

Malaysia: Memorandum of protest against Manipur violence and passivity of government of India

Friday 6 October 2023, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 7 September 2023).

We, the undersigned organisations, are expressing our deep concern and condemnation of the escalating violence in Manipur, particularly the distressing reports of the weaponization of sexual violence against women.

1. Weaponization of Sexual Violence (Crimes Against Women)

The horrific video of two young women stripped naked and paraded on the streets in Kangpokpi in Manipur is deeply distressing and extremely enraging, and our hearts go out to all those affected by these tragic incidents. The three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said the police inaction in registering FIRs, making arrests, and recording statements give the court the impression that “from the beginning of May till the end of July there was no law.” This clearly shows that the authorities are trying to cover up such acts. In this conflict, women and girls are targeted to bring..down..a..community.

The use of sexual violence as a tactic of war or conflict is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and a gross violation of human rights. Women and girls, who are already disproportionately affected by conflict, are being subjected to further harm that scars their lives irreparably.

The weaponization of sexual violence against women represents a horrific and reprehensible tactic employed in conflicts that leaves indelible scars on individuals and communities. Such acts are not only a violation of fundamental human rights but also a grave breach of international humanitarian law. Sexual violence used as a tool of war or conflict undermines the principles of human dignity, equality, and respect that should be upheld even in the most challenging circumstances.

The consequences ripple through families and societies, perpetuating cycles of fear, stigma, and suffering. The use of women’s bodies to indicate cultural pride, masculine hierarchy, and a misplaced sense of honour while undermining women and disregarding women’s identity and agency is intolerable.

2. The Failure Of Law and Order Machinery

The escalation of ethnic tensions between the Meitei community and the Kuki-Zo group underscores the complexity of identity dynamics and the need for peaceful coexistence. Ethnic violence tears at the social fabric, pitting communities against one another and sowing seeds of mistrust and division. More than 150 innocent lives were lost, over 1,000 people were injured, more than 5,000 houses were burned down, and more than 60,000 people were displaced in Manipur. Hundreds of churches and temples have also been burned down. The outbreak of ethnic conflict serves as a stark reminder of the urgent necessity to address underlying grievances and promote understanding.

The day after a horrifying video of two Manipur women being paraded naked and sexually assaulted by a mob of men surfaced, there were reports (Indian Ekspress) that, one of the victims alleged that they were with the police before the mob seized them. She alleged that it was the police that “left them on the road with the mob”.

The younger woman alleged: “The police were there with the mob which was attacking our village. The police picked us up from near home, and took us a little away from the village and left us on the road with the mob. We were given to them by police”, the report mentioned. This shows the complete failure of law and order machinery.

3. The Government’s Passive Response

The perceived passivity of the government in addressing the Manipur violence is a cause for grave concern. The government holds the responsibility of ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of its citizens. A report from the Karwan-e-Mohabbat team, which visited Manipur for four days from July 25 to July 28, found that the state government has not taken action to restore peace and bring justice in the state. The government that runs the state has done “nothing to restore peace and ensure justice against people who were killed, raped, and destroyed homes with unbridled impunity even three months later,” according to one of their main findings. The state fails in its primary constitutional obligation to safeguard citizens.

A lack of robust action not only exacerbates the suffering of the affected population but also erodes public trust and faith in leadership. We strongly criticize Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s delayed response to the situation. His failure to take timely action conveys a clear indication that he either lacks awareness regarding the gravity of the issues or, even worse, deliberately disregards them.

The perceived passivity of the government in responding to the Manipur violence is a matter of grave concern that compounds the suffering of the affected population. The government has a fundamental duty to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of its citizens. A lack of robust action not only fails to meet this obligation but also erodes public trust and faith in governance.

A passive response to violence allows perpetrators to act with impunity, perpetuating cycles of fear and insecurity. It also sends the message that the government is unwilling or unable to protect its citizens. To effectively address the Manipur violence, the government must take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions, ensure security, and provide support to affected communities.

Other Issues

According to the Meitei people’s story, the Kuki people are outsiders who entered Manipur unlawfully from Myanmar and will eventually exceed the native Meitei people to whom Manipur is legitimately owed. While the Meitei are not even allowed to purchase land in the highlands, Kuki have benefited from reserves for tribal people in order to obtain jobs and places in educational institutions. Kuki people are accused of putting Meitei youth in danger by growing illegal poppies. Also They assert that the Kuki people are endangering the local ecology by forcibly removing protected woods for their crops and settlements. They (Meitei) contend that Kuki militants are unconstrained and that the Assam Rifles’ defense allows them to commit violent crimes and engage in drug and gun trafficking.

