

SIKH HERITAGE EDUCATION & CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA, INC.

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August 11, 2023

The Honorable Alex Padilla
B03 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515-0509

Dear Honorable Senator,

We, the American citizens of Indian origin are very concerned regarding what is happening to ethnic minorities and “so-called” low cast Indians in different parts of the country under current government.

What is currently happening to Kuki (Christians), a minority community in Manipur is shocking. Hundreds have been killed, thousands are homeless, children are left alone with no one to care for them as women are being raped and paraded naked in the streets. Prime Minister Modi has been silent, and his party (BJP) is responsible for the whole carnage. Chief justice of India had to take action and tell the government to do something and report to the supreme court.

In another state, Haryana the Muslim community is the target where a Mosque has been burned and an Imam (priest) and many others were killed. Hundreds of people have left their homes to save their lives.

This is all being done by Bajrang Dal and Vishav Hindu Parishad. Both these organizations are connected to the ruling BJP and their parent organization, RSS. In their annual report, CIA has mentioned both militant organizations to be concerned about. It appears that the current Indian ruling party is no different than Hitlers Nazi party.

We request you to please bring our concern to the American President and Indian Prime Minister to stop this ethnic cleansing in India. We also request you to reach Gail McGovern, CEO of American Red Cross to provide necessary aid to the suffering people in Manipur and Haryana. If you can ask The American Red Cross to start a fund for those people who are suffering in India, many of us will happily contribute to such a fund. The Indian government is not allowing us to do that individually.

We appreciate your time and any help that you can provide.

Sincerely,

Gurinder Singh Grewal
Secretary Sikh Heritage Education & Cultural

The NEW YORK TIMES

June 10, 2023

A Rising India Is Also, in One Remote Pocket, a Blood-Soaked War Zone

An outburst of ethnic hatred has fractured an ancient kingdom and turned neighbors into enemies.



Burned buildings in Imphal, the capital of the Indian state of Manipur.

By [Suhasini Raj](#) and [Alex Travelli](#)
Photographs by Saumya Khandelwal

Suhasini Raj reported from Churachandpur, Imphal and villages on the frontline of the conflict in Manipur, India. Alex Travelli reported from New Delhi.

June 9, 2023

People burned out of their homes by the hundreds. Villages, even refugee camps, raked with gunfire. Men, women and children beaten and set ablaze by angry mobs.

India, the world's most populous country and home to the fastest-growing major economy, is now also the site of a war zone, as weeks of ethnic violence in the remote northeastern state of Manipur has claimed about 100 lives.

Militarized buffer zones now crisscross the state, patrolled by local women — who are seen as less hotheaded than men — and the thousands of troops who have been sent to quell the fighting, drawing down forces in other parts of India, including the border with China.

More than 35,000 people have become refugees, with many living in makeshift camps. Internet service has been cut — an increasingly common tactic by the Indian government — and travel restrictions have made it difficult for the outside world to see in.

The development has been jarring for a nation whose 1.4 billion people usually manage to get along despite belonging to thousands of sometimes rivalrous ethnic groups. And it presents an unwelcome image of instability for a national government focused on portraying India as a rising global power.

“It is a nightmare,” said Mairembam Ratan, a small-town career counselor who escaped his home with help from the army. “It’s a civil war.”

Manipur is now effectively divided into ethnic zones, as long-simmering tensions between two groups — the Meiteis, who form a narrow majority in the state, and hill tribes known as the Kukis — boil over. Citizens who belong to the wrong group may not safely pass. Many have painted their ethnicity on doors, lest their homes be burned in a case of mistaken identity.



People displaced by ethnic violence were staying at a school that has been converted into a relief camp for Meitei refugees.



Agnes Neikhohat Haokip, a 20-year-old Kuki woman training to be a nurse, was attacked by a mob in early May.

The state has been carved up in an effort to prevent the targeted violence that engulfed it in the conflict's early days. On the evening of May 4, a 20-year-old nursing student,

Agnes Neihkhohat Haokip, was in her dormitory in the state capital, Imphal, when a gang of about 40 men stormed in and dragged her away.

“Rape her! Torture her! Cut her into pieces!” Meitei women shouted as the attackers pummeled Ms. Haokip, knocking out her front teeth and biting her hands as she tried to pick up her teeth.

Ethnic Conflict in India’s Manipur State

- **A New War Zone:** An outburst of ethnic hatred has engulfed the remote northeastern state of Manipur and turned neighbors into enemies. Here is what to know.
- **The Beginning of the Unrest:** Violent clashes between rival ethnic groups first erupted in May, spurred by a dispute over a special tribal status that the largest ethnic group in the state — the Meitei — has been trying to claim for itself.
- **Video of Sexual Assault:** A video circulated widely online showing two women being paraded naked and assaulted in Manipur has further inflamed tensions and brought renewed attention to the conflict, which has left dozens dead and thousands displaced.
- **Modi’s Silence:** The opposition is trying to force the prime minister to weigh in. He has avoided directly addressing the issue, but will he be able to ignore it for much longer, especially ahead of general elections next year?

Three weeks later, Ms. Haokip, who is a Kuki, remained in an intensive care unit. Down the hall, in the morgue, lay ample evidence of the civil conflict she had been fortunate to survive: 23 corpses, most with bullet wounds to their chests or stomachs, still unclaimed.

“I am so scared that I cannot push that evening away from my mind,” Ms. Haokip said, sobbing into her hospital pillow. “I worry for my future.”

For centuries, Manipur was an independent kingdom occupying a fertile valley in the forested mountains between Myanmar and what locals still call the Indian “mainland.” A polyglot cradle of culture, the territory — nearer to Vietnam than to Delhi — blended courtly traditions imported from India with the languages and customs brought by waves of East Asian settlers.



A member of the Indian Border Security Force patrolling in June.



Tribal women, mostly Kukis, formed a human chain along the route that India's home minister would take on a visit to the state.

The current conflict reflects the scarcity of resources and economic opportunity that defines large parts of India today.

On May 3, a student-led group, mostly Kukis, marched in protest after a court ruled in favor of Meiteis demanding to be classified as “tribals” and given a special status that would allow them to buy land in the hills and guarantee an allotment of government jobs. Armed clashes ensued, and police armories were raided. Within two days, at least 56 people were dead.

While that was the worst of the violence, the bloodshed has not ceased more than a month later, with Kukis suffering most of the deaths.

Resentments between the two groups have been fanned by political leaders. The government of Manipur, a state of 3.7 million people, is controlled by Meiteis. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi guided his Bharatiya Janata Party to power in New Delhi, the state’s chief minister, N. Biren Singh, and his Meitei followers joined the ascendant B.J.P.



N. Khamsuan, a morgue official, attending to a body of a victim of the ethnic clashes.

He thinks he is a Northwest is in the ER visit which



A house destroyed by arson.

Mr. Singh has come down heavily on the side of Meitei grievance. Last year, he conflated migrants from the civil war in Myanmar with their Kuki ethnic kin, stoking fears among Meiteis of an influx of refugees, though very few are in Manipur.

He has blamed Myanmar migrants for the state's drug addiction problems, accusing them of cultivating poppies. And as forests in this part of India have become coveted as land for tourism, timber and palm-oil plantations, Mr. Singh has said migrants are responsible for deforestation.

His office did not answer repeated requests for comment. But after the violence broke out in May, he called the Kukis who took up arms "terrorists" who were "trying to break Manipur."

Khuraijam Athouba, a spokesman for the largest civil society group representing the Meitei, accused what he called "Kuki militants" of bringing in illegal immigrants to overpower the Meiteis by sheer numbers. On Wednesday, Mr. Athouba's group organized a convention that "declared war on illegal narco-terrorists."

Image



When clashes broke out across Manipur, some people painted ethnic identifications on buildings to protect them.



The damage done to a Kuki family's home in Imphal.

Gen. Anil Chauhan, the country's top uniformed military officer, rejected the assertion that the Kukis were engaged in terrorism. "This particular situation in Manipur has nothing to do with counterinsurgency and is primarily a clash between two ethnicities," he said.

Outside of the army, the national government did little on the ground during the first three weeks of Manipur's conflagration. Mr. Modi said nothing publicly about it, as he was busy campaigning for his party in state elections far away. His right-hand man, the home minister, Amit Shah, arrived in Imphal on May 30 and tried to make peace between the warring parties.

It was not far from Manipur in 2019 that Mr. Shah, at a campaign rally, implied that many of the Muslims who live in the neighboring state of Assam were "infiltrators" from Bangladesh who ought to be driven into the sea.

While sowing religious divisions has been an election-season stock-in-trade of the Hindu nationalist B.J.P., the lines are drawn differently in Manipur. The Meitei people are mostly Hindu, and the Kuki people are mostly Christian. But religion has relatively little to do with the animosity between them.



Women and their children at a temporary relief camp.



Robita Moirangthem, a Meitei woman, describing her ordeal of evading ethnic clashes.

Ms. Haokip, the woman who was beaten by a mob, is recovering in a hospital in the hills where Kukis predominate. She worries that she will not be able to return to Imphal to finish her nursing studies.

Another Kuki, Chamelen Hangshing, 30, said he and his fellow villagers had exchanged gunfire earlier this week with Meitei vigilantes. A 7-year-old boy was hit in the head by a stray bullet while taking shelter with his family in a government camp. An ambulance tried to take him to a hospital across the Meitei lines, but it was stopped, and three of its passengers, including the boy and his mother, were beaten and burned alive, according to the boy's uncle, Jeffrey Hangshing.

Meiteis, too, have shared some of the hardship. Robita Moirangthem, a 30-year-old teacher, and her mother fled their home and spent a night hiding in a latrine. "Everything is finished. We don't have a home anymore," Ms. Moirangthem said.

"Let us live our lives where our homes are," she pleaded. "Why take out animosity against us ordinary people?"

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Kim Boi, a Kuki woman, and her 4-year-old son after fleeing the violence in their village.

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