



Atrocities against the Kuki People in the Manipur Conflict: An In-Depth Analysis of Its Impact on Kuki Society

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ABSTRACT

In northern India, the tension between the Kuki and Meitei/Meetei ethnic groups is referred to as the Manipur problem. The Meiteis, who are already included under the General, OBC (Other Backward Classes), and SC (Scheduled Castes) categories, are clamoring to be granted ST (Scheduled Tribes) status. The tension brewed in May 2023 when the Manipur High Court recommended giving ST status to Meiteis. Opposing this, the Kuki and Naga population, which already enjoy ST status, held major peaceful protests against this proposal. But violence erupted on May 3, 2023, when the Meiteis torched the Anglo-Kuki Centenary gate in Churachandpur District, which resulted in increased strife in the area. The study seeks to investigate the primary elements and incidents of the Kuki people during the Manipur conflict. The scope of the study is to present an exposé on the most tragic incident that befell the Kukis and the weapons pillaged by the Meiteis during the conflict. This study performs an exhaustive review of secondary sources between 2023 and 2024, including websites, news outlets, YouTube channels, and particular sources like The Hill Journal, the Kuki Students Organization (KSO) Media and Documentation Cell, and so on. Both qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques were used, including topic identification and coding to organize the findings. As a consequence of the conflict, weapons are plundered; Kuki men and women are set on fire, exhibited nude, raped, harassed, tortured, shot, and murdered. In addition, there are killings, injuries, IDPs (Internal Displaced Persons), and villages, homes, churches, and offices of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) burned. To end the trauma and agony inflicted on this community, the research concludes that responsibility, justice, and healing are imperatively and urgently required.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict, Arms Looted, Atrocities against Kuki, Kuki Victims

INTRODUCTION

There have been significant ethnic conflicts and bloodshed between the Meitei and Kuki communities in northeastern India, most notably in the state of Manipur. The main causes of these violent confrontations include geographical divisions, competing demands for resources and political representation, and the state's complex historical context. In May 2023, tensions escalated into widespread violence, resulting in significant loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property. The Meiteis comprise 53% of the population and have been seeking Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, which has been met with resistance from the Kuki and Naga tribal communities. These communities, classified as STs, fear that the Meiteis' demand is an attempt to circumvent constitutional safeguards and acquire tribal lands. Conflict has its roots in the state's geographical divisions. The Meiteis are confined to merely 10% of the state's land, while the remaining 90% is designated as tribal territory. This classification prohibits Meitei individuals from purchasing land in over 90% of the state, fuelling tensions with the tribal communities.

Further complicating the situation in Manipur is the Indian government's declaration of hill areas under Article 371C of the Constitution (Singh, LB, 2024). This article enables the formation of the Hill Areas Committee and local governing bodies, thereby limiting land ownership rights exclusively to tribal members. The Meiteis' quest for ST status has been driven by their desire to access tribal lands (Shimray, Ngaranmi, 2024). However, the Kuki and Naga communities view this demand

threatening their constitutional rights and safeguards. The recent violence has highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive solution to address the complex issues driving this Conflict. This article examines the devastating incidents of the Kuki-Meitei conflict in Manipur, including the loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property, to provide a deeper understanding of the complex issues driving this Conflict.

The study has specific objectives that include: (i) analyzing the critical incidents involving the Kukis in the Manipur conflict since May 3, 2023, to 2024; (ii) determining the count of sophisticated arms looted by the Meiteis in the State capital during the conflict; (iii) determining how Kuki men, women, children, the elderly, and village volunteers were killed during the Manipur Conflict; and (iv) assessing the impact on the Kukis, which includes the number of deaths, injuries, displaced persons, as well as the destruction (burnt) of villages, houses, churches, and NGO (Non-governmental Organisations) offices during the conflict.

This study investigates the violence involving the Kuki group in Manipur through a comprehensive review of secondary sources. It utilizes a variety of data sources, including websites, news articles, YouTube channels, The Hill Journal (2024), emails from the KSO Media and Documentation Cell (Thingkho Le Malcha, 2024). The cited sources in the news articles/websites include NDTV News, Manipur, India Today News, The Times of India, The Hindu News, Ukhrul Times, Manipur, The Sangai Express, Imphal, Scroll News, India, The Economic Times, India, Outlook News, India, The Print News, India, Wion News, India, National Herald News, India, and Newsreel Asia, with publication years ranging from 2023 to 2024. Among the sources from YouTube Channels are the @Khaokip YouTube channels, the Kuki Chate YouTube Channel, news laundry YouTube channel from 2023-2024. The study examined violence among the Kuki group in Manipur through systematic data collection. It involved an in-depth review of secondary sources, requiring the identification, location, and gathering of pertinent information. The researcher carefully analyzed each source to document and extract valuable data and insights. This method aimed to encompass a variety of perspectives, contributing to a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the violence impacting the Kuki community in Manipur.

