



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) is aghast at the legal threat issued by Meitei journalists against their seniors from the Editors' Guild of India (EGI), the conscience keeper for the industry, for their report on the sectarian conflict in Manipur.

ITLF also strongly condemns the filing of an FIR against the EGI team by Manipur Police, which shows the government's intolerance towards anyone who disagrees with its narrative.

The three-member team from EGI, with more than 60 years of journalism experience between them, took the risk of coming to a conflict zone after receiving multiple representations about the partisan role of the media. The Indian Army also wrote to EGI that media outlets in Meitei-controlled Imphal were indulging in "outright misrepresentation of facts".

No journalist or representative from the Meitei or tribal community followed them in their fact-finding mission. No one influenced their judgment.

Manipuri journalists and the state government can nitpick about details in the report, but the overall state of affairs is plain for all to see - Meitei media outlets have become propaganda machines during the conflict, fully toeing the line of the militants and the chief minister. The radicalization and the hate that oozes from the Meitei populace show that they have been completely brainwashed into thinking all Kuki-Zo tribals are "foreigners", "narco-terrorists" and "militants" trying to take over their land.

The valley-based media has indulged in not just biased reporting, but in many cases resorted to publishing completely fabricated news – on more than one occasion, Imphal newspapers have carried "news" items about fierce gun battles between Kuki-Zo tribal groups in the heart of Lamka.

The EGI team's mandate was to find out the state of reportage amid the complex dynamics at play, and that is what it wrote in the report, without fear or favour. Unfortunately, the Meitei community has gone and done what it does best to those who do not agree with its narrative – use the legal system against them.

It may be mentioned that Manipur police also filed an FIR against a fact-finding team of the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) in July.


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