

Addendum to letter dated May 7th, 2023

We, the North American Manipur Tribal Association, write to you to seek your urgent attention to the grave incidents of violence, arson, and killing of tribal minorities in the state of Manipur, India.

Here is some history and background**. The land rights of minority tribal ancestral lands, constitutionally protected by Article 371C of the Indian constitution, has been violated.

The chain of events leading up to this are:

1. The Chief Minister of Manipur had declared large tracts of ancestral tribal lands as reserved forest, protected forest or wetlands in 2021 . This effectively deemed us, the tribals, landless & homeless in the lands of our ancestors.
2. Following this order from the Chief Minister, the state machinery started demolition of villages, houses, and places of worship under the guise of clearing encroachment in February 2023.
3. The High Court of Manipur passed a ruling for the state government to request the central government to include the advanced majority Meitei community to protect Scheduled Tribe (ST). This law would allow the majority Meitei community access to our constitutionally protected lands.
4. It would be to the great disadvantage of the minority tribal due to the acute economic and demographic disparity between the two communities. This renders the laws, meant to protect our land and tribal rights, effectively toothless.
5. The district of Churachandpur, is an autonomous district and has been blocked from elections to the Autonomous District Council by the State Government thereby violating our democratic right to elect our leaders.
6. The Government of India has pronounced Article 355 on the state which effectively means a complete breakdown of state law and order.
7. The Governor of the State has given shoot at sight orders to the armed forces and police on its own citizens. This order in effect, prevents us from stepping out from our houses to peacefully protest. In the past five days, several lives have been lost at the hands of the Armed Forces and the Police in the district of Churachandpur.
8. There have been reports of multiple killings of the minority community in the Imphal area, the capital which is dominated by the Meitei. There are unofficial counts of about 23,000 people who were uprooted from their homes and taking refuge in Army camps with no proper food and water and sanitation.

As a tribal social organization, we believe it is our right to protect our cultural heritage and maintain our traditional way of life. The above chain of events curtails our human rights, democratic rights, and tribal rights. An urgent action is needed before it becomes a large-scale humanitarian issue.

We urge you to use your office to convey to the Government of India our concerns and our hope for peace.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your prompt action to address this urgent issue.

** These facts and figures have been put together quickly, and may be subject to revision as we receive better data.