Analysis of Data: The data analysis utilized qualitative content analysis to systematically examine the gathered data, emphasizing the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings. This method involved coding, where the researcher classified and labelled relevant data. Through this approach, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the research topic by uncovering themes and connections within the data. The thorough examination enabled by qualitative content analysis provided an in-depth investigation into the complex issues related to the violence experienced by the Kuki community in Manipur.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Significant incidents involving the Kukis and weapons looted during the Manipur Conflict (2023-2024)

The Incident against the Kukis on May 3-7, 2023: On May 3, 2023

Thousands of people participated in the 'Tribal Solidarity March' in Manipur's hill areas to protest the demand for the Meitei to be classified as a Scheduled Tribe (ST). The All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur (ATSUM), staged the Tribal Solidarity March, which had the slogan "Come now, let us reason together." During the Tribals' Solidarity March in Churachandpur, Manipur, members of the Meitei community from the Valley took advantage of the situation and set fire to the Anglo-Kuki War (1917-1919) Centenary Gate at Leisang Village, which is approximately 3 km from Churachandpur Police Station. A conflict between the two communities was initiated (Tribals' Solidarity March thriving, 2023). While some hill districts' protest rallies concluded peacefully, burning, vandalism, and clashes were reported in Churachandpur district, Moirang (Bishnupur District), Motbung (Kangpokpi District), and Moreh (Tengnoupal District). A crowd of counter-protesters, apparently over 200 Meitei, clashed with tribal protestors on May 3, 2023, afternoon, and the first casualty of that mob attack was Haopu Kipgen (Kuki) from Torbung Village, Churachandpur District; he was bludgeoned to death around 4:30 pm. The rioting continued until the afternoon, and several houses were torched, spreading like wildfire throughout Manipur.

In the evening, Meiteis began burning minority ethnic tribes' churches as well as several Meitei churches in Imphal. That was followed by the forcible entry of Meitei mobs onto the Manipur University campus at 10:00 pm when they threatened around 200 students from the Kuki ethnic tribes, who were fortunately escorted to the Indian Army Camp. At 10:10 pm on the same night (May 3, 2023), a violent Meitei mob began destroying and torching tribal dwellings, mainly those of the Kuki ethnic tribe, in various tribal neighborhoods of the Imphal city. While some Kukis in Imphal (Manipur's capital) were murdered, Meiteis in the state's tribal-dominated hill region were similarly targeted by Kuki groups. On May 6, 2023, the India Today North East team visited the state's afflicted areas and experienced the aftermath of the violence. The aggressive demonstrators set fire to churches, schools, homes, vehicles, and other public properties. Approximately 90 individuals were slain during the first week of the violence, with the Kukis accounting for the vast majority of those dead (Saha, Bidisha and Yadav, Dipti, 2023).

The incidents of looted arms by the Meiteis from May 3, 2023 to February 2024

According to a report by the Press Trust of India news agency, when confrontations started on May 3, 2023, Meitei mobs, Meitei Militia Arambai Tenngol (AT), and Meitei Leepun (ML) robbed police stations, causing 600,000 rounds of ammunition and 3,000 guns to disappear (Reports of Looting of Arms, Ammunition Misleading, 2023). The first recorded instance of weapon looting occurred at the Manipur Police Training College in Imphal, beginning on May 3, 2023. There were two stages of weapon looting. In the first phase, which started on May 3, 2023, when violence broke out, about 1,600 guns were stolen. In the second phase, from May 27 to May 28, when Shri Amit Shah visited the state, 2,557 firearms were stolen. A mob stole almost 300 rifles, 19,800 rounds of ammunition, and various accessories from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters in Naranseina, Bishnupur district, according to NDTV News on August 3, 2023. Approximately 5,000 firearms and 5 lakh rounds of ammunition have been stolen from police and military armories in the state at least four times since ethnic violence erupted on May 3, 2023, The Telegraph online reported. However, the KRC Times Online News reported that more than 6,000 arms had been taken from security forces since the Conflict began. The police station in Heingang, Imphal, which has been Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's assembly constituency since 2017, appears abandoned, its armory looted on May 4, 2023, leaving employees without weapons. "Even the police station was robbed; the security man was beaten, and his gun taken away. It's anticipated that the plundered weapons are widely used in confrontations." The keys to the arsenal were with local police unit staff, mostly Meiteis (table 1). In some cases, guns were handed over amicably, with no shots fired at the crowd. Most looting occurred during the first week of May 2023, with over 2,140 guns seized from four police stations (Matharu, Sonal, 2023).

