

Public Rebuttal to PUCL's Partisan Fact-Finding Report on Manipur

We, the undersigned, feel compelled to place on record some grave concerns regarding the partisan contents in the recent report of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) titled "Independent People's Tribunal on the Ongoing Ethnic Conflict in Manipur", released on August 20, 2025. The report is highly judgmental while indulging in selective sampling of narratives and information reportage. The report accuses the State and Centre of their abject failure to contain the violence in Manipur. However, in its typical judgmental spectre, it squarely blames and vilifies a community, the Meiteis, in this case. Without citing any evidential congruency, it not only drags in a community but also certifies the Manipur violence as something "not spontaneous but orchestrated, and facilitated by the state".

PUCL's lack of in-depth understanding and insensitivity to the historicity and multi-ethnic character of the Manipur State is disheartening. PUCL's selective amnesia over Manipur's exemplary struggle and resilience towards the protection of human rights is a stark reminder of the organisation's fast-dwindling credibility.

In complete contradiction to the actual sequence of events, the PUCL report opts for a naming-and-shaming exercise by letting itself get trapped in an identitarian favouritism. PUCL's report openly projects the Meitei groups as the ones who started the attacks on Kukis in Imphal, while the Chin-Kukis are almost given a clean chit for having just 'retaliated in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi' (Page 20). However, the testimonies of victims in the report itself and publicly available sources evidently prove otherwise.

While we commend progressive legacies of PUCL for having undertaken significant works on the protection of civil liberties, including the issues pertaining to the excesses of 'The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, this fact-finding report on Manipur violence shall remain as an epistemic blunder, which will only weaken the collective solidarity amongst struggling peoples. The methods employed and contents of the PUCL report are amateurish, riddled with factual errors and a lack of ethnographic familiarity, selective in omissions, unilateral, and side-taking, and against its own bygone legacies.

We hereby point out several factual incongruences in PUCL's report that warrant rectification, and the report must be withdrawn immediately for the sake of public order and de-escalation of tensions in Manipur.

- 1. Misinterpretation of data:** The district-wise detection of 'foreigners' in Churachandpur is shown to be the least (Page 235), only to be contradicted by the table in the report itself, which records Churachandpur as the fourth largest district with the highest number of undocumented 'foreigners/immigrants' detected among the 11 districts listed in Manipur.
- 2. Reinforcing false narrative:** On eviction drive against illegal structure (Page 20), the report empathises with the claims of Chin-Kukis who view the government's drive against illegal occupation of land and forest as 'anti-minority'. According to official statistics, the eviction, which was carried out between October 24, 2015 and April 18, 2023, had affected the Meiteis the most. Of the 413 families evicted from the illegal occupation of Reserved Forest areas, 280 families belong to Meitei (143 Meitei & 137 Meitei Pangal), 59 from Kuki, 38 from Naga, and 36 from the Nepali community.
<https://www.indiatodayne.in/manipur/story/280-meitei-families-lost-home-as-against-59-kukis-during-cm-biren-singhs-eviction-drive-623850-2023-07-3>.
A resonance of these facts in the reportage could have given a calming effect.

- 3. Justifying Illegal Poppy Cultivation:** In multiple pages, the report construes a shallow narrative on poppy cultivation, almost justifying it for the reasons best known to PUCCL. According to the Narcotics and Affairs of Border, between 2017 and 2023, poppy cultivation in Kuki-dominated areas accounted for 85% of the 15,496.8 acres under cultivation in Manipur. Empathising with the robust poppy economy, which has almost brought the India–Myanmar borderlands under the grip of the infamous ‘Golden Triangle’ (UNODC 2024), as if it were merely a micro-livelihood practice, is either evidence of poor research or a reflection of premeditated reportage. It also cites silly excuses such as poverty, while the same report says the Meitei and Kuki do not have much difference in economic condition.
- 4. Contradicts facts, testimonies and own statements which conclude the violence started in Churachandpur with Kukis torching Meitei homes:** On page 20, the report says (Meitei) “mobs rampaged through Kuki settlements in Imphal and nearby areas, while in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi, retaliatory violence emerged against Meitei homes and properties”. This is false and contradicts the facts, with over 20 testimonies from both Meiteis and Kukis and their own statements, all cited in the report.

First, the report itself on page 51, recounting the events on May 3, 2023, writes “.... on hearing that the Memorial Gate had been set on fire allegedly by the Meitei radicals, agitated Kuki community members rushed to the area “Soon a clash erupted between the Kuki and the Meitei groups and resulted in widespread violence and arson of Meitei settlements in Churachandpur.” So the report acknowledges violence started with the arson and attack on Meiteis by Kuki groups.

