belonging to minority community in the state".⁶

b. The Thingkho Le Malcha, 24 April 2024

The newsletter detailed the following attacks on Kuki-Zo:

- 176 deaths
- 200+ villages burned
- 7000+ houses burned
- 360+ churches and synagogues burned
- 41,435+ displaced persons.

Additionally, the bulletin noted two significant developments:

- "Meiteis continue relentless attacks on Kuki-Zo areas", after a fresh wave of violence was reported in Kangpokpi District on Tuesday 23 April 2024. The report documented, "A bomb blast, suspected to be an Improvised Explosive Device, rocked Kangpokpi District amidst relentless gunfire in the Phaileng-Luwangsanggol area that erupted on Tuesday afternoon... Coincidentally, the chief of Meitei Leepun, Pramod Singh had already predicted this in an interview with Karan Thapar for 'The Wire' on 6 June 2023. In the interview, Pramot Singh – the chief of the Meitei Leepun revealed that the Meiteis are planning to bomb Kangpokpi district and that the 'blow' will happen, this blow will wipe away all the Kuki-Zo community of Kangpokpi district ...".
- "Despite claims and clarifications made by

Arambai Tenggol that they were not involved in violent activities and large-scale poll riggings during the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency, a Meitei woman and her brother have revealed that members of the militia group were deeply involved in the poll riggings and other malpractices. The civilian duo claimed that they were badly assaulted by cadres of the Arambai Tenggol for supporting a [BJP] candidate against their choice"



The Salai Taret flag, a Hindu Meitei religious symbol which has been placed on churches, mountain tops and here on the crucifix

⁶ Department of Information and Publicity, Kuki-Zo Inpi Manipur, Appeal for Government of India's Immediate Intervention and Impartial Investigation over the incessant Attack on Kuki-Zo Tribal dominated areas, 25 April 2024.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORTING

MURDERS

- Over 100 (BBC Manipur churches - Swaminathan Natarajan, 15 June 2023)
- At least 175 (India 2023 Human Rights Report, United States government, 2023)
- 175-219 (Manipur OHCR report, 4 September 2023)

INJURIES AND VILLAGE DESTRUCTION

- Over 300 injured, 200+ villages burned, and thousands of homes destroyed (Manipur OHCR report, 4 September 2023)

DISPLACED PEOPLE

- More than 600 people were displaced between 3 May and 15 November 2023 (India 2023 Human Rights Report, United States government, 2023)
- Around 9,000 IDPs who sought refuge in Mizoram face an election voting dilemma or whether to forego their voting rights or risk travelling back to Manipur to vote ("To vote or not to vote, that is the question: Displaced people from Manipur grapple with voting dilemma", *Economic Times*, 19 April 2024)

CHURCHES DESTROYED

- 508 churches (BBC Manipur churches - Swaminathan Natarajan, 15 June 2023)
- 360-508 churches (Manipur OHCR report, 4 September 2023)

Assessing the grounds for the violence is a complex task, beyond the scope of this summary report. An article by "John" for American website Global Missiology (October 2023) is an example of one perspective, drawing just on issues of religion. Called "The Hindutva Movement in Northeast India: Situating Manipur Christian Suffering in Context" the article makes a link between the violence and the faith of many of those attacked, driven by a mix of ethnic, religious, and economic factors. It states "Widespread destruction of churches, houses, communities, and tribal peoples' lives [has] inflicted deep, widespread, and ongoing suffering among Manipur's Christians."

The article reports on the initial outbreak of violence:

"Churches both of Meiteis in the valley and of the tribals were targeted. The churches were always the first targets during the attacks. There are two reasons for this. First, the church is the source of strength, hope, and identity of the tribal people. Second, to the Hindu Meitei, Christianity is considered the religion of low caste communities, hence eliminating it is part of the community integration process for national strength."

Establishing the facts has been challenging, especially in relation to the impact of the violence on Meitei Christians. If it's the case that the violence was purely ethnic or economic as some argue, then Meitei churches would not have been burned, as the evidence suggests, by Meitei radicals.

Two journalists for a news website visited Manipur and stated on 27 December 2023 in their article - "Meitei Christians in India's Manipur Face Broad Attacks":

"New Lines met several Meitei Christian pastors in Imphal and the surrounding Meitei-dominated districts whose churches had been attacked, but they were extremely scared to share their stories." The article reports: "In June, the archbishop of Imphal, Dominic Lumon, said that 249 churches belonging to Meitei Christians had been destroyed in the first 36 hours of the violence."

