



KUKI ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TRUST (KOHUR)

A Member of UN Special Consultative Status Since 2016

[Registered under the Indian Regulation Act, 1908. Regd. No.963 (V), 08, May, 2009]

Ref. _____

Date: _____

REJOINER TO THE UNITED NAGA COUNCIL'S STATEMENT DATED 21 MAY 2026

The Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) is constrained to issue this firm and unambiguous rejoinder to the Office of the Working Committee, United Naga Council (UNC), Tahamzam (Senapati), in response to its statement of 21 May 2026 titled "Rejoinder to KOHUR."

The UNC's statement is a disappointing exercise in deflection, inversion of facts, and moral evasion. Far from addressing the substantive concerns raised by KOHUR on 19 May 2026, it seeks to whitewash the conduct of armed Naga elements, shield identified perpetrators, and recast the victims of a premeditated act of terrorism as instigators. KOHUR rejects this attempt in the strongest possible terms and places the following on record.

1. The 13 May 2026 Ambush: The Victims, the Site, and the Facts

On the morning of 13 May 2026, at approximately 10:15 a.m., a convoy of two clearly marked Thadou Baptist Association India (TBAI) vehicles — a White Bolero Neo and a White Bolero BS6 — was returning from the 1st United Baptist Convention Assembly held at Chiengkompang, Lamka (Churachandpur), when it came under sustained automatic-weapons fire from elevated hillside positions at Saheibung Peak ("Zero Point"), between Kotzim and Kotlen villages, under New Keithelmanbi Police Station, Kangpokpi District. Security forces have disclosed that eight to ten armed assailants participated in the ambush.

Three Kuki-Zo Christian clergymen — all senior leaders of the Thadou Baptist Association India — were killed in cold blood:

- Rev. Dr. Vumthang Sitlhou, President, Thadou Baptist Association India, and two-term former General Secretary of the Manipur Baptist Convention;
- Rev. Kaigoulun Lhouvum, Secretary, Finance, Youth & Music Department, TBAI;
- Pastor Paogoulen Sitlhou, Superintendent Pastor, IT Road / Twilang Area, TBAI.

Four others sustained grievous injuries: Rev. S.M. Haopu Sitlhou (TBAI Executive Secretary), Rev. Hekai Simte (Superintendent Pastor, Twipajang Area), Rev. Kaikhothang Singsit (Pastor, TBAI Centre Church, Kangpokpi), and the drivers Thangtinlen Sitlhou and Lungoumang Lhouvum.

Rev. Dr. Vumthang Sitlhou was, in the days immediately preceding his assassination, the principal Kuki-Zo-Naga Christian bridge-builder in the region. He had convened a peace consultation under the auspices of the Nagaland Joint Christian Forum at Kohima, and on the very day before his death had participated in a Kuki-Zo-Naga Christian leaders' dialogue in Churachandpur. His own mother was of the Rongmei Naga community; his late father had served as a Pastor among the Rongmei. The man whose murder the UNC now euphemises as an "ambush" devoted the final weeks of his life to peace between our two peoples.



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To suggest, as the UNC does, that “the bullets and the guns were but yours only” is not merely false — it is a defamatory inversion of a documented atrocity in which three Christian ministers were slaughtered while travelling on a mission of inter-community reconciliation. KOHUR places on record its categorical rejection of this slander.

2. On the Question of Perpetrators: The ZUF Press Release and the UNC’s Convenient Silences

The UNC asks, with feigned innocence, what “reason or benefit” the NSCN-IM and “ZUF (K)” would have in killing the reverends. KOHUR will not dignify the question with speculation, because the question itself has already been answered by the Naga side itself.

On 13 May 2026, within hours of the ambush, the **Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF)** issued a formal and detailed press release under the signature of **Mr. Louis Gangmei, Secretary, Information & Publicity, ZUF**. The press release publicly and unambiguously named NSCN-IM as the perpetrator and is reproduced, in pertinent part, below:

- ZUF “vehemently and unequivocally condemns the barbaric ambush and brutal attack carried out on a civilian vehicle between Kotzim and Kotlen, in which three innocent Kuki civilians, including church leaders, tragically lost their lives”;
- the act is described as “this inhumane and cowardly act, allegedly perpetrated by NSCN-IM operatives in the name of ‘ZUF Kamson’”, and characterised as “an unforgivable crime against humanity and a blatant violation of peace, coexistence, and mutual respect among neighbouring communities”;
- ZUF “categorically clarifies that there is only one legitimate ZUF, and there exists no such faction as ‘ZUF Kamson’ or any other fabricated nomenclature being maliciously used by NSCN-IM to mislead the public and tarnish the hard-earned image and integrity of the Zeliangrong people”;
- ZUF further records that “NSCN-IM had issued directives on 2 May and 4 May 2026 instructing people to boycott a ZUF-organised peace meeting”, framing these directives as part of a planned sequence leading up to the 13 May attack;
- ZUF “sternly warn[s] NSCN-IM to immediately desist from exploiting the name of ZUF for their ulterior motives and to stop spreading terror and ethnic animosity in the region.”

