

## **Independent People’s Tribunal hears testimonies from Manipur violence**

**NAGALAND 8th July 2024**

**DIMAPUR, JULY 8 (MExN):** The Independent People’s Tribunal on Manipur, established by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), convened in Delhi on July 6 and 7 to hear personal testimonies from survivors and victims of the ethnic violence that has plagued Manipur since May 3. The hearings were part of an initiative to document the extensive human rights violations and were organized by the PUCL Secretariat.

According to the PUCL press release, the Tribunal consists of prominent figures, including Shri Kurian Joseph, former judge of the Supreme Court of India; K. Kannan, former Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court; Dr. Anjana Prakash, former Judge of the Patna High Court; MG Devasahayam, IAS (retd), former Additional Chief Secretary of Haryana; Dr. Swaraj Bir Singh, IPS (retd), former DGP of Meghalaya; Prof. Uma Chakravarti, Feminist Historian; Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Social Scientist and Author; Prof. Rosemary Dzuwichu, formerly from Nagaland University; Prof. Tanweer Fazal, University of Hyderabad; Dr. Sandeep Pandey, Peace Activist; Manjula Pradeep, Senior Human Rights Activist; Dr. Navsharan Singh, Writer, Researcher & Activist; Henri Tiphagne, Advocate, Madras/Madurai High Court; and Aakar Patel, Journalist and Author.

“The situation in Manipur is marked by deep distrust towards the state and central governments, and serious concerns regarding the roles played by security forces and militant groups,” stated the press release. The hearings followed an investigative visit to Manipur by Tribunal members and secretariat staff in May and June 2024. They traveled to districts severely affected by the violence, including Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Imphal, Kangpokpi, and others, recording testimonies from survivors, relief organizations, and government officials.

The PUCL emphasized the importance of these testimonies: “Documenting the violations suffered by the people, especially the loss of life, sexual violence, and the suffering of children and the elderly, is crucial for seeking justice and accountability.”

The Tribunal members interacted with internally displaced persons, representatives of various ethnic communities, advocates, journalists, health professionals, scholars, and activists from Manipur. The PUCL remarked on the gravity of the testimonies: “The stories we have heard are heart-wrenching and highlight the urgent need for intervention and justice.”

The Tribunal also examined the actions of constitutional authorities and security agencies. It pointed out the controversy surrounding the security forces: “There are serious questions about the neutrality of the Central Forces, including the Assam Rifles, and the effectiveness of the state police in handling the situation.”

PUCL President Kavita Srivastava and General Secretary V. Suresh outlined the Tribunal’s objectives, which include analyzing the performance of government authorities, examining the role of security agencies, and proposing recommendations to repair the social and political fabric of Manipur. “Our goal is to restore confidence in the constitutional order and institutions,” they stated, in the press release.

The Tribunal's findings will be compiled into a 'Report to the Nation,' expected in the coming months. This report will include recommendations aimed at ensuring accountability, justice, and redressal for the people of Manipur. "We hope this report will be a significant step towards healing and rebuilding trust in Manipur," the PUCL stated.

The PUCL press release highlighted the urgent need for such an independent body. "Considering the deep polarization and precarious situation prevailing in Manipur, an independent People's Tribunal will help restore a sense of confidence and trust in the constitutional order and institutions," it stated.

The hearings concluded with a call for greater coordination between state and central authorities to address the ongoing crisis in Manipur. "We must work together to end this violence and bring peace and stability to the region," the Tribunal urged.

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