

PUCL's Independent People's Tribunal on Manipur to release findings soon

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The Independent People's Tribunal on Manipur', constituted by the People's Union for Civil liberties (PUCL), met in Delhi on July 6 and 7 to hear personal testimonies of survivors and victims of the ethnic violence that engulfed Manipur for the last fifteen months since May 3, 2023. A press release issued by the President Kavita Srivastava and General Secretary V Suresh, informed that the Tribunal will place their findings in the form of a "Report to the Nation' within the next few months. This Report will also contain the recommendations with a view to ensure accountability, justice and redressal for the people of Manipur.

Prior to the Delhi hearings, a set of Jury Members of the Tribunal along with members of the Secretariat who are assisting the Tribunal, visited Manipur in end May and June, 2024, updated PUCL. The team travelled to various districts affected by the violence, including Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Imphal, Kangpokpi, Kakching, Senapati and other places, to record personal testimonies of survivors/ victims of the different communities, the various service organizations which are organising and providing relief to affected people. The Team also visited a number of Relief Camps set up in the districts to talk with survivor/inmates, school going children, women and elderly. Further, the Team met with various government functionaries and officials of security forces.

"Apart from the testimonies collected from and discussions held with diverse stakeholders, documents related to various dimensions of the ongoing violence were also placed before the Tribunal. The Tribunal also heard testimonies of internally displaced persons and representatives of the different ethnic communities -Kukis, Meiteis, Nagas, Pangals and others. The Tribunal met advocates, journalists, health professionals, scholars, academics, and activists from the different communities in Manipur," stated the press release.

The members of the Independent People's Tribunal were:

- (1) Kurian Joseph, former judge, Supreme Court of India.
- (2) K. Kannan, former Judge, Punjab and Haryana High Court.
- (3) Dr. Anjana Prakash, former Judge, Patna High Court
- (4) MG Devasahayam, IAS (retd), former Addl. Chief Secy, Haryana.
- (5) Dr. Swaraj Bir Singh, IPS (retd), former DGP, Meghalaya.

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Wednesday, 17 July, 2024

- (6) Prof. Uma Chakravarti, Feminist Historian.
- (7) Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Social Scientist and Author
- (8) Prof. Rosemary Dzüvichū, formerly from Nagaland University.
- (9) Prof. Tanweer Fazal, University of Hyderabad.
- (10) Dr. Sandeep Pandey, Peace Activist.
- (11) Manjula Pradeep, Senior human rights activist.
- (12) Dr. Navsharan Singh, Writer, researcher & Activist.
- (13) Henri Tiphagne, Advocate, Madras/ Madurai High Court.
- (14) Aakar Patel, Journalist and Author

As announced by PUCL on March 15, 2024, the Independent People's Tribunal on Manipur was constituted in the context of prolonged state-wide violence and serious issues of constitutional governance in the state of Manipur.

"The situation is marked by a sense of deep distrust of the role played by the state and central government and its functionaries, controversy over the response and role played by the security forces, including the state police. The neutrality of the Central Forces including the Assam Rifles, and other central forces is questioned. The role of militant groups in this conflict, role of vigilante militia, looting of police armouries and snatching of sophisticated weapons which have not yet been fully recovered remain issues of concern. All these have created an environment of hostility which still prevails," expressed the PUCL.

Considering the deep polarization and precarious situation prevailing in Manipur, the PUCL shared the belief that such an independent People's Tribunal will help restore a sense of confidence and trust in the constitutional order and institutions.

The objectives of the Tribunal are as follows:

- Document the violations suffered by the people of Manipur with a specific attention to loss of life, sexual violence and violence suffered by children, women including pregnant women and the elderly.
- Examine and analyse the performance and responsibilities of the constitutional authorities by documenting the action taken to prevent the violence, provide access to remedy and justice, investigate and prosecute crimes, and in all other ways to provide redressal of violations and make efforts to establish the rule of law.
- Examine the role of all security agencies as well as government functionaries at all levels of the state and central governments in ensuring law and order and also examine the role of independent national and state based institutions in protecting human rights.
- Examine existing documentation on the Manipur situation and analyse the reasons for the continuing violence
- Propose recommendations to repair the torn social, cultural and political fabric of the State.

The Independent People's Tribunal on Manipur will place their findings in the form of a 'Report to the Nation' within the next few months. "This Report will also contain the recommendations with a view to ensure accountability, justice and redressal for the people of Manipur," shared PUCL

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