

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# INDIA: WANTON KILLINGS, VIOLENCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN MANIPUR

Amnesty International is alarmed at the continued and unabated violence that is taking place between ethnic groups in the North-Eastern state of Manipur, India and the inability of the Indian authorities to protect human rights in the region. Since the start of the ethnic violence on 3 May, more than a 100 people have been killed and scores others injured.<sup>1</sup> More than 50,000 people have been forced to flee.<sup>2</sup> Now displaced from their homes, they are living in relief camps across Manipur and in the neighboring north-eastern states. Scores of houses and property have been burned, looted, vandalized.<sup>3</sup> This has left entire communities terrorized and devastated. The state government has also imposed an internet shutdown since the start of the violence.<sup>4</sup>

## BACKGROUND

On 3 May, ethnic violence started between the Meitei community and the Kuki and other tribal hill communities. The Meitei community is the largest community in Manipur and are predominantly Hindu. The state capital of Imphal and the surrounding valley areas are predominantly inhabited by Meiteis. Whereas the Kuki-Zo, Nagas, and other tribal communities are predominantly Christian, and the hill districts surrounding the Imphal valley are predominantly inhabited by them. Manipur also shares a border with Myanmar.<sup>5</sup>

In March, the Manipur High Court directed the state government to consider granting the Meitei community Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Following this, tensions started simmering, which have been exacerbated by issues relating to migration and poppy cultivation in the state.<sup>6</sup> This includes divisive narratives that blame the drug trade and migration from neighboring states to Manipur solely on specific ethnic groups, which have added fuel to the current violence in the state. On 3 May tribal hill groups, primarily from the Kuki community, organized a protest against the proposal to grant the Meitei community this ST status. This proved to be a trigger for the start of the violence between the two ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup>

The ST status is an affirmative action proposal to grant protected status to the Meitei community which would give them quotas in government jobs and public education institutions, and other special protections, like the ability to purchase land in the protected tribal hill areas. Tribal groups are opposed to this status being granted to Meiteis, as they state that

<sup>1</sup> Al Jazeera, "Nine killed as ethnic violence continues to grip India's Manipur", 14 June 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/14/nine-killed-in-new-ethnic-violence-in-indias-manipur>

<sup>2</sup> Business Standard, "Manipur violence: Over 50,000 displaced people staying in 349 relief camps", 11 June 2023, [https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/manipur-violence-over-50-000-displaced-people-staying-in-349-relief-camps-123061100220\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/manipur-violence-over-50-000-displaced-people-staying-in-349-relief-camps-123061100220_1.html)

<sup>3</sup> Al Jazeera, "Nine killed as ethnic violence continues to grip India's Manipur", 14 June 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/14/nine-killed-in-new-ethnic-violence-in-indias-manipur>

<sup>4</sup> Government of Manipur Order, 5 July 2023, <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FOUzeCmaMAAuvOU?format=jpg&name=large> and Statement by Internet Freedom Foundation, "50 Days of Internet Shutdown: Internet Freedom Foundation's statement on the ongoing digital rights violations amidst Manipur's indefinite internet shutdown", 22 June 2023, <https://internetfreedom.in/manipur-50-days-internet-shutdown/>

