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28.8.2025

To  
Dr. Angomcha Bimol Akoijam,  
Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) – Inner Manipur.  
Keishamthing Top Leirak,  
Imphal West, Manipur 795001  
**Email:** akoijam24mp@gmail.com

**Subject: Your letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025 bearing  
reference no. 122/PUCL/IMP25**

Dear Shri Angomcha Bimol Akoijam,

Greetings!

***PRELIMINARY REMARKS***

We write in response to your letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 raising certain issues about the Report of the 'Independent People's Tribunal on the Ongoing Ethnic Conflict in Manipur' (henceforth the Report).

We welcome **your offer and suggestion of a public deliberation about the Report.**

As an elected Lok Sabha Member of Parliament for Manipur, we respect that your concerns are for all communities in Manipur – Kukis and Meiteis, as also the other communities and that your response to the Report arises from the concern of bridging the divisions between the communities to bring about peace and reconciliation to Manipur.

We also share the same concern and desire as you: as a group from different parts of India, we too are keen to help contribute to peace and dialogue amongst various sections of society in Manipur thereby building a process of peace building through truth and reconciliation and. We are sure you will also agree that a lasting peace cannot be achieved without accountability.

Indeed, that is what the Report was meant to do: to offer a platform for people from the affected communities to share their experiences of the strife and violence they have been subjected to over the last 2 years; to talk about their *"sense of insecurity in being uprooted and displaced while articulating the indignity, fears and insecurity they faced during their exile in relief camps ... and their plea to be seen, heard and acknowledged by the rest of India*

*and the world ... and to honestly report both communities' cry for justice and yearning for peace ..."* (page 652-53).

We therefore welcome public discussions about the findings highlighted in the Report. As the Report highlights, *"Without grassroots reconciliation, political changes often remain superficial and temporary.... In Manipur, if the government only focuses on short-term political management (negotiations, military deployment pr even autonomy deals) without addressing past violence and grievances, the conflict may resurface periodically .... (and) any long-term solution must go beyond political elite discussions and involve village-level reconciliation, inter-community dialogues and truth-telling mechanisms ..... Without genuine reconciliation efforts, cycles of violence and distrust will continue, regardless of who is in power"*. (page 622)

We would like to point out that the Report is based on depositions that came before the Tribunal. We are always open to public discussion about the Report and findings of the Tribunal at any time.

*We would like to point out that it is important to read fully the following chapters*, which describes the full range of testimonies and depositions that was raised before the Tribunal.

Chapter 4: *Events of violence*. (pages 105 to 239).

Chapter 5: *Gender based violence*. (pages 240 to 282).

Chapter 6: *Tracing the causes*. (pages 283 to 349).

Chapter 7: *Popular writings in the print and electronic media*. (pages 350 to 366).

Chapter 8: *Relief, Rehabilitation and Rebuilding Lives*. (pages 367 to 422).

Chapter 9: *Navigating Health and Mental Health Landscape*. (pages 423 to 520).and

Chapter 10: *Justice and Accountability*. (pages 521 to 613).

These chapters, between them cover 508 pages. They have put together testimonies of victims and survivors, witnesses, other local groups supported by documents and other materials, to factually report on the trajectory of violence experienced by various communities of Manipur. It is quite possible that different readers may have a different understanding of events and happenings, but what is very urgently required is an open and honest discussion amongst all sections of Manipur society about events, experiences and situation that had overtaken them in 2023-24.

We firmly believe that the pathway to peace and reconciliation requires honest and open dialogue and discussion amongst all communities over what happened to all of them; which in turn requires ensuring justice and accountability for victims and survivors, creating safe spaces for people from across communities to share their feelings and experiences so as promote personal and collective healing and finally to move from a sense of 'revenge' to 'reconciliation'.

The Tribunal Report has in Chapter 11: *Strategies for Justice and Peace* (pages 614 to 651) provided a road map for discussion and deliberation.