Table 1. Looted arms and attempted looting incidents from May 4, 2023, to February 2024

Month, Date, and Year	Place Name	District
May 4, 2023	Ishikha Outpost	Imphal East
May 4, 2023	Sambei Awang Leikai	Imphal East
May 4, 2023	7 th Manipur Rifles, Pangei	Imphal
May 4, 2023	6 th IRB, Pangei	Imphal
May 4, 2023	Manipur Training Centre, Pangei	Imphal
May 27, 2023	7 th Manipur Rifles	Imphal
May 28, 2023	8 th IRB, Khabeso	Imphal
May 28, 2023	3 rd IRB	Thoubal
May 28, 2023	Manipur Police Training Centre, Pangei	Imphal
May 29, 2023	7 th Khabesoik Kote	Imphal East
July 4, 2023	3 rd IRB, Khangabok	Thoubal
August 3, 2023	2 nd IRB	Bishnupur
August 5, 2023	Toupokpi Police Outpost,	Imphal West
November 13, 2024	1 st Manipur Rifles,	Imphal
February 13, 2024	Manipur Training Centre, Pangei	Imphal
February 13, 2024	5 th IRB Thengu Chingjin	Imphal East

Source: Reports of Looting of Arms, Ammunition "Misleading:" Manipur Police, 2023 NDTV News

Manipur police confirmed rifles and ammunition were stolen from police stations and armories statewide. Rioters took approximately 4,000 firearms and 50,000 rounds of ammunition from police stations and armories, the Hindustan Times reported. Over 500 individuals in 40 trucks stole rifles and ammunition from the Indian Reserve Battalion camp in Naraseina, Bishnupur district (Gupta, Aman, 2023). Since May 3, 2023, Meitei mobs, AT, and ML have repeatedly looted weaponry. Fewer than ten of these aggressors have been apprehended and charged. Over 4,000 rifles and thousands of ammunition remain with Meitei militants (Singh, Bikash, 2024). Kuldiep Singh, the Manipur Government's Security Advisor, expressed concerns about retrieving looted firearms, stating, "Such a huge number of sophisticated weapons remaining with the general public is not a good idea, as they will land in the hands of miscreants." An audio tape allegedly surfaced featuring Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh boasting about the unchecked robbery of arms, as claimed by the KSO (Kuki Student Organization). "The 4,000-5,000 guns and arms looted so far...it's all because of me (N. Biren Singh) and my power," (2:49 minutes and 40:53 minutes). The following are the arms looted and attempted looting in Imphal Valley districts by armed Meitei extremists.

The incidents where Kuki men and women were burnt alive

Mr. Laldingthanga Khongsai was burned alive:

A viral video circulating on social media in October 2023 showed a man being set on fire. The culprits, who spoke in Manipuri/Meitei, warned against taking photos, saying, "Do not click photo." Manipur Security Advisor Kuldiep Singh confirmed that the video, which spread among the Kuki community, was from May 4, 2023, during ethnic riots in Manipur. Singh stated that the case had been recommended to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for investigation. The deceased, Lal Ding Thanga Khongsai (also known as Lal James), was a resident of Haokhongching Village, Kangpokpi District (Dey, Sreyashi, and Chaudhuri, Zinnia Ray, 2023). The CBI was asked to take over the case, which is linked to another incident involving two women being paraded nude. The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) issued a strong condemnation of the brutal ethnic cleansing assault perpetrated by the majority of Meiteis against the Kuki community, as graphically depicted in a widely circulated video (CBI investigates case of horrific Kuki man burnt alive, 2023).

Mr. Nehmang Kipgen was burnt alive:

Another horrifying incident occurred in May 2023 when the radicalized militant group Arambai Tenggol and State Forces, including police and commandos, burned to death Nehmang Kipgen, a Kuki individual with a hearing impairment from S. Phailengkot Village, Bungpi Block, and Kangpokpi District. According to reports, the Meitei secessionist militant group abducted Kipgen, severed his arms and legs, and then burned him alive. The consequences of Nehmang Kipgen's attempted immolation are unimaginable. Explaining how he was burned could imply that his body's organic matter was burned to fuel. The Kukis believe that the most pain he might have felt would have been at the start of the burning process before the flames burned his nerves (Manipur Burns as Kukis and Meiteis rejected peace commission, 2023).

Seven-year-old Child Tongsing with his mother and Aunt were burnt alive:

On May 4, 2023, seven-year-old Tongsing Hangsing (Kuki) and his family fled their village of Kangchup in the Kangpokpi area before a mob approached. The family had relocated to the Assam Rifles camp just outside the town the day before, anticipating violence from the Meiteis. A bullet splinter struck Tongsing's head in the afternoon on June 4, 2023, within the Assam Rifles' camp. According to the Assam Rifles official, the boy received oxygen, but his condition remained severe. Fortunately, an ambulance arrived shortly, escorted by Mr. S Ibomcha, Imphal West's SP (Superintendent of Police). Tongsing was accompanied by his mother, Mrs. Meena, and another neighbor, Mrs. Lydia Louremba. Meena, an Imphal native, had married Mr. Joshua Hangsing, Tongsing's father, a Kuki.