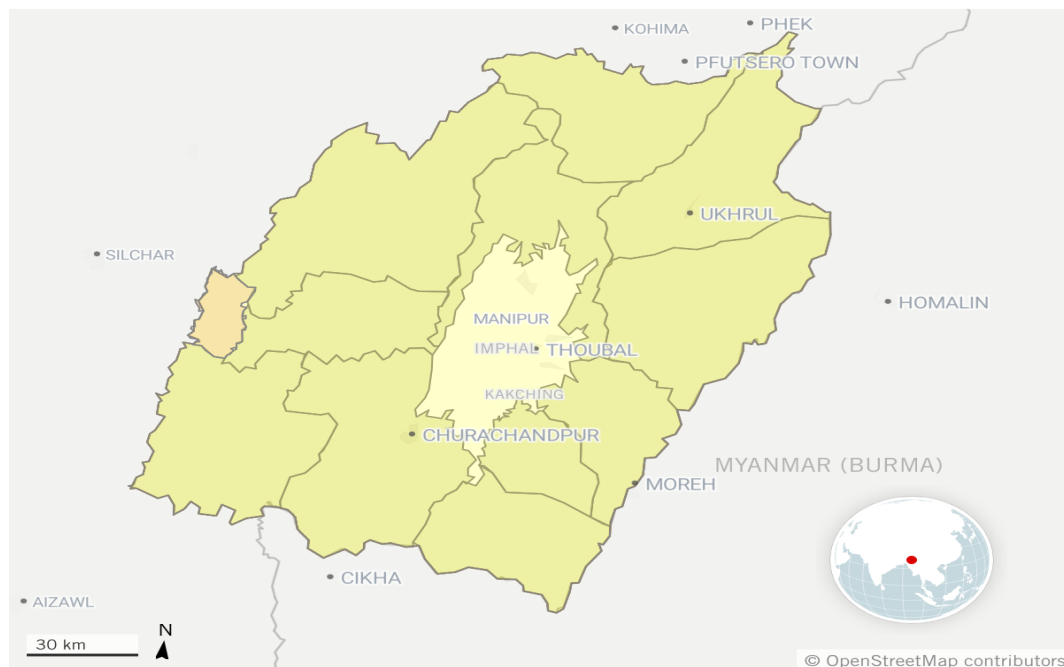
<sup>5</sup> Karmarkar, Rahul, "Explained | What is behind Manipur's widespread unrest?", 5 May 2023, The Hindu, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/explained-what-is-behind-manipurs-widespread-unrest/article66814975.ece>, and Roy, Esha, "Manipur's ethnic faultlines: Kuki-Meitei divide & recent unrest", 7 May 2023, The Indian Express, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-politics/manipurs-ethnic-faultlines-violent-protests-kukis-and-nagas-8594147/>, and Al Jazeera, "What has spurred ethnic violence in India's Manipur?" 7 May 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/7/what-has-spurred-ethnic-violence-in-indias-manipur>

<sup>6</sup> Saikia, Arunabh, "Why Manipur's civil war is being linked to the narcotics trade", 13 June 2023, Scroll.in, <https://scroll.in/article/1050773/poppy-in-the-hills-why-manipurs-civil-war-is-being-linked-to-narcotics-trade>

<sup>7</sup> Raj, Suhasini and Travelli, Alex, "A Rising India is Also, in One Remote Pocket, a Blood-Soaked War Zone", The New York Times, 12 June 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/09/world/asia/india-manipur-conflict.html>

they are already numerically advantaged and comparatively well-off. Whereas Meitei groups claim that the ST status is needed to “save the ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language”.<sup>8</sup>

## Ethno-religious composition of Manipur in India



### Districts in Manipur, North-Eastern state of India

- Majority Meitei Population (Predominantly Hindu)
- Majority Tribal Population including Kuki-Zo, Naga, and others (Predominantly Christian)
- Other

Source: Census Data, 2011 and Media Reports



Figure 1: Ethno-religious composition of Manipur

Since 3 May, Indian authorities deployed additional paramilitary and army forces<sup>9</sup> in the state, and later set up a peace committee, but the violence continues unabated. Several community members from both Meitei and Kuki communities have distanced themselves from the peace committee citing a lack of adequate consultation.<sup>10</sup> During his visit to Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah also announced the formation of a judicial commission led by a retired Indian Chief Justice of a High Court to investigate the violence in Manipur.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Baruah, Sukrita, “Meitei ST demand in Manipur gets HC boost, touches another raw tribal nerve in NE”, The Indian Express, 28 April 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/northeast-meitei-st-demand-manipur-hc-8581664/>, and The Firstpost, “Why is Manipur burning? The Meitei community vs the Kuki-Naga battle in the state, explained”, 5 May 2023, <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/manipur-burning-meitei-community-vs-kuki-naga-battle-12549862.html>

<sup>9</sup> The Print, “Army, paramilitary forces deployed in violence-hit Manipur”, 4 May 2023, <https://theprint.in/india/army-paramilitary-forces-deployed-in-violence-hit-manipur/1555018/>

<sup>10</sup> Parashar, Utpal, “No rationale’: Meitei, Kuki groups refuse to participate in peace process”, Hindustan Times, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/peace-committee-for-meitei-kuki-conflict-in-manipur-faces-opposition-from-civil-society-groups-on-both-sides-101686596271194.html>