**We would like to reiterate that the aim of the IPT is not to widen divisions but to create a context for peace and reconciliation in Manipur.**

## **THE TRIBUNAL PROCESS**

While the initial violence began in May, 2023, it continued for a long period of time. It was only after there seemed to be no abatement that PUCL decided to set up an independent Tribunal in March, 2024 and the Secretariat along with many members of jury and experts visited Manipur in May – June, 2024, that is about 1 year after the violence had started.

We were shocked that even after 1 year the communities were totally divided, living separately with buffer zones; a large number of people were unable to return to their homes; there existed strong feelings of distrust amongst members of communities existed. There was also a strong feeling that the State had totally abdicated its responsibilities. The visit to Manipur was between 28<sup>th</sup> May – 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2024. Since many persons could not meet us during this visit for various reasons, including floods, we had also set up a further sitting of the Tribunal in Delhi on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 where again the jury met persons from both communities. Even after this a few online meetings with those who wanted to depose were organized for the jury members upto September, 2024.

It needs to be borne in mind that the report largely deals only with the first year period - 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 till July, 2024, and a little time more - of the dispute and whatever is mentioned about the later events is only in the nature of some updates.

The Tribunal process was conducted taking care that people from all communities in Manipur got an audience with the jury, notwithstanding the many challenges and physical restrictions due to Manipur being divided into buffer zones and ongoing insecurity and the constant threat of violence. Sittings were held by the jury and expert members in different districts in Manipur - including Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Kakching, Kangpokpi, Senapati - and in Delhi. Written testimonies and supporting documents, videos, photographs were also collected from the deponents.

We made public announcements with a view to encourage people to participate in the process and also actively reached out to civil society members, journalists, authorities and other stakeholders from Manipur to ensure representation and a thorough understanding of the conflict. In an exercise so vast and riddled with multiple obstacles, while we cannot claim to have reached everyone, we took particular care to try our level best by creating access point and by providing ample time for testimony collection over a period of several months.

We can assure you that the tribunal process and inquiry was entirely independent and without any external influence or bias, and these efforts were specially taken with a view to ensure the same. The observations and findings of the tribunal are based on the voices of the survivors and deponents from various communities - Kukis, Meiteis, Nagas, Pangals and others - who deposed before the tribunal and the documents placed before the jury as also visits to various relief camps of both communities. The testimonies of the people have been relayed in the report in their purest form, to provide a fair chance to convey their truth. Of course we have kept in mind confidentiality. All this with a view to ensure a clear path for accountability and peace. Not a single person was turned away, from providing their testimonies. Appeals were made to both Meitei as also Kuki support organizations to provide written

testimonies, make arrangements for witnesses to depose and also provide follow-up documentation. This elaborate process preceded the writing of the Tribunal's Report.

One of the reasons why the Report of the Tribunal took time was because of the voluminous material collected which needed to be cross verified, documented and studied. We know for a fact that the Jury members went the extra mile to ensure that they heard the testimonies of witnesses.

One senior member actually attended a 2-day hearing from his hospital bed because he wanted to hear for himself. This was despite the fact that he was going against the advice of his doctors not to sit for such long hearings, which often stretched between 6 to 8 hours each day. Another member, also a senior and widely respected bureaucrat also had to attend the virtual hearings owing to health issues.

We mention this not to say that the Jury members were doing anyone any favour; but only to highlight that each of the 14 members of the Jury were sensitive to the issue of the ethnic conflict in Manipur and invested all their energies to the Tribunal process.

It is in such a factual background of the Tribunal's functioning that the charge that the Tribunal members lacked 'reflexivity' appears to be unkind and unfair. But anyway, it is a matter of opinion.

### **POINTWISE REBUTTAL**

One of the complaints made about the Report is that it is partisan towards one community and is ending up by widening divisions in Manipur. Very unfortunately, barring allegations, very little has been shown as to how the findings of the Report are factually wrong. As stated earlier, we are open to public discussion at any stage.