As the ambulance travelled, the Meira Paibis, Manipur's "women torchbearers," blocked it, representing a strong Meitei civil society movement. "After two kilometers, we (Assam Rifles) were not allowed to venture by the Meira Paibis," the officer stated. Now, only the police were protecting the ambulance. A large mob blocked the vehicles near Imphal's Iroisemba region, just 10 kilometers from

where the Assam Rifles had fled. Not only was the ambulance transporting a gravely injured youngster, but the two women accompanying him were Meiteis themselves. According to the Assam Rifles spokesman, the mob stormed the police convoy and set fire to the ambulance, which still had Tongsing, Meena, and Lydia inside. An official at the Lamphel police station, where Iroisemba is located, told Scroll News that only "a couple of bones" could be recovered (Saikia, Arunabh, 2023).

Mr. Benzamin Guite was burnt alive:

Mr. Benzamin Guite, a 22-year-old village volunteer, was brutally burned in Langching, Sugnu, during the Manipur conflict. On May 28, 2023, Meitei groups Arambai Tenngol and Meitei Leepun, along with Manipur commandos, police, and state troops, attacked Sugnu Langching with the assistance of Assam Rifles. Following the state government's advice, the Assam Rifles arrested and chased rural volunteers, seizing their licensed weapons and leaving them defenseless. In a tragic turn of events, Arambai Tenngol and Meitei Leepun shot Mr. Benzamin Guite with a sniper. Despite efforts by his companions, Guite succumbed to his injuries at the scene. The situation took a gruesome turn when Guite's allies were unable to retrieve his body, and the Meiteis severely torched the still-living but unconscious body. A video clip showed the burning of Guite's body, with the word "KUKI" scribbled nearby.

Incidents in Haokip Veng (Haokip colony), Imphal, Manipur Capital:

A widely shared video from May 4, 2023, appears to show Manipur police leading a mob, many wearing Arambai Tenngol (AT) colors, towards the Kuki settlement of Haokip Veng (Kuki colony) in Imphal. The footage corroborates eyewitness accounts of cooperation between authorities and the mob. The video allegedly shows state soldiers, mainly Commandos, leading Meitei militants and a mob in Imphal to attack and slaughter innocent Kuki Zo residents, destroy homes, and plunder property. The colony was reportedly burned down in broad daylight in front of police, who blocked opposition from resident Kukis while allowing destruction by Meitei miscreants. This Incident occurred on May 5, 2023, one day after the state administration issued a "Shoot at Sight" order. This event is reportedly just one example of how state police, under the Chief Minister's supervision, escorted Meitei miscreants to attack many Kuki villages in the Imphal valley's foothills and catchment area, allegedly violating the shoot-at-sight order (Meitei Police escorting Meitei mob to burn down Haokip veng (Kuki Colony, 2023).

Kuki Women were paraded Naked, Rape, harassed, tortured, shot, and killed

Incident occurred where two Kuki women were paraded naked and raped on May 4, 2023:

A video on social media, posted on July 19, 2023, showed two Kuki women being paraded nude by a mob. The Incident occurred on May 4, 2023, in Kangpokpi district's B. Phainom village, one day after the ongoing violence in Manipur started. According to the Indian Prime Minister, the act caused him "pain and anger." He added that the incidents had "shamed India" and that the perpetrators would not escape punishment. The CBI charge sheet claims that Manipur police officers drove two Kuki women to a mob that exhibited them nude. In Kangpokpi district, a disturbing incident occurred in which two Kuki women, including the wife of a Kargil war veteran, requested transportation to a safe location from police officers but were denied assistance, with the officers citing a lack of keys to their vehicle; subsequently, the women were allegedly transported by Manipur Police officers to a location where a mob of approximately 1,000 Meitei rioters was present. During the state's ethnic violence, the two women were paraded naked and subjected to sexual abuse, according to the charge sheet. British Labour Party MP (Member of Parliament) Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi described the Incident as "very traumatic." He stated that the two women's human rights violations were "shameful not only for Indians but people across the globe." According to the British MP, people worldwide were "very, very shocked" by what transpired in the state.

On October 16, 2023, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took a significant step by submitting a charge sheet against six accused individuals and a report against one Child in Conflict with the Law to the Special Judge, CBI Court in Guwahati. This move was part of the CBI's investigation into the violent mob attack that occurred in Kangpokpi district, where a large mob, estimated to be

around 900-1,000 people, stormed into the victims' village, located approximately 68 kilometers south of Saikul police station. The mob, armed with sophisticated weapons, engaged in vandalism, arson, looting, assault, murder, and sexual assault, as alleged in the investigation (Bureau of Investigation, 2023). The rioters, who had divided the victims, saw the women and other victims fleeing into the forest. Some mob members instructed the women to go to the police car stationed on the side of the road for assistance. Two police officers and the driver were seated inside the vehicle the two women had entered. Despite begging the driver to take them to a secure location, one of the male victims was informed that "there was no key." The police's overall failure to maintain order was compounded by their inability to protect the father of one of the vehicle's occupants, who was assaulted by the mobs.

Subsequently, the driver of the police gypsy took a deliberate action that put the victims in greater danger, driving the vehicles toward a crowd of approximately 1,000 people. The victims' desperate pleas for assistance to reach a safe location fell on deaf ears, as the police officers refused to provide any help. Tragically, the mob had already claimed the life of one of the male victims' fathers, who was among the occupants of the vehicle, including the two women, highlighting the severity of the violence. As the police officers abandoned the area, the aggressive mob moved in on the gypsies, leaving the victims entirely at their mercy. Ultimately, the rioters subjected the women to a horrific and dehumanizing ordeal, removing them from the vehicle, stripping them nude, and sexually assaulting them, as detailed in the charge sheet. When the Woman's brother attempted to intervene, he was also murdered (Manipur police personnel drove 2 Kuki women to the mob that paraded them naked, 2024).

Incidents occurred where two Kuki Women were raped on May 5, 2023:

In Imphal, the capital of Manipur, two Kuki young girls, Miss Olivia Chongloi and Miss Florence Hangshing, were raped on May 5, 2023. They were from Khopibung, Kangpokpi district. On May 5, 2023, Olivia and Florence were brutally raped and killed by roving mobs. According to reports, the two girls rented rooms surrounded by Meitei men. After being recognized by the Meitei mobs, the girls were gagged and carried away on May 5, 2023. They were then taken to another room and attacked. Between 5 pm and 7 pm on May 5, 2023, Meitei women allegedly handed the girls over to the mob and encouraged them to assault the victims "as retaliation." According to the family, the girls' coworkers were powerless to help but heard them crying and pleading for release from outside the locked door, indicating that they had been raped, abused, and tormented. When the room was finally opened after 7 pm on May 5, 2023, it was found to be covered in the victims' blood and hair. They had been subjected to extreme cruelty. Olivia's mother, Mrs. Kimkhohat, stated, "I spoke with Olivia the day before. When Khohat called the next day, a stranger answered and asked if she wanted to see her daughter dead." Florence's father, Mr. Paotinthang, told a DW News reporter, "What we are witnessing is horrific." Mary Beth, a woman activist from Churachandpur, told DW, "Rape is used as a weapon to attack minority communities, and it has a long history, typically driven by specific ethnic or religious objectives." She added, "There has been widespread use of sexual violence as part of the ethnic conflict" (India: Rape used as weapon amid Manipur violence, 2023).

Two more Kuki women were raped on May 15 and May 28, 2023:

A 19-year-old Kuki tribal woman was allegedly raped by three men on May 15, 2023, near Imphal, the state capital. According to Reuters News, dated August 8, 2023, she was brought to a gathering of Meira Paibis, where she was thrashed in front of them. In a police complaint filed on July 21, 2023, and reviewed by Reuters, the Woman claimed that "one of the Meitei women from the mob gave clear instructions to four men to kill me." She stated that she had been too afraid to report the Incident sooner. Additionally, Mrs. Hatbem Kipgen, who was married to a Meitei man, was allegedly raped, tortured, and killed by Meitei radical mobs in June 2023. At the time of the Incident, she stayed in a Meitei relief camp in Sugnu, Churachandpur district (Kuki Chate Channel, 2023).

Mrs. Zosangkim Hmar was raped on November 7, 2024:

Zosangkim Hmar, a 38-year-old Kuki-Hmar tribal woman, was brutally raped and killed in Jiribam district, Manipur. The Incident occurred on November 7, 2024, when armed assailants, allegedly from the extremist Arambai Tenggol group, attacked her village, Zairawn. Zosangkim was

shot, raped, and then burned alive in her own home. Her death sparked widespread outrage and protests, with many demanding Justice and greater protections for the Kuki community. The Incident highlighted the precarious situation for women in conflict-prone areas, who are often subjected to violence, harassment, and displacement. The Manipur government faced criticism for handling the crisis, with many arguing that more needs to be done to address the root causes of the Conflict and ensure justice for victims like Zosangkim (Day after Woman allegedly raped, killed in Manipur, 2024). The autopsy revealed that Zosangkim was subjected to "third-degree" torture and burns while alive, leading to her death. The Jiribam Police registered a case of rape; however, doctors were unable to collect a vaginal smear due to the charred and unrecognizable body parts, which further complicated the investigation. According to Zosangkim's husband, his wife was brutally murdered after being sexually assaulted at their residence in Zairawn village, reviving the horrors of the ethnic Conflict last year. The post-mortem report stated that the Woman suffered 99% burns in the gruesome Incident in Jiribam. Her body was found charred, with missing parts of her upper limb and facial structure. A wound was found on her right thigh, and a metallic nail was embedded in her left thigh. Kuki-Zo organizations condemned the Incident as "barbaric" (Kalita Prabin, 2024).

Incident involving Miss Jamngaikim Gangte and Mrs. Nancy Chingthianniang occurred on May 4, 2023:

The sectarian Conflict in Manipur has led to horrific violence against women. According to a new laundry or the YouTube channel report on June 2, 2023, a 20-year-old Kuki survivor, Miss Jamngaikim Gangte, recounted her ordeal. "The Meiteis did not even spare the baby, hitting, slapping, and punching the baby, but my aunt tried her best to cover the baby (a 1-year-old child), and luckily, the baby is fine, but my aunt was injured in several parts of her body," Gangte stated. Gangte, a college student in Imphal, claimed that her mother and brother were brutally killed during the state's unrest. She stated, "The Meitei mob constantly beat me with sticks and a large stone on my back, and I can still feel the pain." Mrs. Nancy Chingthianniang, a 29-year-old Kuki survivor, recalled a horrific attack by a Meitei mob on May 4, 2023, in Imphal, which resulted in the murder of her husband and mother-in-law. According to Karan Thapar, a journalist who interviewed her on July 29, 2023, she said that a relative's 1-year-old child was hit and beaten. According to reports, Mrs. Chingthianniang was brutally assaulted, and armed miscreants opened fire on her.

Incident involving Mrs. Veinem Chongloi, Miss Helam, and Miss Hekim took place on May 4, 2024:

Meitei radicals brutally murdered Mrs. Veinem Chongloi, 80, and her unmarried daughters, Miss Helam, 50, and Miss Hekim, 48, in their home in Uripok (Imphal West) on May 4, 2023. Mrs. Veinem was blind, sick, old, and bedridden; she was unaware of the brutality until her death. Miss Helam and Miss Hekim were thrashed and then sliced with sharp objects in their front yard (List of Kuki Women who lost their lives in Manipur violence, 2023). On May 5, 2023, the Army attempted to evacuate stranded Meiteis in Churachandpur district. However, the inhabitants of Churachandpur tried to hinder the Army's evacuation attempt, requesting that stranded Kuki community members in Imphal be rescued first. However, Mrs. Veinem, Miss Helam, and Hekim Chongloi could not escape from the Imphal Valley, and the Meiteis killed them brutally.

Separate Incidents involving Miss Nianghoihching Simte, Mrs. Domkhohoi and Miss Donngaihching took place on May 5, 2023, June 10, 2023, and July 6, 2023 respectively:

Miss Nianghoihching Simte, a 33-year-old Kuki nurse, was shot dead on the night of May 5, 2023, in front of Venus Hotel in New Lamka by the Army in Churachandpur while part of a mob attempting to prevent the Army from evacuating the Meiteis (Zaman, Rokibuz, 2023). On June 10, 2023, Arambai Tenngol, with the assistance of the State Force and BJP, stormed Khoken Viillage in Kangpokpi District and shot Mrs. Domkhohoi, a 75-year-old woman praying inside the local church, at about 4 am. Meitei media/propagandists explain the shooting by claiming she was a sniper shooter (Can still feel the blows, Imphal murdered my family: Manipur violence survivor recalls escape, 2023). According to EastMojo News, a Kuki woman was shot dead outside the Shishu Nishtha Niketan School in Imphal West district on July 6, 2023. According to eyewitnesses, armed miscreants opened

fire on the victim and fled the scene. Meanwhile, the ITLF (Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum) named the victim, Miss Donngaihching and strongly condemned the Incident.

Incident involving Mrs. Lethoi Haokip, Mrs. Nengkim Haokip, and Neilam Haokip took place on May 28, 2023, and another incident in November 2023:

Mrs. Lethoi Haokip, 60, was shot dead by Manipur commandos on May 28, 2023, in Langching, Sugnu Churachandpur district. She was intellectually challenged and unwell. Two other women, Mrs. Nengkim Haokip, 60, of Bolkot village, Churachandpur district, and Neilam, 55, of Laimanai village, were brutally tortured and died in November 2023. The Incident occurred in Kangchup Chingkhong hamlet, Kangpokpi district when five tribal people in a Bolero automobile were stopped at a security checkpoint. A crowd quickly appeared and abducted four people, including two women. Central security troops stationed there could only rescue one of them; the attackers assumed he was dead and abandoned him (Singh, Vijaita, 2023). According to Reuters News on August 8, 2023, more than 200 individuals, including 21 women, have died since the Conflict began in early May 2023. According to Thinkho Le Malcha (Kuki News), in November 2024, 35 Kuki women/girls were killed during the Conflict.

The incidents of Sugnu in Chandel districts:

A violent gunfight broke out in Sugnu, Chandel District, on May 28, 2023, resulting in the deaths of three Kuki men and leaving nine others wounded. According to doctors at Churachandpur district hospital, where the victims received medical attention, all the injuries and fatalities were attributed to bullet wounds. Two of the deceased Kuki men were identified as 26-year-old Thangminlun Haokip from Phaisi village and 40-year-old Douminthang Haokip from Haikal village, both of whom succumbed to bullet wounds to their chests during the intense battle, as confirmed by Churachandpur district doctors, who provided detailed information about the cause of deaths. The continuous and intense exchange of fire led to a situation where one dead body remained unclaimed in the firing zone, highlighting the severity of the violence. In addition to the gunfight, the Meitei mobs, along with radicalized organizations Arambai Tenngol and Meitei Leepun, Manipur Police, commandos, Meitei Assam Rifles Officers, and their militants, also set fire to eight Kuki tribal settlements, specifically Langching, Sugnu Tribal, Zou Veng, Khodang, Gothol, H. Gamnom, Khulim, and Munnomjang, causing widespread destruction (The Hill Journals, 2023).