<sup>11</sup> Singh, Vijaita, “Judicial commission to probe Manipur ‘ethnic violence’, says Amit Shah”, 1 June 2023, The Hindu, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-violence-panel-led-by-retired-hc-judge-to-probe-cases-says-amit-shah/article66918781.ece>

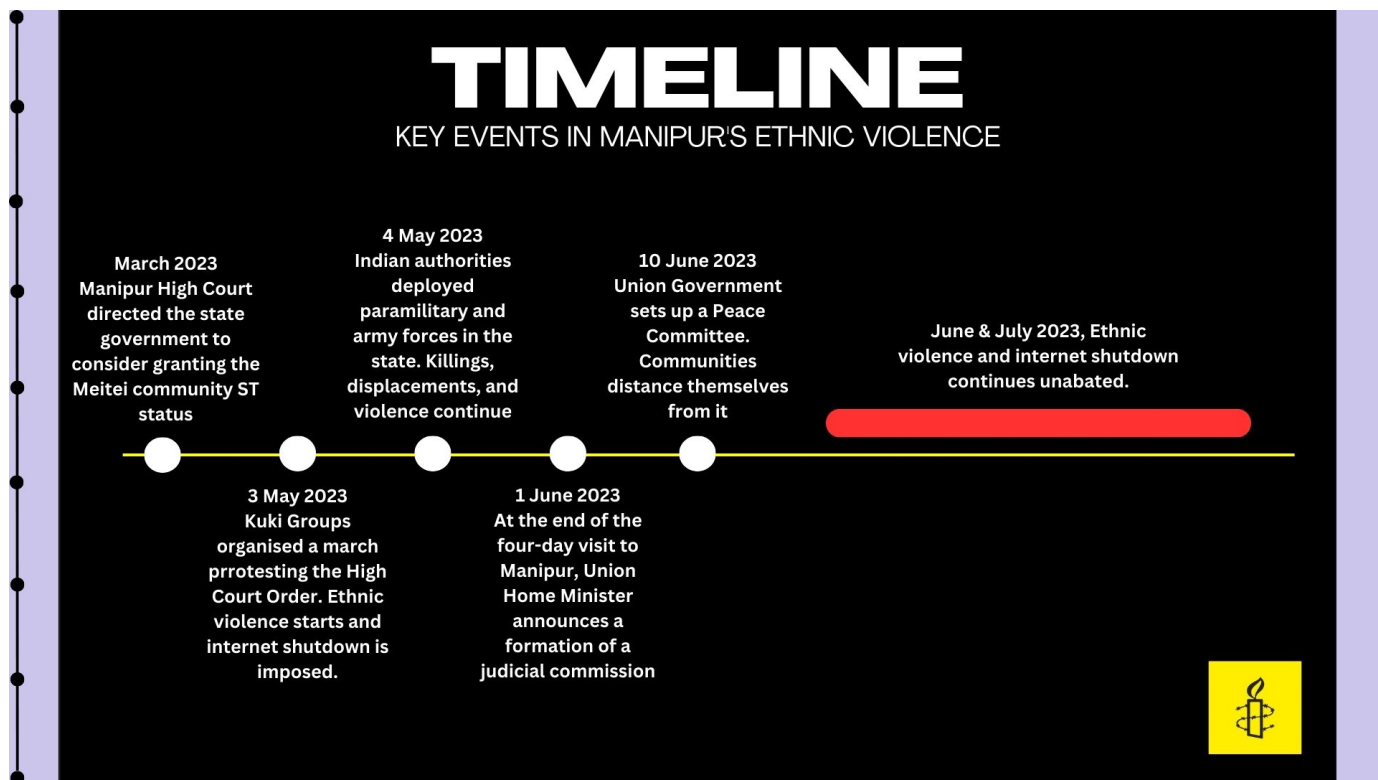


Figure 2: Timeline Graphic

## METHODOLOGY

To investigate and cross-verify incidents of ethnic violence and human rights abuses in Manipur, Amnesty International conducted seven remote telephonic interviews with activists, journalists, and survivors of the violence within and outside Manipur in June 2023. In addition, the organization also reviewed audiovisual evidence, official documents and statements, and media reports. To protect the security of its sources, names and identifying details of all individuals who provided Amnesty International with information have been withheld. Amnesty International extends its deepest gratitude to all those who shared information with the organization for this statement. Amnesty International wrote to the Home Ministry of India via e-mail detailing the findings in this public statement and sought a response from them. At the time of publication of this statement, the organization did not receive a response.<sup>12</sup>

## ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Ongoing killings, violence, displacement, and destruction of buildings and property has devastated lives, and has led to an atmosphere of intense fear, volatility, and distrust between ethnic communities. Police and security force armories have been looted by mobs<sup>13</sup>, and armed groups across community lines continue to perpetrate violence that shows no signs of stopping. Prices of essential commodities are increasing, and supply lines have been affected leading to shortages.<sup>14</sup> The state of Manipur has been effectively divided into 'no-go' zones, patrolled by community groups as well as security forces.

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International wrote to the official listed e-mail address of the Home Ministry. The organisation also wrote to the Chief Minister of Manipur on the official listed e-mail address, but the correspondence remained undelivered.

<sup>13</sup> Kaur, Banjot, "Manipur: FIRs Show the Type and Quantity of Weapons Taken from Police Armouries", 19 June 2023, The Wire, <https://thewire.in/security/manipur-looted-weaponry-yet-to-return-to-police-armouries-cm-appeals-afresh-for-surrender>

<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International interviews. See also, The Print, "Prices of essential items go sky-high in trouble-torn Manipur", 24 May 2023, <https://theprint.in/india/prices-of-essential-items-go-sky-high-in-trouble-torn-manipur/1591968/>

Members of Kuki community cannot pass through the Imphal valley districts dominated by the Meitei community, and the Meitei community cannot venture into the hill districts.<sup>15</sup>

Amnesty International spoke to a survivor of the violence belonging to a tribal hill community whose two family members were killed on the morning of May 4 when the entire family were attacked by mobs on the road, when they were on their way to seek refuge at a relief camp. Other family members also sustained serious injuries. According to the survivor, the police couldn't access the location of the violence as they were outnumbered by the mob. They were forced to flee their home, which was later looted and completely emptied of their belongings. The family have also been unable to retrieve their bodies and conduct last rites for the family members who had been killed.<sup>16</sup>

Church Leaders in Manipur have said that more than 250 churches have been burned down in the state.<sup>17</sup> In addition, media reports have noted that 17 temples have been destroyed.<sup>18</sup> A Member of the State Legislative Assembly (MLA) belonging to the Kuki community and his driver, also from the Kuki community, were also attacked by mobs. The MLA was hospitalized, and the driver was killed.<sup>19</sup>

In Kuki dominated areas, people belonging to the Meitei community have also been attacked and forced to flee their homes. Amnesty International spoke to a survivor of violence belonging to the Meitei community in a hill district whose family, including elderly persons were forced to flee their homes past midnight, on the intervening night of the 3 and 4 May, under the cover of darkness when their village was attacked. One family member sustained bullet injuries.<sup>20</sup> Across community lines, however, the inaction and failure of the authorities is being acutely felt by victims. "There is no government", one survivor told Amnesty International, and another asked, "Don't we belong to this government?"<sup>21</sup>

In this atmosphere, human rights defenders, activists, and academics who have been speaking out against rights abuses have also faced reprisals, threats, and intimidation.<sup>22</sup>

On 24 May, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged, "the authorities [in Manipur] to respond to the situation quickly, including by investigating and addressing root causes of the violence in line with their international human rights obligations".<sup>23</sup> Authorities in the State of Manipur and the Central Government in India have an obligation to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. Indian authorities should meaningfully work together with civil society groups and community members of all ethnic groups to ensure that peace and security is restored in a human rights compliant manner. Victims of violence have a right to truth, accountability, and justice.

## **POLICE AND SECURITY EXCESSES, REPORTS OF BIAS**

On 4 May, in a flagrant violation of international human rights law and standards, the Manipur State government issued a "shoot-at-sight" order to all district magistrates in the state "in extreme cases after all forms of persuasion, warning, reasonable force have been exhausted" and the "situation could not be controlled".<sup>24</sup> Shooting at sight constitutes intentional lethal force. Under international law and standards, law enforcement officials may only resort to such force

<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International Interviews. See also: Raj, Suhasini and Travelli, Alex, "A Rising India is Also, in One Remote Pocket, a Blood Soaked War Zone", The New York Times, 12 June 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/09/world/asia/india-manipur-conflict.html>

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International interviews.