The New Lines magazine report identifies evidence linked to faith:

"While the conflict primarily has been ethnic in nature, between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo tribal residents, there has been a communal element to the violence, especially against Meitei Christians. This aspect of the conflict has been underreported by the media and downplayed by Imphal-based journalists."

The two New Lines writers observe that "In the past five years, the number of Christian converts in the Meitei community has soared" and that "during the early days of this unrest, Meitei Christians suffered attacks on their churches and residences, as well

as threats and intimidation from village committees and right-wing extremist groups Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, which are mostly made up of Meitei Hindus and have been organizing themselves militarily over the past two years,"

The writers go on to state: *"Meitei pastors have also alleged that they were forced to convert to Sanamahism and that an unaccounted number of Meitei Christian families have had to renounce their faith by signing conversion affidavits and burning their Bibles under duress from these extremist groups."*

"John" in his Missiology account describes the impact of the outbreak of communal violence:

"... in the case of Meitei Christians in Manipur valley until today, they are not allowed to meet together for public worship services, and in fact many of their leaders are still hiding in safer places. For fear of attack by their own people who are not Christians, Meitei Christians abstain from contacting Kuki-Zos for mutual support and cooperation. Meitei Christians thus have different elements than Kuki-Zos in their suffering."

The figure of 249 churches or church-linked buildings such as offices, schools, seminaries, and the homes of clergy referenced by Catholic former Archbishop Dominic Lumon of Imphal relates just to the Meitei Christians of Manipur. Lists compiled by Kuki-Zo representatives seen by members of the Council of Experts are separate and additional to this number, with named denominational buildings, locations and dates it is said they were burned. Put together, the figure of over 500 Christian buildings mentioned in reporting by BBC online is entirely plausible.

These accounts are just examples that attempt to assess the double persecution faced by Meitei Christians, who have been targeted both for their ethnicity and their faith. The pressure to convert to the indigenous Sanamahahi religion, often through coercive means like forcing Bible burnings, underscores the religious dimension of the conflict. They also note that this aspect has been downplayed in media coverage, obscuring the full extent of their suffering.



Bibles burned during the violence, Manipur

CONCERNS ABOUT MEDIA REPORTING

The first investigative report of the Council of Experts touched on the role of false information in forming communal mistrust, with a journalist witness telling the panel that *"Misinformation usually always precedes organized violence."*⁷

In separate assessments, the US State Department, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the Editors Guild of India (EGI) all highlighted the specific role of social media and the press in fueling conflict. Comments by UN Experts in August 2023 also directly addressed the impact of hate speech that was spread through social media and offline channels in Manipur. They noted,

"It is particularly concerning that the violence seems to have been preceded and incited by hateful and inflammatory speech that spread online and offline to justify the atrocities committed against the Kuki-Zo ethnic minority, particularly women, on account of their ethnicity and religious belief."

The UN Experts also expressed alarm at the *"apparent slow and inadequate response by the Government of India, including law enforcement, to stem physical and sexual violence and hate speech in Manipur,"* highlighting the government's failure to effectively counter the spread of disinformation and hate speech in the state.

The EGI's report from September 2023 provides a comprehensive assessment of the media's role in the Manipur conflict based on a fact-finding mission to the state. The report notes the severe impact of the internet shutdown on the ability of journalists to verify information and counter disinformation:

"Our duty to inform the public was severely handicapped by the lack of phone and internet facilities during the initial days of the violence. The distinction between facts and disinformation was blurred. This ensured there was no filter and

rumours circulated by interested quarters held sway."

The report cites specific examples of rumours and false narratives that spread in Manipur, fuelling tensions between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities:

"On 4 May, rumours began circulating in the Valley that Meitei women doctors/students in Churachandpur Medical College hospital had been raped and that several women from the Valley were molested by angry Kuki-Zo mobs. These rumours were accepted as the gospel truth, and led to retaliatory action in the Imphal Valley."