Second, the Meitei victims said their homes in Kuki-dominated areas were attacked at around 2.30 PM onwards, while the Kuki victims stated that their homes at Imphal were attacked at around 8.30-9.00 PM on May 3, 2023, on the same day. The available videos, which show the Meitei homes burned and attacked during daylight, further support this. It was clear from the testimonies and evidence that violence started in Churachandpur/Bishnupur by the Armed Kuki groups by attacking and burning Meitei homes, and the retaliation started in Imphal in the evening. In fact, an Ex MLA from the Kuki community visited the office of the Sangai Express newspaper and interacted with the staff on around 5:30 PM.

The key confirmed incidents also validate it:

- May 3, ~10:30 AM: The Forest beat office at Bungmual Village at Torbung, Churachandpur was burnt down by the Kuki mob.
- May 3, ~11:30 AM: A Meitei driver was assaulted by a Kuki mob.
- May 3, ~3:30 PM: Videos of at least 2 Kuki Militants armed with sophisticated guns, among the Kuki mob, went viral on social media.
- May 3 ~ 4:00 PM onwards: Videos of Meitei settlements being torched at Torbung Bangla, Kangvai, Dolaithabi and Phougakchou Ikhai in Churachandpur and Bishnupur districts went viral on social media.
- May 3, ~ 5:40 PM: Meiteis houses in Moreh Bazar burnt by Kuki mob and armed groups
- May 3, ~ 6:00 PM: Kuki mobs looted a gun shop in Churachandpur [FIR No 148 (05) 2023], Churachandpur PS.
- May 3, ~ 6:30 PM: A Meitei woman gangraped by at least 5 Kuki men [FIR No- 00(8), 2023 WPS-BPR].

- May 3, 7:10 PM: Ebhudhou Pakhangba Temple at Thingkangphai Sabal Leikai, Churachandpur [FIR No 827 (6) 2023], Imphal PS and Ebhudhou Pakhangba Temple at Tuibong Churachandpur vandalised [FIR No 2869 (11) 2023 Churachandpur PS.
- May 3, ~ 8:00 PM: Retaliation by Meiteis started in Imphal.

Thirdly, this is further corroborated by media reports that the violence started at Churachandpur. See *The Indian Express* on May 4, 2023, reported that “Violent clashes broke out Wednesday in various parts of Manipur during the course of a ‘Tribal Solidarity March’ (https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/manipur/all-you-need-to-know-about-manipur-violence-8592033/?ref=archive_pg). Similarly, Al Jazeera reported on May 7, 2023, that “Violence erupted in the Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/7/what-has-spurred-ethnic-violence-in-indias-manipur>). Chronology of events with documentary evidence here: <https://www.meiteiheritage.org/manipur-crisis-2023.html> were provided to the Tribunal both in hard and soft copy, but has clearly been ignored.

What is the point of having depositions before the tribunal if they are to be ignored and a conclusion contradictory to the testimonials drawn? It reinforces suspicion that this was merely an exercise to gain legitimacy and appear balanced, that both sides were heard.

Despite the mountain of evidence, by locating the origin of violence in the valley and blaming Meiteis, the report distorts the sequence of events and mischievously and implicitly places culpability on one community. It is also worth noting that the same Tribal Solidarity Rally was organised in all the Naga-inhabited districts, too, but no violence was reported from there. Such one-sided and swayed reporting undermines the very possibility of reconciliation, which requires accuracy and honesty as its foundation.

- 5. Fails to dispel rumours of burning of the illegal structure, so-called ‘Anglo Kuki War Memorial Gate’, to attack Meitei:** The burning of the gate has been used by Kukis to justify the attack and arson on Meiteis and villages that triggered this violence. The report also talks about “burning of the Anglo-Kuki War Memorial gate – an iron structure that could never have been burnt fully (as was evident from the video), allegedly by Meitei mob, though the identity of the people/group has not been identified yet. Further, the Indian Army Chief, Upendra Dwivedi, on record stated that the Manipur Conflict started because of a “rumour mongering” of burning the Anglo-Kuki War Memorial gate. Instead of refuting these rumours, the report appeared to be attempting to legitimise the attack by armed Kuki groups on Meitei villages in Churachandpur. [Manipur Violence: It Has Become a Battle of Narratives, Says Indian Army Chief | Palki Sharma](#)

- 6. Silence and cover-up of Kuki Militants and their related information:**

- a. In the 692 pages of the PUCL report with a total word count of over 1.85 Lakh, a troubling aspect is its silence on the role of the Kuki armed groups operating under the garb of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement. The report fails to acknowledge the impunity these groups have exercised on the highways for decades and their infringement on civil liberties. Several members of SoO groups have been arrested by the country’s top investigating agencies like NIA and CBI for their alleged involvement in abduction, attacks and killing of civilians and even the Central Security Forces and Manipur Police Personnel. Yet, it does not name any militant groups under SoO.

