



## Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)

Conglomerate of Recognised Tribes in Lamka, Outer Manipur

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### PRESS RELEASE

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) vehemently opposes the Manipur government and the inter-agency Unified Command's decision to destroy bunkers, which are essential in protecting Kuki-Zo tribal villages from raids.

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, who chaired a meeting of the Unified Command on Monday, said the meeting decided to deploy forces to remove all bunkers in the state. This would make the Kuki-Zo tribal villages more vulnerable to attacks by radical Meitei gunmen and mobs.

Despite the deployment of a massive number of security forces and the setting up of military buffer zones, tribal villages are attacked almost every day, leading to deaths and the destruction of houses and properties.

Meitei settlements do not need bunkers because tribals do not attack them; but for tribals, bunkers are an essential part of their defense against unending raids.

Also, the tribals cannot trust a CM who calls his fellow citizens "illegal immigrants" and openly sides with one community despite being a state administrator.

The CM's partisanship was on full display during his recent visit to the Sagang area, in which Langja village was attacked by armed Meitei groups. He only visited and paid his condolences to the Meiteis, while totally ignoring the burning of 30 tribal houses and the brutal killing and beheading of an unarmed tribal youth.

The decision to destroy all bunkers, announced by the person who is the main architect of the current violence, is not comforting for the Kuki-Zo tribals.

Two months of killings are enough for every stakeholder to conclude that cosmetic measures are not enough to control the violence. The central government needs to show that it is being fair to all sides by implementing President's Rule in the state.

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