On the first point raised in your letter, on the people's sense of betrayal at the failure to keep the promises made by the Union Minister Amit Shah, we are surprised at the inference being drawn by juxtaposing two sentences in the same paragraph of the report. There is nothing in the sentences or paragraph to arrive at the entirely unsupported conclusion drawn that the sentence means to say that the 'majority' Meitei community got into some kind of understanding with Amit Shah to attack 'Christian minority tribal' in a planned manner, as alleged in your letter under reply. Nowhere else in the report also is any such a claim made. In fact, the sentences mean and can only be interpreted to mean that the Meitei people felt betrayed at the failure of the Union Home Minister Amit Shah to ensure rehabilitation and compensation measures, proper peace process and return to normalcy.

The Point to be noted is that your quote is from the Epilogue portion at the end of the Report, which sought to contextualise the situation in Manipur more than 2 years after the conflict erupted. This concluding chapter took note that even after the promulgation of President's Rule in February, 2025, materially, the conditions on the ground had not changed drastically, especially for the 60,000 displaced persons, which included both Meiteis and Kukis. The entire paragraph which provides the context amply, is extracted below.

*"From the Meitei side, there is also despair. There is a sense that nothing is changing, that the youth are being arrested while leaders roam free. There are complaints that rehabilitation packages are inadequate — ₹75,000 for a home is a cruel joke in a community that lives in shared housing. There is widespread anger at Union Home Minister Amit*

*Shah for what is seen as a betrayal. Promises made were not kept. Women, in particular, feel they were used at the peak of the conflict and then excluded from peace efforts. Meira Paibis have withdrawn. Women are absent from both Track 1 and Track 2 dialogues. Even those willing to return to their villages are holding back. Without trust, they say, there can be no return. Buffer zones are now being treated as permanent boundaries. ...".*  
(at page 690).

It is important to note here a crucial distinction, that the report nowhere states that either community colluded with the government and clearly reveals that victims and survivors of both communities faced brutal violence; it however talks of the state complicity in the violence by giving a free hand to violent groups and an active failure to ensure safety and security of the people and peace in Manipur.

As far as the second point raised in the letter is concerned, the suggestion made is to include SoO groups in the dialogue considering the role they play to influence peace process on the Kuki side. The paragraph goes on to explain that without onboarding even hostile parties that can impact the peace process, it would be difficult to practically change the status quo. Like other suggestions made in the report, this is a call made towards a truth and reconciliation process, while also foregrounding the need to ensure accountability. The portion of the paragraph is extracted below for context.

*"Track 2 meetings—friendly, intellectual gatherings—are happening, but they lack the political teeth to change realities. True dialogue must bring hostile parties face to face and must include all SoO groups if it is to have legitimacy on the Kuki side. Above all, there must be accountability." (page 691)*

Regarding the third point in the letter, we would like to clarify that the report provides a detailed account of the violence as stitched together from the testimonies and materials before the tribunal. This extracted sentence is only a summation of an episode in the executive summary, and not a general statement, as is being misconstrued. The complex timeline of the violence is admittedly presented in the report, which shows where violence originated or spread in multiple such episodes that have been recorded throughout the report. We accordingly request that the report be read as a whole.

As far as point 4 is concerned, the photographs used in the report were submitted by the families of the deponents. Photographs of both Meitei and Kuki victims have been used. We were hesitant to use the several photographs presented before the tribunal for similar reasons and hence selected only those that were already in the public domain or for which permission was provided by families. We are pained to know that the photographs have evoked a feeling of the "other", which was never intended. The Tribunal has tried its best to stay true to its objective of reporting the truth and the photographs were placed only as a part of this exercise.

## ***AN EXPLANATION ABOUT TRACING THE CAUSES OF THE VIOLENCE***

A major criticism of the Report has centred around the events of 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023 when the conflict burst out and spread into various areas. Chapter 4 – 6 of the Report documents in a detailed manner the events and causes of the conflict prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> May, events of 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023 and events following the outburst of violence on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023.

The Report reconstructs the events that unfolded through the testimonies of many victims, survivors and witnesses from both the Meiteis and Kukis as also other communities, living in different places and also security forces officials. What became clear is that the bursting of conflict in Churachandpur on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023 was preceded by a series of events which clearly show that the 3<sup>rd</sup> May incident was not a spontaneous event.