This is not an allegation by KOHUR. It is an admission emanating from within the Naga armed landscape itself — a sovereign Naga armed organisation, on its own letterhead and over the signature of its own Information & Publicity Secretary, publicly and on record naming **NSCN-IM** as the perpetrator of the 13 May 2026 ambush and stating, in terms, that the so-called “ZUF Kamson” is a fabricated label deployed by NSCN-IM under a false flag.



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The UNC's studied silence on this admission is telling. An organisation genuinely committed to truth would have addressed the ZUF press release of 13 May 2026 head on — either by accepting it or by rebutting it on the merits. The UNC has chosen instead to pretend it does not exist, and to direct its energies entirely toward attacking KOHUR. That choice is itself revealing.

Simultaneously, the Tahamzam Youth Forum (TYF), based at Senapati (Oking: Senapati 795106) and operating in the political space adjacent to the UNC, has — in its statement of 22 May 2026 issued by its Media and Publicity Wing — openly admitted that the “**Naga Village Guard, Northern Command**” is in custody of the 14 Kuki-Zo civilians and has “demonstrated maturity and humanity by expressing readiness to exchange the 14 detainees under their custody for the six Naga hostages.” This is, on the face of it, a **public confession** of unlawful detention of civilian hostages by an armed Naga formation, framed as a proposed prisoner exchange. The UNC has not condemned this admission. KOHUR notes that it is impossible to reconcile the UNC's claim of Naga civilian innocence with the open admission, by a Naga organisation operating in its political orbit, that Naga armed elements are holding 14 Kuki-Zo civilians as bargaining chips.

3. On Hostages: A Tale of Two Conducts

The UNC's attempt to moralise on the question of captives collapses under the weight of recent history.

On 11 March 2026, in the Litan area of Ukhrul District, two Kuki-Zo men — Thengin Baite (42) of Thawai Kuki village (Kamjong District), and Thangboimang Khongsai (35) of Shangkai village (Ukhrul District), an internally displaced person — were abducted while attempting to repair a water pipeline at the Mapithel hill range and were killed in cold blood. Their bodies were recovered the following day. A third civilian, Lalminthang Haokip (40), sustained gunshot injuries.

In the immediate aftermath, more than 20 Tangkhul Naga civilians — including members of a wedding party — were briefly held by Kuki villagers under Litan Police Station. Within hours, on humanitarian grounds and at the request of the government, every one of them was released unharmed, with dignity, and without precondition. That is the Kuki-Zo record on civilian captives. It is a matter of public record.

On 14 May 2026, following the Kangpokpi ambush, the Kuki-Zo side once again released five Naga individuals along the IT Road as a goodwill gesture, even as our community was burying its murdered clergy.

By stark contrast, following the ambush of 13 May 2026, armed Naga elements seized civilians from Taphou and Hengbung villages. As of the date of this rejoinder, 14 Kuki-Zo civilians — all men between the ages of 16 and 50 — remain in captivity in Senapati District, with the Tahamzam Youth Forum itself confirming custody under the “Naga Village Guard, Northern Command.” These are non-combatants. Their continued detention is a textbook violation of international humanitarian norms and of every standard the UNC purports to uphold.



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The UNC's statement speaks piously of "the safe exchange of captives." KOHUR welcomes that language — and now calls upon the UNC to translate it into immediate action by securing the unconditional release of all 14 Kuki-Zo civilians. Words are not a substitute for the lives of innocent men. The credibility of the UNC will be measured by what happens to those 14 men, not by the elegance of its press releases.

KOHUR equally reiterates its standing demand for the safe return of the six missing Naga men — Rev. Dr. Manu Thiumai, Pastor Kenpibou, Ch. Phenrilungbou, Dilip Thiumai, Phenrongwibou Thiumai, and Kaliwangbou Abonmai. Their safety is a matter of equal concern to KOHUR, and we have publicly said so. The release of captives is not a transaction. It is a humanitarian imperative on both sides.

4. On the UNC's Charge of "Selective Condemnation"

The UNC accuses KOHUR of failing to condemn the killing of an innocent Chiru Naga on 13 May 2026. KOHUR's position is and has always been consistent: the killing of any innocent civilian — Kuki-Zo, Naga, Meitei, Chiru, or otherwise — is to be condemned without reservation. The death of Mr. Wilson Thanga of Dolang Chiru village, in the firing incident on the Bishnupur-Khoupum Road in Noney District on 13 May 2026, is condemned unambiguously and on record once again. KOHUR extends its condolences to his family.