The EGI report also highlights instances of biased and one-sided reporting by some media outlets in Manipur, particularly those based in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley:

"The role played in rescuing civilians irrespective of their ethnicity by Assam Rifles, whether it was rescuing nearly 1,000 Meiteis from Churachandpur, about 500 Meities from Moreh or tribal women students and non-Meiteis from Manipur University, was exemplary. Although an attempt was made to suggest that the Assam Rifles was only protecting Kuki-Zos later by Meitei radicals, that seems far removed from the reality."

The report notes that Meitei media outlets spread false information about the role of the Assam Rifles in Manipur, accusing them of bias towards the Kuki-Zo community. This biased reporting contributed to the vilification of the Assam Rifles and the erosion of trust in their impartiality.

Furthermore, the EGI report highlights the role of social media in spreading graphic videos and images of the violence in Manipur, which further inflamed tensions:

⁷ Violence in Manipur, North-East India: Investigative Report to the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, 21 June 2023; page 11.

"The narrative changed as the viral clip of two naked Kuki-Zo women caught the eyes of people around the country. Journalists from across the country poured in, and access for the national media was much better as reporters were welcomed by both sides. The tribals were better organised when dealing with reporters, giving details of each incident, using their mobile phone cameras to record events and providing facts and figures to support their views."

The report concludes by noting the polarisation of media along ethnic lines in Manipur, which has made it difficult for journalists to report objectively on the conflict:

"The Meitei media became a party to the vilification of the security forces, especially the Assam Rifles. It failed in its duty by constant propaganda against the Assam Rifles claiming that it was only purveying the views of the public."

These assessments underscore the crucial role that social media and the press have played in exacerbating the conflict in Manipur. It is the view of the Council of Experts who compiled this report that the spread of hate speech, disinformation, and biased reporting has clearly contributed to the escalation of violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in the state.

Addressing these issues will require a concerted effort from the government, civil society, and the media in Manipur. Measures such as countering hate speech, promoting responsible journalism, ensuring access to reliable information, and building bridges between communities will be crucial in preventing further violence and promoting reconciliation in the state.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE SITUATION

1. On 12 July 2023, an Urgency Resolution was debated and approved by the European Parliament, which identified a freedom of religion or belief component to the violence. The Resolution noted, "women, in particular, face severe challenges and violations of their rights often related to tribal and religious backgrounds, including sexual violence and harassment." The Resolution also "strongly condemn[ed] the acts of violence, loss of life and destruction of property in Manipur. Denounces in the strongest terms nationalistic rhetoric deployed by leading members of the BJP." Moreover, the Resolution explicitly stated that intolerance towards religious and belief minorities, including Christians, contributes to the violence.^{8,9}

2. On 29 August 2023, 16 Special Procedures mandates (including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief) publicly wrote to the Indian Government, noting the attacks on people as a result of their gender as well as their religious beliefs. The letter said, "women and girls have reportedly been attacked in their homes, dragged in the street, tortured or severely beaten before being raped and killed", and "residences, neighbourhoods, and hundreds of churches... were targeted and attacked". The letter also highlighted the campaigns of disinformation that have been used by the perpetrators to incite the violence, and the links between the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government of Manipur and other Hindutva groups, and the alleged hate speech aimed at inciting violence and genocide against the Kuki-Zo ethnic minority community.¹⁰

The experts particularly lamented the inadequate humanitarian response "following

the latest round of community conflict between the predominantly Hindu Meitei and the predominantly Christian Kuki-Zo ethnic communities." Moreover, citing the "hundreds of churches being burnt down", the experts stated, "recent events in Manipur were another tragic milestone in the steadily deteriorating situation for religious and ethnic minorities in India".¹¹ The report also stated, "Hate speech allegedly aimed at inciting violence and genocide against the Kuki-Zo ethnic minority community reportedly spread online and offline. Reportedly, one of the slogans made against the Kuki-Zo who were being attacked was "Haomacha Hatlo" which translates into "kill smelly tribal children." It concluded, "Sexual and gender-based violence appears to have been used to attack, ethnic minority women of all ages, including girls and older women, on account of their ethnicity and religious belief, as an apparent tool of subjugation and violence."

3. The Indian Government replied to the UN experts who had written to them about the violence on 25 October 2023, omitting the link with religiously motivated violence. Instead, the government stated that the violence was purely ethnic. It claimed that "no specific community can be exclusively held responsible for the unrest". It also outlined the financial remedy that is being offered to victims, but did not provide any details of efforts to rebuild places of worship.

4. On 2 September 2023, the Editors' Guild of India investigation report on Manipur noted, "The state government's alleged inaction has allowed deaths and destruction to escalate. Partisan political interest has fuelled the violence spiral to cause severe loss of human life and property.

⁸ Joint motion for a Resolution on India, the situation in Manipur, 12 July 2023, (2023/2781).

⁹ europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2023-0335_EN.html

¹⁰ Ref.: AL IND 9/2023.

¹¹ ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/india-un-experts-alarmed-continuing-abuses-manipur

- Clearly the State failed to curb the violence sooner and maintain law and order and peace."¹²
5. The US State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report published in April 2024¹³ highlighted the "delayed action to stop the violence and provide humanitarian assistance" by the national government, as noted by local human rights organisations and affected communities.
 6. UK Government and Parliamentary assessments: Lord Cameron (UK Foreign Secretary) noted before Parliament, "It is right to say that we should not downplay the religious aspects of some of this strife. Sometimes it is communal, tribal or ethnic, but in many cases, there is a clear religious part of it. We should be clear about that".¹⁴
 7. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is an independent, bipartisan U.S. government advisory body, separate from the U.S State Department. In its May 2024 Annual Report,¹⁵ it assessed the conditions for religious liberty in India, stating that "more than 500 churches and two synagogues were destroyed and over 70,000 people displaced during clashes in Manipur State." It concludes on page 31 that there is a "clear religious dimension to an ethnic conflict" and recommends that India is designated "as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."¹⁶



A building destroyed in the violence, Manipur

¹² Editors' Guild of India: Report of the Fact-Finding Mission on Media's Reportage of the Ethnic Violence in Manipur, 2 September 2023.

¹³ India 2023 Human Rights Report (state.gov); page 23.

¹⁴ Statements before the House of Lords on Manipur and India (Hansard) (16 April, 2024).

¹⁵ uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024%20Annual%20Report.pdf

¹⁶ thehindu.com/news/national/give-us-complete-break-up-of-6000-firs-sc-tells-manipur-government/article67142598.ece

LITIGATION AND POLICE REPORTS

The Supreme Court has been actively hearing complaints and cases. Writ petitions have been filed by local Indian lawyers on behalf of the victims of violence in Manipur in the following cases:

a. On 31 July, the Supreme Court asked the Manipur government to provide details of over 6,000 First Incident Reports (FIRs) made to the police.¹⁷ The Manipur state reported that it filed over 5,000 cases of arson, leading to the arrests of 252 people and nearly 13,000 preventive arrests.¹⁸

b. The Supreme Court expressed shock after learning that it took 14 days for the police to register a zero FIR in the case of two women being paraded naked by a mob who were assaulted sexually in public.¹⁹ During the hearing on 1 August, the Court called the police investigations "tardy" and said that the state of Manipur underwent "absolute breakdown of the constitutional machinery".²⁰ On 7 August 2023, the Supreme Court formed a committee consisting of retired Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal, former Bombay High Court judge Justice Shalini Phansakar Joshi and former Delhi High Court judge Asha Menon to look into relief and rehabilitation, and appointed former Mumbai Police Commissioner Dattatray Padsalgikar to oversee the probe.²¹

c. A petition challenging the internet ban has also been filed before the Supreme Court of India.²²

d. Dinganglung Gangmel v. Mutum Churamni Meetai & Ors.²³ This petition, initiated by the Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly sought relief and

rehabilitation for people who were affected by the violence. It asked the court for ID cards to be provided to displaced people; the banks to provide details of accounts to displaced people who have already opened bank accounts; and issue disability certificates to disabled people in relief camps.

e. Meitei Christian Churches Council Manipur v. Union of India. This petition sought to restore and rebuild 240 churches within the Meitei Christian Churches Council Manipur (MCCCM) that were destroyed by arson. These include churches belonging to the Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Believers Eastern Churches, and other denominations. The petitioners approached the Supreme Court seeking restoration of places of worship, disbursement of adequate compensatory damages for the loss of church property, and rebuilding of the properties to their original condition at the expense of the state. In December 2023, the Supreme Court directed the government to assist the survivors in relief camps and provide them with the protection they require to observe Christmas. The government was also directed to identify and secure the sites where the places of worship were situated. It was also instructed to formulate a standard operating procedure for the restoration of the churches destroyed by arson.²⁴

f. Chinglunniang v. Union of India. Three petitioners, who were victims of the violence in Manipur and had together incurred financial losses of approximately \$1,450,300 from medical expenses and possession losses. They had not received any form of aid either from the State Government of Manipur or from the Central