However, PUCL unfailingly unleashes its writs on the Arambai Tenggol (mentioned 111 times) and the Meitei Leepun (mentioned 49 times). In fact, the Chin Kukis have so far killed 13 security personnel, belonging to BSF, CRPF, Assam Rifles, Manipur Rifles and Manipur Police, including an Additional SP.

- b. The tribunal/report is silent on Mr Thanglianpau Guite, the President of Zomi Revolutionary Army, who was also formerly a Member of Parliament (MP) in Myanmar. The same person reportedly unofficially migrated to Manipur in 1995, enjoying Indian taxpayers' money. The Home Ministry investigated how he and his family acquired Indian citizenship.
- c. The Chairman of the United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF), Mr S.S. Haokip, sent a representation to the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, on June 7, 2019, to indulge in electoral kickback demands in return for ensuring the BJP's win in the 2019 elections <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/manipur-bharatiya-janata-party-battles-poll-deal-claim-by-kuki-militant-leader/cid/1945194> and letter here https://x.com/mohsinkhaniyc/status/1669303674781458432?t=jYMEu5K7_eXk31vPZ_ujfRg&s=19.
- d. The report covers up the role of the Kuki militant behind the protests. The report says Kuki protesters are maligned as being propped up by their militant group. But a video of the Kuki militant group's President, PS Haokip, instigating the Kuki villagers on March 8, 2023, to protest against the Government's eviction drive of encroachers settled in the wildlife sanctuary and forest land. It was also widely reported in the media. https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=f1Zdek6jRGQ_ibkm&v=vC8QDcVZNDw&feature=youtu.be.
- e. The report is silent on one of the most widely reported and discussed information during this crisis, i.e., the close familial and political nexus between Kuki politicians and the armed groups. <https://thefrontiermanipur.com/shady-role-of-eci-in-manipurs-electoral-process-a-systemic-failure-of-government/>

7. Ignores foreign terrorists and radical religious leaders' connection with Kuki Groups:

The report exposes PUCL's dominant nationalist attitude by belittling the importance of balanced storytelling. It brazenly tries to link the Meitei groups with the right-wing groups, such as the RSS, based on an "unmistakable resemblance" to give a convenient religious spin to the Manipur violence. On page 156, it also relies on a frivolous random Facebook post to project as 'anti-nationals' without understanding Manipur's distinct historical position and unresolved grievance. However, it fails to highlight the disturbing attempts by the Kuki intelligentsia to rope in Israel, Terrorists, radical religious forces abroad and instrumental usage of religious deep states in the Manipur conflict.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/manipur-tribal-outfit-member-at-surrey-gurdwara-raises-red-flags/articleshow/103998613.cms>.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/us-man-gifted-drone-manipur-ultras-foreign-agent-trouble-making-evangelist-2653078-2024-12-20>.

8. Selective targeting of Meitei Groups: While the report tries to vilify Meitei CSOs, particularly Meira Paibi, it fails to acknowledge the Chin Kuki CSOs' rights abuses and involvement in the killing of civilians.