There were 2 challenges: (a) The problem of equivalence – the demand that for every person affected from one community the Tribunal refers to a similarly affected person from the other community; (b) to state who first started or sparked the violence.

In a situation of mass violence occurring across different geographical locations, we feel that every life lost, is a loss to humanity. The scale of the tragedy cannot be weighed in numbers of lives lost of the various communities. What the Report has sought to do is to trace out a time line of events as they occurred, in different places. Each testimony in this regard, was rigorously checked for consistency with other evidence gathered and supporting material from some other source like FIR, media reporting and so on.

We acknowledge that the Executive Summary does not fully articulate the findings which are more fully described in Chapters 4 to 7. We have no hesitation to accept any inadequacies that may exist in the Executive Summary portion. Our only request is that readers please read through fully the contents of Chapters 4 to 7.

As explained before, we are always open to criticism and dialogue. We are ready to consider any comment or feedback made about any section of the Report but request that specific portions be highlighted with supporting material to show why a review is required. Our commitment is for the truth to be uncovered and prevail, however difficult it is, as only through truthful recounting of facts and events can justice and peace prevail and the process of reconciliation begin.

### ***THE REPORT IS THAT OF THE INDEPENDENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL: REVISITING THE TOR***

We should draw attention to a very important distinction: the report is the Report of the 'Independent People's Tribunal' (IPT) which was no doubt constituted by the PUCL but was made up of 14 independent experts, drawn from various walks of life: judiciary, academia, media, activists and lawyers. These jury members brought in a wide range of expert knowledge, insights and expertise to the fact-finding exercise undertaken by the IPT. They are also independent of PUCL. These 14 jury members were joined by a 3-member panel of experts of specific subject areas. (See pages 43-44).

PUCL offered secretarial and infrastructural assistance, which involved PUCL members as also others not members of PUCL.

The Terms of Reference of the IPT outlines 5 key objectives (see page 42 of the Report). We may point out to 3 of the objectives:

1. **Document the violations suffered by the people of Manipur** with specific attention to loss of life, sexual violence and violence suffered by children, women including pregnant women, and the elderly.
4. Examine existing documentation on the Manipur situation and **analyse the**

**reasons for the continuing violence.**

**5. Propose recommendations to repair the torn social, cultural and political fabric of the state.**

(Emphasis provided). (ref. Page 40).

As must be clear, the Tribunal, had at no time the intention of dividing communities in Manipur or in any way, to thwart, put hurdles or prevent peace process in Manipur or to paint one community as a victim and another as a perpetrator or to keep the hatred and cycle of violence to continue.

We encourage you to show what is wrong or inaccurate or objectionable about the testimonies and evidence reported in the Report and the findings in each of the chapters from chapters 3 to 10. It is quite possible that in such a comprehensive report there may be some inaccuracies or mistakes made in some part or the other. We are always open to criticism and to examine mistakes pointed out to us and make necessary corrections.

Before ending we would like to draw your attention as a Lok Sabha MP, to the pitiable conditions of 60,000 IDPs in the various camps in Manipur. They look forward to a bleak future. The Tribunal Report has placed before the public, serious health and medical crisis issues in the camps affecting pregnant women, women, elderly, children and the differently abled or challenged people. Worse is the mental health issue which is not being talked about or addressed at all.

In the Tribunal Report, the last section on **Recommendations** (pages 669 – 685) summarises the key issues on which immediate and urgent action should be taken on a range of issues. We request that this portion of the Report is studied and wherever found relevant, to take it up with the government agencies for remedial and corrective action.

Speaking for PUCL, we will always remain available to share our expertise and knowledge resources with the process of peace and reconciliation in Manipur. We are also sure, that all the Tribunal Members will continue to contribute to finding durable truth and reconciliation process in Manipur.



*Kavita Srivastava*, President



*Dr. V. Suresh*, General Secretary

*People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)*