¹⁷ [thehindu.com/news/national/give-us-complete-break-up-of-6000-firs-sc-tells-manipur-government/article67142598.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/give-us-complete-break-up-of-6000-firs-sc-tells-manipur-government/article67142598.ece)

¹⁸ [scoobserver.in/reports/what-does-the-status-report-filed-by-the-manipur-government-say](https://www.scoobserver.in/reports/what-does-the-status-report-filed-by-the-manipur-government-say)

¹⁹ [thehindu.com/news/national/give-us-complete-break-up-of-6000-firs-sc-tells-manipur-government/article67142598.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/give-us-complete-break-up-of-6000-firs-sc-tells-manipur-government/article67142598.ece)

²⁰ web.archive.org/web/20230801123258/https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-status-report-on-crimes-shows-there-was-a-complete-breakdown-of-constitutional-machinery-from-may-to-july-end-supreme-court/article67145756.ece

²¹ web.archive.org/web/20230808234113/indianexpress.com/article/india/manipur-violence-sc-commences-hearing-state-proposes-district-level-sit-probe-cases-8880736

²² [livewlaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-petition-challenge-internet-ban-manipur-constitutional-rights-230158](https://www.livewlaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-petition-challenge-internet-ban-manipur-constitutional-rights-230158)

²³ Supreme Court of India, Extraordinary Appellate / Original Jurisdiction, Special Leave Petition (Civil) Diary No. 19206 of 2023.

²⁴ barandbench.com/news/manipur-violence-supreme-court-records-states-assurance-facilitate-those-relief-camps-celebrate-christmas; [livewlaw.in/top-stories/manipur-violence-supreme-court-asks-state-to-inform-steps-taken-to-restore-places-of-worship-to-court-appointed-committee-244636](https://www.livewlaw.in/top-stories/manipur-violence-supreme-court-asks-state-to-inform-steps-taken-to-restore-places-of-worship-to-court-appointed-committee-244636)



Relief aid being delivered to a relief camp, Manipur

Government. The petition sought a comprehensive compensation plan for them, and a class action for thousands of other victims who experienced losses. A committee formed at the instance of the Supreme Court is monitoring all relief and rehabilitation efforts in Manipur. Following the hearing of the petition by the Supreme Court bench, the State of Manipur responded by informing the bench of the existence of the Manipur Women Victim Compensation Scheme, designed to provide compensation for crimes perpetrated against women within the State. Subsequently, the Court issued an order directing the State to furnish adequate compensation. The victim was subsequently provided with Rs. 50,000 by the State. However, the adequacy of this amount in comparison to the expenses incurred for medical treatment has been contested in court.

g. Manipur University Eimi Welfare Society Petition. Violence erupted when a Meitei community mob stormed the Manipur University campus and targeted students and individuals

from the Kuki-Zo tribal community. Over the next two days, the mob looted and vandalized property and belongings of tribal students across the university's accommodations. Eventually, security forces escorted them to relief camps in other states. Fearing continued threats from Meitei groups, the tribal students abandoned their studies and left Manipur. The Manipur University Ethnic Students (MUEWS), representing the displaced tribal students, approached the Supreme Court to facilitate the transfer of these students from Manipur University to other central universities. Additionally, the petition seeks relief measures, including exemption from tuition and other fees, provision of scholarships and stipends, exemption from the submission of mark sheets and original documents temporarily, and provision of safe accommodation and facilities for their continued education.

In December 2023, the Supreme Court directed the State to facilitate the transfer of students to other universities within two weeks of receiving their applications. However,

the students who applied have not yet been transferred to their preferred universities.

h. The National Institute of Technology (NIT) and Dental Students Matter. Students from the tribal community studying at the National Institute of Technology, Imphal, also faced displacement from their educational institution due to the violence. They filed a writ petition in February 2024 requesting the transfer of 38 Kuki-Zo students from NIT, Manipur to other NITs. The petition included seeking transfer to other NITs citing safety concerns and lack of internet access for online classes, disruption of educational opportunities due to mob violence, and lack of access to documents for transfer. Despite numerous representations, authorities have taken no action.