The same standard, however, must apply to the UNC — and here its silence is deafening.

The UNC's statement of 21 May does not contain a single sentence of condemnation for the murder of Rev. Dr. Vumthang Sitlhou, Rev. Kaigoulun Lhouvum, and Pastor Paogoulen Sitlhou. Not one.

Nor has the UNC, at any point, condemned the cold-blooded abduction and murder of Thengin Baite and Thangboimang Khongsai by Tangkhul Naga armed elements on 11 March 2026 in Ukhrul District. Two unarmed civilians were seized and killed — and the UNC, the self-proclaimed apex body of the Naga people in Manipur, did not see fit to issue a single line of condemnation.

Nor has the UNC condemned the coordinated dawn assault of 24 April 2026 on Mulam and Songphel Kuki villages in Ukhrul District, in which two Kuki village volunteers — Paominlun Haolai (19) and Letlal Sitlhou (43) — were killed in an ambush between the two villages, at least 17 houses were torched, six civilians were injured, and women, children and the elderly were displaced. Mongkot Chepu, Yaolen, and other Kuki villages in the surrounding area were also targeted in this period.

Nor has the UNC condemned the February 2026 arson at Litan Sareikhong, in which roughly 50 houses and four government quarters of the Kuki-Zo community were systematically burnt down — an act so grave that the State Government was compelled to impose prohibitory orders and suspend internet services across Ukhrul District for five days.

An organisation that lectures others on the "first duty" of a human rights body, while itself failing to condemn the murder of three Christian ministers, the killing of two Kuki-Zo civilians at the Mapithel hill



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range, the assault on Mulam and Songphel villages, and the burning of dozens of Kuki-Zo homes at Litan Sareikhong, has forfeited the moral high ground from which it presumes to speak.

Selective condemnation is precisely the charge that the UNC has, by its own conduct, earned.

5. On the Character of This Crime

The men killed on 13 May 2026 were not combatants. They were ordained ministers of the Gospel. They were senior leaders of the Thadou Baptist Association India. Their convoy was clearly marked. Their journey was a return from a Christian assembly. Their work in the final weeks of their lives was inter-community reconciliation. Their assassination was not an “incident” in a tribal quarrel — it was the targeted killing of religious figures, executed by eight to ten armed assailants firing from prepared positions. It is an act that strikes at the conscience not only of the Kuki-Zo community but of every faith community in this country and beyond. Any organisation that cannot bring itself to name and condemn that act is engaged in apologetics, not advocacy.

6. KOHUR's Demands

KOHUR reiterates, with the full weight of its institutional mandate, the following demands:

- (i) The immediate and unconditional release of all 14 Kuki-Zo civilians held in Senapati District, and of the six Naga men still unaccounted for in Kangpokpi District.
- (ii) A transparent, time-bound, and impartial investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the ambush of 13 May 2026 at Saheibung Peak, Kangpokpi District, and the murder of Rev. Dr. Vumthang Sitlhou, Rev. Kaigoulun Lhouvum, and Pastor Paogoulouen Sitlhou.
- (iii) Identification and prosecution of the perpetrators, irrespective of the armed organisation to which they belong, including a thorough examination of the ZUF's own public allegation — made on record by Mr. Louis Gangmei, Secretary (Information & Publicity), ZUF — that NSCN-IM cadres carried out the ambush operating under the fabricated “ZUF-Kamson” name.
- (iv) Independent inquiry into the 11 March 2026 killings of Thengin Baite and Thangboimang Khongsai, the 24 April 2026 assault on Mulam and Songphel villages, and the February 2026 arson at Litan Sareikhong, with prosecution of those responsible.
- (v) Immediate cessation of all civilian hostage-taking by any armed or non-state actor operating in the region, with the framework for such cessation guaranteed by central security forces, given the proximity of Konsakhul and Leilon Vaiphei to the 57 Mountain Division cantonment at Leimakhong.



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- (vi) Public clarification by the United Naga Council of its position on (a) the ZUF press release of 13 May 2026 naming NSCN-IM as the perpetrator under a false flag, and (b) the Tahamzam Youth Forum's open admission, in its statement of 22 May 2026, that Naga Village Guard formations are holding 14 Kuki-Zo civilians.

7. Conclusion

KOHUR has neither the time nor the inclination for a war of press releases. Our concern is the lives of innocent people, the dignity of the dead, the safety of those still held, and the prevention of further atrocity. We invite the United Naga Council to abandon the politics of denial and to join us, plainly and without qualification, in condemning the murder of innocent civilians and clergy and in securing the release of all remaining captives — Kuki-Zo and Naga alike.

Truth is not partisan. Justice is not tribal. The path to peace in Manipur cannot be paved with evasions.

Issued by:

Department of Information & Publicity

Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR)