



Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)

Conglomerate of Recognised Tribes in Lamka, Outer Manipur

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PRESS RELEASE

“Trust men and they will be true to you.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

When the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) tried to bury martyrs killed in Manipur's ethnic conflict on August 3, the Home Ministry requested us to postpone the mass burial for a week to sort out all issues. We agreed in good faith. After four months, none of our demands have been met, including the return of our dead bodies lying in morgues in the Imphal valley.

When ITLF met Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi, we demanded the removal of Meitei state forces in all hill districts. The minister disregarded our request but promised that he would not allow state forces to be deployed independently and they would only act “in conjunction” with central forces in hill areas. Recent events have shown that this is not being followed in letter or spirit.

While the killing of a tribal police officer by a Meitei sniper did not evoke any response from the state or central government, the death of a Meitei police officer is being used as an excuse to terrorize Kuki-Zo civilians living in Moreh town and other villages in Tengenoupal district.

Meitei commandos are being given a free hand to assault civilians and burn down houses. Vehicles are set ablaze and money looted from homes. What are the central forces doing?

In a conflict between Meiteis and tribals, why are Meitei forces allowed to conduct operations among tribals? What is preventing the central government from deploying neutral central forces among the tribal population?

Meanwhile, militant Meitei groups like Arambai Tenggol are releasing videos where they are openly brandishing sophisticated weapons looted from state armouries and urging their cadres to attack Kuki-Zo tribals. No action has been taken against them by security forces or investigating agencies like the CBI and NIA.

The trust we have placed in the central government is waning day by day.

It is time to put electoral political considerations aside and look at the humanitarian toll. When the majority community that controls the state government is trying to eliminate the minority tribal population, it is the duty of the central government to safeguard the rights and lives of the true victims of this conflict. We need a separate administration to live apart from those who want our destruction.

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