<sup>17</sup> Purohit, Devadeep, "As conflict in Manipur reaches 26<sup>th</sup> day, a look at the 'plot' that keeps the fire burning", 29 May 2023, The Telegraph, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/from-ethnic-strife-to-heartburn-over-land-plot-that-keeps-the-manipur-fire-burning/cid/1940347>

<sup>18</sup> Biswas, Soutik, "Manipur: Fears grow over Indian state on brink of civil war", BBC, 22 June 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-65679616>

<sup>19</sup> The Quint, 15 June 2023, <https://twitter.com/wannabhistorian/status/1669321342112477189>

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International Interviews

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International Interviews

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International Interviews. See also: [https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/manipur-violence-hearing-of-case-against-kuki-intellectuals-begins-after-interviews/cid/1950918?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/manipur-violence-hearing-of-case-against-kuki-intellectuals-begins-after-interviews/cid/1950918?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email) and <https://twitter.com/hatjalhai/status/1678030606004027393?s=20>

<sup>23</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Statements, 24 May 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/05/turk-there-should-be-un-human-rights-office-everywhere>

<sup>24</sup> Government of Manipur Order, 4 May 2023,

[https://twitter.com/ANI/status/1654093530330173440?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1654093530330173440%7Ctwgr%5E2e6969b988aadae32db27700a690be94e71397cd%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fthewire.in%2Fgovernment%2Fmanipur-govt-issues-shoot-at-sight-orders-in-extreme-cases-amid-violence](https://twitter.com/ANI/status/1654093530330173440?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1654093530330173440%7Ctwgr%5E2e6969b988aadae32db27700a690be94e71397cd%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fthewire.in%2Fgovernment%2Fmanipur-govt-issues-shoot-at-sight-orders-in-extreme-cases-amid-violence)

when strictly unavoidable to protect against imminent threat of death or serious injury, which the order failed to clearly lay out, effectively permitting the deliberate and arbitrary killing of individuals who do not pose such a threat.

On 12 June in Imphal West, security personnel belonging to the Rapid Action Force (RAF), a specialized wing of the Central Reserve Police Force, vandalized private vehicles belonging to individuals. The incident was captured on CCTV cameras. Amnesty International spoke to one person whose car was vandalized who confirmed the vandalism by the personnel.<sup>25</sup> Two of the personnel were reportedly suspended following the incident.<sup>26</sup> In a separate incident, three RAF personnel were reportedly detained for trying to set fire to a local shop.<sup>27</sup>

The “shoot-at-sight” order and security personnel vandalizing property are deeply troubling. Authorities in Manipur should ensure that any use of force must be undertaken strictly in accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.<sup>28</sup> Law enforcement must not use force except when strictly necessary and to the minimum extent required under the circumstances. Lethal force should not be used except when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

There have also been concerning reports citing eyewitness accounts of police leading Meitei mobs into Kuki localities.<sup>29</sup> Kuki community members have accused police authorities of siding with the Meitei community, citing inaction and even complicity.<sup>30</sup> Reports have also noted how right-wing groups affiliated with the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party in Manipur have targeted Kuki properties and businesses.<sup>31</sup> Citing deeply divisive issues of migration from Myanmar, poppy cultivation, and the drug trade in Manipur, the Chief Minister N Biren Singh, has particularly demonized the Kuki community through statements and divisive policies.<sup>32</sup>

International human rights standards state that authorities must ensure that no one is subject to discriminatory treatment by law enforcement because of their race, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion or belief, political or other opinion, ethnicity, national or social origin, disability, or other status. Law enforcement must be especially vigilant to protect potentially vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, women, refugees, displaced persons and members of minority groups.

Excessive use of force and reports of police bias need to be immediately, independently, and impartially investigated. As required by the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, authorities should ensure that superior officers should also be held responsible if they know, or should have known, that law enforcement officials under their command are resorting, or have resorted, to the unlawful use of force and firearms, and they did not take all measures in their power to prevent, suppress or report such use.<sup>33</sup> Law enforcement officials must also respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons.