The Kuki people’s story is completely different. They assert that although rural farmers may grow poppies to make a meagre living, politicians and large businesses in the Imphal valley and elsewhere primarily benefit from the drug trade and its revenues. They assert that they are the legitimate residents of Manipur and say that Meitei people are attempting to gain Scheduled Tribe status in

order to seize their lands and make them a minority in their mountain homes. They claim that Meitei seek to dominate the tribe members-reserved seats in the legislatures and academic institutions. Also, they allege that the Chief Minister of Manipur openly supports a militia of Meitei youth and that under the open official patronage of these militants, their lands and people have been destroyed by rape, murder, and arson. They claim that the RSS(Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) has worked for many years to turn Meitei nationalism into a Hindu nationalism that is ferociously antagonistic to the Kuki people because of their Christian beliefs as well. And they think that the Meitei militants and those who committed rape and murder are protected by the Manipur state police and paramilitary forces.

There were also reports that a few mobs were blocking food, medicine, and essential goods for the community that lives on hills (kukis and panggal-muslim minority). Local people are running out of everything. There were insufficient essential supplies for vulnerable groups like lactating mothers and pregnant women. Due to travel restrictions, medical supplies, notably for those with chronic conditions were in low supply. As the area gets closer to winter, the situation gets worse.

Ethnic violence not only endangers lives but also disrupts economic activities, development, and social cohesion. The incidents of arson,sexual assault and murder are stark examples of how ethnic tensions can escalate into horrifying acts of brutality.

Call for Immediate Action and Engagement

- There is an urgent need for widespread disarmament of civilian populations. To restart a discussion process, it is necessary to bring together the leaders of the two divided communities. We appeal to you to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation among the diverse communities in Manipur. Promoting understanding and tolerance among different groups is essential to fostering long-term peace and harmony in the state. It is crucial that all parties engage in a peaceful dialogue to resolve their grievances, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect, brotherhood, and peace.
- We are demanding strict action against those responsible for creating turmoil in Manipur. The prolonged silence on the part of the authorities aggravated the situation, resulting in lawbreakers continuing their acts with impunity. Legislative measures should be in place so that people of all tribes are treated without discrimination. Justice should be served to the victims of violence by holding the perpetrators accountable for their actions. We urge the Government of India to initiate comprehensive and unbiased investigations into all reported human rights violations, ensuring that justice is served for the victims and their families.
- The government should supply essentials like food and medicine, restore livelihoods, reestablish internet, utility, and transportation services, and rebuild hospitals, schools, places of worship, and other infrastructure for the people displaced. Supply enough food and medicine to ensure a safe pathway for the logistics of essential goods.
- Addressing the weaponization of sexual violence requires a comprehensive approach. Impartial investigations are vital to uncovering the truth and holding perpetrators accountable. Survivors must be provided with the necessary support and access to justice. Legislation must be strengthened to ensure that sexual violence is treated with the seriousness it warrants.
- Government must ensure the protection of witnesses and punishment for the enforcement officer and body that break the law and order. The police body needs to be reformed to be in tune with present day scenario and upgraded to effectively deal with the crime, uphold human rights and safeguard the legitimate interests of one and all.
- Other than that, education and awareness campaigns are crucial to challenging the cultural norms that perpetuate such acts and promoting a culture of respect and equality. By engaging in educational efforts, society can dismantle racism, stereotypes, foster empathy, and

encourage critical thinking, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and harmonious environment. Such initiatives empower individuals to recognize the harmful consequences of discrimination and actively contribute to a cultural shift that prioritizes equality and dignity for all, irrespective of their backgrounds or identities.

- Set up a [a helpline for Manipur residents who are facing discrimination](#). This helpline will serve as a lifeline for those in distress, offering a confidential and accessible platform for reporting discrimination incidents, seeking guidance on legal recourse, and obtaining emotional support.

Conclusion

The issues of weaponization of sexual violence, ethnic violence, and government passivity in the face of Manipur violence are deeply interconnected and demand comprehensive and coordinated responses. It is crucial to uphold human rights, promote dialogue, and foster a culture of accountability and justice to ensure a future of peace, security, and dignity for the people of Manipur.

We call upon the government to fulfil its responsibilities in protecting its citizens and resolving the conflict through peaceful means.

Initiated by:

Pemuda Sosialis (Socialist Youth)

Parti Sosialis Malaysia (Socialist Party of Malaysia)

Endorsed by:

1. *Malaysian United Democratic Alliance* (MUDA)
2. Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia (SABM)
3. Citizens International
4. ALIRAN
5. SUARAM (Suara Rakyat Malaysia)
6. Justice for Sisters
7. North-South Initiative (NSI)
8. Our Journey
9. Malaysian Dravidian Association
10. All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
11. Persatuan Kebajikan Tamilal Naam
12. Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ)
13. Islamic Renaissance Front
14. TENAGANITA
15. Foreign Spouses Support Group
16. Pertubuhan SiraguGal
17. Beyond Borders Malaysia
18. Persahabatan Semparuthi

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