- a. The Justice Geeta Mittal Committee, appointed by the Supreme Court, named Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), and Joint Philanthropic Organisation (JPO) for threatening families and preventing them from claiming the bodies of deceased loved ones. The former Chief Justice of India rebuked such actions, stating, “You cannot keep the pot boiling”
<https://www.deccanherald.com/india/manipur/manipur-violence-sc-issues-direction-for-ensuring-burial-or-cremation-of-bodies-2787817>.
 - b. NIA has named the Kuki Inpi, Tegnoupal, as an “insurgent” group ([NIA India on X: "3 Insurgents Arrested by NIA in Attack on Manipur Security Forces Case https://t.co/vXqpCsiG7j" / X](https://t.co/vXqpCsiG7j)) for their involvement in the attack and killing of Security forces.
 - c. The ambulance used by Kuki Militants in attacking Meitei villages in Koutruk on September 1, 2023, was also found registered in the name of Kuki Students Organisation.
<https://www.news18.com/india/kuki-attackers-release-celebratory-video-after-drone-strikes-on-meitei-village-in-manipur-exclusive-9041613.html>.
9. **Biased and one-sided reportage of atrocities and violence:** The entire chapter 4 deals with the ‘testimonies of murder, rape, arson and looting’ of the Chin-Kukis, but black out the story of the other side. None of the 10 photos implicated in chapter 4 are Meiteis. The report is a tragic failure as ‘the Jiribam Massacre’ that killed 6 unarmed women and children, including a 10 months infant, in a cold-blooded manner ([Kin of women and children abducted, killed in Jiribam seek death penalty for perpetrators - The Hindu](#)) or the cold blooded abduction and murder of 2 Meitei students that drew national outrage does not find even a mention in PUCL’s frame of addressing rule of law and civil liberties [Two Manipur Students Who Had Gone Missing in July Killed; Photos Viral with Internet Restored - The Wire](#).
10. **Dismisses concerns of illegal immigration:** In an utter mode of denial (Page 292), the report concludes that the clamour of population influx was primarily confined to the Meitei nativists and Manipur’s ruling regime. To recall, the Manipur Government’s Cabinet Sub-Committee was headed by Letpao Haokip, a Kuki, who was the Tribal Affairs Minister then, who identified 2,187 reportedly undocumented immigrants from Myanmar, who set up their own homes and villages in Manipur, which caused anxiety for the citizens of the state.
<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/exclusive-manipur-panel-began-identifying-immigrants-5-weeks-before-clashes-began-in-may-2023-7219017>.
Even after the violence broke out in July 2023, in 2 days alone, Assam Rifles detected 301 undocumented (illegal) immigrants in the border areas of Manipur from Myanmar.
https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/718-myanmarrese-including-301-children-entered-manipur-illegally-home-dept-123072500221_1.html.
11. **Camouflages the first rape in the crisis that of a Meitei woman, among rumours:** Without delving deeper into it, the tribunal/report talks about rumours of Meitei women being raped as triggering violence against Kukis, particularly women. The fact is that a Meitei woman was indeed gang raped on May 3, around 6:30 pm, by at least 5 Kuki men, until she fell unconscious. The survivor testified before the Tribunal and also submitted both the FIR [FIR No- 00(8), 2023 WPS-BPR] and the medical report, which provided details of the rape and injuries. The Tribunal, instead of highlighting (without suggesting justification) that this may perhaps have been a reaction of the Meiteis against Kuki women—something uncharacteristic of the Meitei community, which is known for its regard for women and

acknowledged even by the Kukis—chose to frame it differently. But this unfortunate gang rape and their survivor’s testimony, FIR and medical report have been undermined, and the case has been conveniently camouflaged among the rumours, while devoting pages on “the rape of Kuki women and relying on these testimonies without reservation”.

- 12. Biased gender-based violence:** The gender-based violence section of the report is biased and distorted. It includes sources, testimonials, and detailed information about sexual assaults only in the Kuki community. It ignores the reported and unreported cases of violence against Meitei women and does not include the most barbaric violence against women and children who were abducted from Jiribam relief camps and later killed and thrown in the river. The report emphasises emotional appeal for Kuki women while simultaneously maligning and labelling Meitei women. There is a lack of balanced sources and information from both communities. The report presents information selectively to favour one community while omitting essential facts and incidents from another.
- 13. Misleading claims:** On 22nd June, 2022, under the directive of the Imphal Municipal Corporation, Notification No. 1/7/2018-IMC, a door-to-door survey using GIS based property mapping was done and allocate a Unique Property Identification Number (UPIN) for households in Imphal. In several parts of the report, this exercise has been misinterpreted deliberately to mislead the public as a ‘selective marking’ of Kuki households by Manipur Government to give credence to the allegations of the so called ethnic cleansing. It is pertinent to note that these markings were done for all households.

It is unfortunate that the Tribunal did not call out such misleading testimonies and references in the report, rather reinforces the false narrative of certain politically vested groups.

- 14. Legal and judicial issues:** Many sub-judice issues have apparently been resolved in this report. For example, on who started the crisis, the government-appointed agencies and courts are yet to decide. However, PUCL has selectively used and believed testimonials of victims belonging to a particular community and ignored others and has already given the impression that the Meiteis were responsible for starting the violence, and the violence in the Kuki-dominated areas was in retaliation.

The report alleged that FIRs are being selectively filed, often against members of minority communities. However, it is not revealed how many of the total 6,500 FIRs filed are from each community, which would warrant such allegations of selective filing. Additionally, it overlooks the fact that a victim is allowed to file a Zero FIR anywhere they are staying, not just in Imphal.

Such a narrative appears to suggest that the report is selective in its use of facts and intentionally overlooks those that do not support the conclusion it aims to achieve.