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<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International Interviews

<sup>26</sup> Hindustan Times, “Manipur: 2 RAF personnel suspended over alleged vandalization of vehicles”, 14 June 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/raf-personnel-suspended-for-vandalizing-parked-cars-in-imphal-india-following-viral-video-101686746044848.html>

<sup>27</sup> Saikia, Arunabh, “Manipur: 3 RAF officials detained for allegedly trying to set fire to a shop”, 20 May 2023, Scroll.In, <https://scroll.in/latest/1049895/manipur-3-raf-officials-detained-for-allegedly-trying-to-set-fire-to-a-shop>

<sup>28</sup> The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement>

<sup>29</sup> Saikia, Arunabh, “Armed gangs and a partisan state: How Manipur slipped into civil war”, Scroll.in, 6 June 2023  
— <https://scroll.in/article/1050361/armed-gangs-and-a-partisan-state-how-manipur-slipped-into-civil-war>

<sup>30</sup> Dhillon, Amrit, “Separation is the only answer’: Manipur violence fuels calls for separate state in India”, 16 May 2023, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/16/separation-is-the-only-answer-manipur-violence-fuels-calls-for-separate-state-in-india>

<sup>31</sup> Purohit, Devadeep, “As conflict in Manipur reaches 26<sup>th</sup> day, a look at the ‘plot’ that keeps the fire burning”, 29 May 2023, The Telegraph, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/from-ethnic-strife-to-heartburn-over-land-plot-that-keeps-the-manipur-fire-burning/cid/1940347>

<sup>32</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPin6LI9u9Y> and <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/marginalisation-of-kukis-the-main-reason-behind-manipur-violence/article67000979.ece>

<sup>33</sup> The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, Article 24, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement>

## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Over 50,000 people have been forced to flee and are now living in relief camps in Manipur and in the neighboring north-eastern states. In Manipur, the facilities and necessities in relief camps are often being organized by community members, mutual aid groups, and other civil society organizations.<sup>34</sup>

A survivor in Manipur told Amnesty International that the camps their family was living in did not have adequate housing and shelter, “It is basically a shed... The facilities are not hygienic”. The survivor who was previously stationed in a different camp in the immediate aftermath of the violence said that for two days and nights, they received no food or drinking water at all.<sup>35</sup> Medical supplies and medical care are also proving difficult to access. Another activist working to coordinate relief efforts in Manipur told Amnesty International, “It is a big challenge...Camps don’t have proper sanitation.” Adding further on promises of financial assistance made by the authorities<sup>36</sup> for displaced persons, “[It] has not been implemented. These are propaganda promises. The people are not fools.”<sup>37</sup>

These accounts of a lack of adequate shelter, sanitation, food, water, and medical care suggest that authorities’ efforts to respect and protect the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) do not conform to standards laid under the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.<sup>38</sup> The Guiding Principles require that all internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with safe access to essential food and potable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing; and essential medical services and sanitation.<sup>39</sup>

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement also note that states have a duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction. Children, especially unaccompanied minors, expectant mothers, mothers with young children, female heads of household, persons with disabilities and elderly persons, shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs.<sup>40</sup>

Indian state authorities should coordinate with each other and with local groups to ensure that basic necessities of adequate and sanitary housing, safety, clothing, clean water, nutrition and health care are accessible to all IDPs who have been forced to flee. Authorities must facilitate the IDPs’ right to voluntarily return to their homes and rebuild their lives by ensuring safe rehabilitation and/or resettlement.

## INTERNET SHUTDOWN

Since the outbreak of violence, the internet has been shut down in Manipur. The Manipur government has ordered an extension of the internet shutdown until July 10. The shutdown has been in place since May 3. This has meant that the people of Manipur have been without internet access for over two months. On July 7, the Manipur High Court had ordered the State government to partially lift the internet shutdown. However, the Manipur Government has challenged this order in the Supreme Court.<sup>41</sup>

Manipur authorities have said that the shutdown is to “thwart the design and activities of anti-national and anti-social elements” and to “maintain peace and communal harmony”,<sup>42</sup> but the shutdown violates the human rights of the people of Manipur and hinders them from receiving and imparting information and freely expressing their opinions, and to contact their loved ones.

