



Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)

Conglomerate of Recognised Tribes in Lamka, Outer Manipur

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CONDEMNATION

Media reports from the Imphal valley and various social media posts mention that an Indian Merchant Navy officer was among those killed during a gunfight between security forces and Meitei miscreants who were attacking tribal villages on Thursday.

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) strongly condemns the involvement of an active serviceman in attacking Indian civilians.

Almost two months into the ethnic conflict in Manipur, armed Meitei groups led by rogue state forces are still attacking tribal settlements while the womenfolk are used to block security forces from aiding hapless villagers.

Even a public face like Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was blocked from travelling to the tribal district of Lamka (Churachandpur). The N. Biren Singh-led government directed the SP and DC of Bishnupur to prevent Gandhi from reaching Lamka town by road on the false pretext of violence in tribal areas. Mr Gandhi eventually reached the town by helicopter to personally witness a peaceful and welcoming community. This shows that the government is fearful of letting any neutral observer from discovering what is really happening on the ground.

Even as Gandhi was visiting the state, violence continued unabated with tribal settlements being attacked in Kangpokpi district by Meitei gunmen supported by Manipur police commandos. A national newspaper quoted defence sources as saying the attack was "premeditated".

While army columns were immediately deployed to stop the attacks, they were shot at by "armed rioters" and Meitei mobs converged to interfere with the operations of the security forces.

It is pertinent to note that out of more than 4,000 weapons looted from police and state armouries in May, just over 1,000 have been returned to authorities. This means more than 3,000 weapons are still being used to terrorize tribals.

ITLF demands the imposition of President's Rule in the state and action against militant groups like Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun if the central government is sincere about stopping the violence.

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