- 15. Silence on banks looted in hill districts:** During the crisis, three banks, namely Axis Bank, Churachandpur, Manipur State Co-operative Bank, Kangpokpi and Punjab National Bank. Ukhrul, were looted in the hill districts of the State. This should have been discussed in the report. But it finds no mention in the report.

16. Exonerates National Media of their biased reportage targeting Meiteis: The report comes with a select accusatory note that local media was into “biased reporting”, while it leniently viewed the *National Media* was in “lack of coverage.” But a detailed study by Manipur’s Member of Parliament, Dr Akoijam Bimol, on the reportage of 5 leading National media houses found sharp bias against a particular community. The loss of life of the ‘Kuki’ (or tribal) was regularly described as being “killed” while that of the Meitei as “died”. If not PUCL’s secretariat, the well-established jurists and academics involved in the editorial of the report should have carefully studied and understood how intricate conflicts in general can trivialise mass media, social media and even the public sphere. Available here: [e28fd15694803b041f545291bc037b65869d96f1-7.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/default/files/e28fd15694803b041f545291bc037b65869d96f1-7.pdf). Not surprisingly, it also relies on the controversial EGI report, which was criticised for factual inaccuracies and distortion and had to embarrassingly delete its tweet thanking a Kuki lobby group.

In view of the above facts and concerns, it is established beyond doubt that the Report of PUCL contains innumerable discrepancies. The stoic silence of the PUCL Report on the problems that Manipur grapples with is unacceptable. There is an enormous denial of constitutional rights to the people of Manipur, almost producing another condition of lived exceptionality, unlike in other parts of India, whereby the right to life, free movement, and livelihood gets severely compromised. To our disbelief, these issues have not attracted the attention of PUCL.

The report is partisan; it has infuriated anger and dissatisfaction, even though the same Report might have appeased a section. This is not an ethical fact-finding initiative. The distinguished tribunal members tragically end up perpetuating what it blames others for acting in a "partisan manner, spreading misinformation and inflaming hostilities, rather than fostering peace."

A credible organisation like PUCL, if one goes by its legacy, must unconditionally withdraw this “Independent People’s Tribunal on the Ongoing Ethnic Conflict in Manipur, 2025” in the interest of public order, true solidarity and peace-building in Manipur.

Individuals

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Padmashri, Eminent Film maker.
2. Shri Khaidem Mani
Former Chairperson
Manipur Human Rights Commission.
3. Dr R K Nimai Singh, (Retired) IAS.
4. Prof. (Retired) Kshetri Rajendra Singh
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5. Prof. (Dr) Md Rahejuddin Sheikh,
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6. Prof. M. Amarjeet Singh
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7. Prof. Komol Singha
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8. Prof (Retired) Ch. Sheelaramani
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9. Brigadier (Retired) L I Singh.
10. Prof. Shanta Laishram
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11. Prof. (Assistant) Homen Thangjam
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12. Th. Sujata
President, Imagi Meira
13. Mr. Rohen Philem
President, Indigenous People's Forum
Manipur.
14. Md Islahuddin
National Secretary
All India Tanzeem E Insaaf (AITI)

Organizations

1. Meitei Alliance (An alliance of Meitei diaspora associations in India, Australia, United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, USA, and Nicaragua)
2. Churachandpur Meitei United Committee (CMUC)
3. Meitei Council Moreh (MCM)
4. Meitei/Meitei Tribe Union (MMTU)
5. All Manipur Meitei Pangal Clubs' Organisation (AMMPACO)
6. Federation of Indigenous People's Democratic Movement (FIDM)
7. Delhi Meitei Co-Ordinating Committee (DMCC)
8. Meitei Heritage Society
9. Imagi Meira
10. All India Tanzeem-E Insaaf-Manipur (AITI-M)
11. International Meitei Christian Youth Assembly
12. Team Meitei Personalities, Manipur
13. Apunba Awonba Manipur Amagidamak (AAMA)
14. Delhi Manipuri Society (DeMas)
15. Souls Offered Unitedly for a Lustrated Society (SOULS)
16. Committee of Peaceful Coexistence, Manipur (CPCM)
17. Committee on Relief & Rehabilitation (CRR)
18. Ningols United Progressive Initiative (NUPI), Delhi
19. Kanglei People Against Narcotics & Psychotropic Substances (Kanglei Panas)
20. Manipur International Youth Centre (MIYC)
21. Nupi Union For Peace and Integrity (NUPI)
22. United Meitei Pangal Committee (UMPC)
23. Youth Collective Manipur (YCM)