Kuki Volunteers were beheaded, Mutilated, and chopped alive by the Meiteis

David Thiek Hmar was beheaded alive:

A horrific incident occurred on July 2, 2023, in Langza, a Hmar-Kuki village in Churachandpur district, where Mr. David Thiek Hmar was murdered and decapitated. This event took place between 3:30 am and 4:00 am on July 2, 2023, during a retaliatory attack on two Kuki villages, Langza and Chinglangmei, which resulted in approximately 30 houses being set on fire. The violence continued for 60 days despite the presence of 36,000 central forces in the state. A disturbing video emerged, showing a Kuki man's severed head displayed in the violence-plagued state. The ITLF (Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum) condemned the act, stating, "The perpetrators ruthlessly chopped his neck and displayed his head on a fence before dumping his body in one of the engulfed houses. This heinous act demonstrates a complete disregard for human life and a reprehensible contempt for the tribal community" (Joshi, Manas, 2023).

Two Kuki village volunteers were killed, and their bodies were found mutilated

Another horrifying occurrence took place in April 2024, when two Kuki "village volunteers" were murdered in Manipur, their remains mangled. According to separate announcements from the ITLF and the CoTU (Committee on Tribal Unity), two Kuki-Zo "village volunteers" were killed in Manipur's Kangpokpi district's Phailengmol area. The victims, 23-year-old Kamminlal Lupheng from Maphoudam village and 25-year-old Kamlengsat Lunkim from Bongjang hamlet, were killed by Meitei militants working with personnel of central security forces, tribal organizations claimed. Videos of their disfigured bodies went viral on social media following the shooting. The ITLF stated, "The Kuki strongly condemn the central security forces' killing of two Kuki-Zo village volunteers who fired upon

and shelled tribal positions in Phailengmol village, aiding Meitei militants." The ITLF also denounced the "barbaric treatment" of the victims' bodies, which "were dragged on ropes, had their arms hacked off with machetes, and their faces stomped on and sprayed with bullets." Furthermore, the Meitei militants severed one of the victims' hand palms and attached it to a tree. Kangpokpi's civil society organization, the CoTU, called the murders a "state-sponsored clandestine attack" (Thingkho Le Malcha, KSO Media and Documentation Cell, 2024).

10 Kuki-Hmar volunteers were killed in Jiribam:

The 10 Kuki-Hmar volunteers were killed in Jiribam, Manipur, in an incident that has sparked widespread outrage and condemnation from the Kuki community. According to the Kuki account, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) shot the volunteers dead on November 11, 2024. Autopsy reports revealed the victims were shot from behind with multiple bullet wounds, contradicting the CRPF's claim of an encounter (The Hill Journal, 2024). The reports also showed four bodies had one eye gouged out, believed to be a trademark of the Arambai Tenggol, a Meitei extremist group. The Kuki community alleges CRPF personnel rounded up the volunteers, who were patrolling to protect fellow tribals, and shot them from behind. They claim the CRPF action was part of a larger pattern of violence and discrimination against the Kuki people by state forces and Meitei extremists. The ITLF has called for a judicial inquiry into the actions of the CRPF, which the ITLF has condemned as "atrocious." According to the ITLF, the victims were not militants but rather villagers who were protecting their community (The Hill Journal, 2024). Table 2 show is the list of 10 Kuki-Hmar village volunteers.

Table 2. The 10 Kuki-Hmar Community killed in Jiribam, November 2024

SN	Name of deceased	Age	Place of Death	Resident/District
1	Mr. Ramneilien	29	Jiribam	Churachandpur
2	Mr Fimlien Kung Ngurte	31	Jiribam	Churachandpur
3	Mr Elvis Lalropei Zote	21	Jiribam	Churachandpur
4	Mr. Lalthanei	22	Jiribam	Churachandpur
5	Mr. Joseph Lasiemlien	19	Jiribam	Churachandpur
6	Mr Francies Lalzarlien	25	Jiribam	Churachandpur
7	Mr. Roulneisang	30	Jiribam	Churachandpur
8	MrLalsiemlien Hmar	30	Jiribam	Churachandpur
9	Mr. Henry Lalsanglien	25	Jiribam	Churachandpur
10	Mr Robert Lalnunluong	16	Jiribam	Churachandpur

Source: Arora Vishal, Manipur Autopsy Reports: 10 Kuki-Zos Killed in CRPF Firing, *Newsreel Asia*, 2024

Incident Report: May 2023 – November 2024

There have been many victims of the ethnic Conflict in Manipur, including deaths, injuries, displacement, and other forms of suffering. The Conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur has resulted in devastating losses and displacement. Since May 3, 2023, the violence has claimed the lives of numerous people. Brutal attacks, including arson, vandalism, and murder, have marked the violence. Many homes, temples, and churches have been destroyed or damaged, leaving communities without access to necessities. The situation remains volatile, with reports of ongoing clashes and tensions between the two communities. From May 3, 2023, to November 2024, the Conflicts has been reported in the following table 3:

Table 3. Kuki Victims from May 3, 2023, to November 2024

SN	Number of dead, injured persons, displaced persons, villages burnt, churches burnt, houses burnt, destroyed and NGO office destroyed	Total
1	Number of dead confirmed	219
2	Number of persons injured	850+
3	Number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	58, 848
4	Number of IDPs in relief camps	41, 425
5	Number. of villages burnt	200+

6	Number of houses burnt	7,000+
7	Number of churches burnt and destroyed	360+
8	Several important NGO offices were destroyed	73

Source: Thinkkho Le Malcha, KSO Media and Documentation Cell, 2024, Issue No. 393

During the ethnic unrest between the Meitei and Kuki populations in Manipur on May 3, 2023, public properties, schools, homes, churches, cars, and stores were set on fire. The Conflict has claimed the lives of at least 218 Kuki people and injured about 850 others since May 3, 2023, according to Thinkkho Le Melcha (Kuki News). The Kuki village volunteers who passed away due to illness and other causes are included in the above table, in addition to those who were shot or murdered by the Meiteis. Based on available data from the official inventory of deaths and destruction caused by the violence, Kukis undoubtedly experienced more property loss. Despite sporadic incidents of violence continuing to occur in strife-torn Manipur, approximately 61,000 inmates continue to seek refuge in nearly 325 relief camps in the state until April 2024. Among the 61,000 people in various relief camps, 41,425 are Kukis, and 19,575 are Meiteis. While most displaced people sought safety in Manipur, many fled to neighboring states, such as Mizoram, with smaller groups fleeing to Nagaland and Assam. An estimated 10,000 children and adolescents have been displaced and are being housed in 350 relief camps in the violence-hit state of Manipur. According to Thinkkho Le Malcha (Kuki News), more than 7,000 dwellings and 200 Kuki villages were destroyed on June 6, 2024. Christian organizations in Manipur reported that up to 360 churches, including Meitei churches, were burned down during the communal unrest between the Kuki and Meitei people on May 3, 2023. Even the Meiteis destroyed 73 NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) offices (Displacements in South Asia caused by Manipur violence 97%, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Manipur violence stems from a complex interplay of historical, ethnic, and political factors. Central issues include the loss of human life, crimes against humanity, and widespread destruction of homes and places of worship. It is crucial to avoid oversimplifying the situation by inaccurately labelling the entire tribal community as aggressors. The Conflict has resulted in violent actions, including killing, arson, and property destruction. The Meitei heinous acts against the Kuki community, such as rape, naked parading, and beheading, demonstrate the inhumane nature of their actions. Notably, the Joupi massacre in 1993, which claimed the lives of around 115 Kuki civilians, is a painful reminder of the cycle of violence. The failure of the Manipur and Indian governments to address these crimes has exposed their biased approach, prioritizing the interests of the Meiteis over those of other communities. This lack of action has raised concerns about the government's commitment to justice and accountability for all citizens.

To resolve the issue, immediate communication and confidence-building measures are necessary. Disarming violent civilians and militant organizations is critical. Intellectuals and impartial individuals should promote communication over animosity. Resolving the Conflict requires a multifaceted approach involving disarmament and demilitarization of violent civilians and militant organizations. Additionally, facilitating communication, addressing ethnic inequities, resolving historical inequalities, and investigating violence and unrest are essential steps. Achieving greater autonomy and decentralization can be done by re-evaluating resource distribution and political representation, streamlining legislative assembly constituencies, and examining the causes and effects of recent and historical violence. A long-term solution requires prioritizing Justice, equality, and harmony among all communities involved. The federal government of India is urged to cease violence, promote continuous dialogue, and motivate both state and national authorities to address the dispute in a peaceful manner, ensuring justice and equality are upheld.

Immediate communication and confidence-building measures are essential to resolve the ongoing conflict, alongside the disarmament of violent civilians and militant organizations. Intellectuals and impartial individuals should advocate for dialogue over hostility. A multifaceted approach is necessary, involving disarmament, demilitarization, and addressing ethnic and historical inequalities. The re-evaluation of resource distribution and political representation can facilitate greater autonomy and decentralization. The federal government of India is encouraged to promote peaceful negotiations and end violence while establishing an independent committee to gather evidence from survivors.

Trauma counselling and support services for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children from the Kuki community, are vital. Community reconciliation programs must foster dialogue and understanding among conflicting groups. Additionally, legal accountability for those committing violence and human rights violations is crucial. Building infrastructure that enhances access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities is essential for impacted communities, reinforcing justice, equality, and harmony among all stakeholders involved. Lastly, Indian government must grant the Kuki a separate administration to resolve the issue in Manipur; otherwise, peace will not exist.

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