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<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International Interviews. See also: <https://thewire.in/rights/ground-report-manipur-relief-camp>

<sup>35</sup> Amnesty International interviews

<sup>36</sup> See: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/manipur-violence-victims-staying-in-relief-camps-to-get-1000-assistance-cm-biren-singh/article67015582.ece>

<sup>37</sup> Amnesty International Interviews

<sup>38</sup> Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/international-standards>

<sup>39</sup> Principle, 18 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/international-standards>

<sup>40</sup> Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/international-standards>

<sup>41</sup> See: <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-agrees-to-hear-today-plea-challenging-manipur-hcs-order-restoring-internet-in-state-232308>

<sup>42</sup> Government of Manipur Order, 25 June 2023, <https://cdn.thewire.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/25161719/Image-from-iOS.jpg>,



States parties must not block or hinder internet connectivity to curb freedom of expression, which is a right enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a state party, as well as in the Constitution of India. Any restrictions on the operation of information dissemination systems must conform with the tests for restrictions on freedom of expression—notably, they should be legal, necessary, and proportionate. These tests are laid down under international human rights law as well as the Supreme Court of India judgement, *Anuradha Bhasin Vs Union of India*, which noted that the degree and scope of internet restrictions had to be proportionate”.<sup>43</sup> Blanket – or total – cuts to internet access (or internet shutdowns) are inherently disproportionate under international human rights law and should never be imposed even in cases of emergency.

The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/13 of 2016 “condemned unequivocally measures to intentionally prevent or disrupt information online that are in violation of international human rights law”.<sup>44</sup> A 2015 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations, even in times of conflict, using communications ‘kill switches’, “can never be justified under human rights law.”<sup>45</sup>

The ability of people to access communication technologies in a secure and private manner is also an essential tool for effective human rights work. Imposing such prolonged and blanket internet shutdowns stops important information from reaching people. It also prevents journalists, international and local organizations from documenting critical human rights violations. It further forces them to rely on unencrypted means of communication, thereby increasing their risk and detrimentally affecting their safety.

The internet shutdown has also impacted their economic, social, and cultural rights, including access to essential services including medical care, ability to conduct economic activities, undertake financial transactions, and has severely impacted livelihoods. A reporter based in Manipur told Amnesty International, “Reporting is difficult [due to the internet shutdown]. Businesses [are] also affected. Bank services are difficult. Students, to attend [online] classes, it is very difficult for them during [this] admission season.” Another business owner told Amnesty International, “No transactions have been possible. Even filing GST (Goods and Services Tax) is not possible. We have no cash. This is going on for almost two months now.”<sup>46</sup>

India has emerged as the global leader of internet shutdowns. Indian authorities have imposed the highest number of internet shutdowns for 5 years in a row.<sup>47</sup>

Amnesty International reiterates that Indian authorities must immediately restore internet access in Manipur. Authorities should meaningfully work together with civil society groups and community members of all ethnic groups to ensure that peace and security is restored in a human rights compliant manner. Victims of violence have a right to truth, accountability, and justice. Police excesses and reports of police bias need to be immediately, independently, and impartially investigated. Indian state authorities should coordinate with each other and with local groups to ensure that necessities of adequate and sanitary housing, safety, clothing, clean water, nutrition and health care is accessible to all IDPs who have been forced to flee. Authorities must facilitate the IDPs' right to voluntarily return to their homes and rebuild their lives by ensuring safe rehabilitation and/or resettlement.

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<sup>43</sup> General comment No.34 on Article 19: Freedoms of opinion and expression, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no34-article-19-freedoms-opinion-and>, and *Anuradha Bhasin Vs Union of India*

<sup>44</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/13 of 2016, [https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_32\\_13.pdf](https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/A_HRC_RES_32_13.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and responses to conflict situations, May 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2015/05/joint-declaration-freedom-expression-and-responses-conflict-situations>

<sup>46</sup> Amnesty International Interviews

<sup>47</sup> Access Now, “Five years in a row: India is 2022’s biggest internet shutdowns offender”, February 2023, <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/keepit-on-internet-shutdowns-2022-india/>