Additionally, according to the First Instance Reports filed with police and courts, the perpetrators have been:

- People associated with Meitei Leepun, an organization committed to preserving traditional Meitei culture.
- Several media reports state the link between armed groups and the Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh²⁵ and has a close link with the RSS²⁶ (the Indian far-right paramilitary organization).

- Mr Singh stated on Facebook on 28 April: *"Cut down the forest, dry up the rivers, finish them off, meanwhile let's build a homeland...this is our time. Then let's annihilate our traditional rival on the hills and live peacefully thereafter."*²⁷ The Arambai Tenggol (meaning Warrior Blood) was created to bring back the past glory of the Meitei religion namely "Sanamahi." From its inception Arambai Tenggol affirmed that its objective is to save the future of all indigenous people of Manipur. This group has the backing of many in power and political leadership, as witnessed by the many pictures.
- Survivors have testified to having seen the mob wearing the same black t-shirts with the blood-red logo spearheading the killings, attacks, and violence in their villages.
- In other parts of Manipur, people have described gunmen wearing Arambai Tenggol shirts leading mobs of hundreds during attacks on villages.

In addition, according to a chargesheet by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the two women who were sexually assaulted by a mob on 4 May were driven to that mob by police.²⁸



Food being distributed among the people in a relief camp, Manipur

²⁵ Has been in the legislative assembly of Manipur since 2002. He formerly joined the BJP legislature party in Manipur (Bharatiya Janata Party) in 2016. BJP is the ruling party in India under Modi (since 2014) – it adheres to a Hindu nationalist ideology.

²⁶ Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

²⁷ Quoted in the Supreme Court of India Writ Petition (Civil) No 540 of 2023 in the matter of Manipur Tribal Forum Delhi v State of Manipur and Anr.

²⁸ independent.co.uk/asia/india/manipur-india-gang-rape-kuki-zo-meitei-b2537795.html

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has revealed that despite international attention, the tragic situation for Christians in Manipur is not resolved. Rather, survivors of violence are still living with its consequences, including displacement and trauma. Those who have been displaced remain acutely vulnerable and suffer from poor conditions with inadequate access to hospitals and wider infrastructure.

Vulnerable groups are continuing to suffer violence, as extremist groups exploit the lack of security in the state. This has been reported even around India's elections. There is an urgent need for investigations into the alleged human rights abuses, and of cases in which the police or state actors are alleged to have been complicit.

To address the ongoing crisis, the Indian government should:

1. Take immediate action to stop ongoing violence in Manipur, starting by demobilizing and disarming extremist groups, and ensuring that sufficient security forces are deployed to protect vulnerable tribal communities;
2. Provide unhindered access for humanitarian aid and human rights monitors, together with international journalists, to reach those who have suffered violence, and those who are still displaced;
3. Strengthen the provision of comprehensive care for survivors of sexual violence in Manipur (including medical, mental health and psychosocial services);
4. Conduct timely and independent investigations into alleged human rights abuses, supporting the ongoing work of the Indian Supreme Court, ensuring that the perpetrators of abuses are held accountable and in particular that allegations of serious misconduct by the police and state authorities are fully investigated;
5. Provide support to rebuild damaged infrastructure, including places of worship, clergy manses, places of education such as schools and seminaries and church offices. It must allow those who have been displaced to return home, as well as creating a fund to provide comprehensive reparation to the survivors of violence so they can rebuild their homes and their villages;
6. Engage in an inclusive reconciliation process following the violence, involving religious leaders of all faiths and wider civil society groups;
7. Condemn the violation of freedom of religion or belief experienced by Kuki-Zo Christians and Meitei Christians at the hands of Meitei extremist groups, and act against inflammatory statements against them and disseminated through print and social media (including those made by state actors);
8. End discriminatory so-called "anti-conversion" laws and policies which are used to justify such attacks.

As the international community marks one year since the beginning of the crisis in Manipur, other nations must not allow the tragedy to fade from view. Instead, other governments should not hesitate to raise the attacks faced by Christians in Manipur with the Indian Government, along with its obligations under international human rights law to uphold Freedom of Religion or Belief for all its citizens. In addition, the international community should increase support for grassroots peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, with the aim of securing a path to lasting peace and justice for all the people of Manipur and India.