

# Update on the Human Rights Situation in Manipur

BRIEFING NOTE

*An update on the human rights situation in Manipur, India, which has been rocked by inter-ethnic violence since May 2023, leaving over 200 dead, mostly members of the Kuki-Zo tribes.*

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The number of people directly affected by the conflict in Manipur has risen since July 2023. Early in September 2023, a group of 19 UN Special Procedures mandate holders had expressed concern over the grave humanitarian situation in Manipur, and the steadily deteriorating condition of religious and ethnic minorities elsewhere in the country.<sup>1</sup> Reports from January 2024 indicated that over 200 people had died and 70,000 been displaced since 3 May 2023 due to the conflict in Manipur.<sup>2</sup> Conditions in relief camps are dire, with lack of access to food, water and healthcare reported.<sup>3</sup> It is also relevant to note that the 2024 elections are scheduled to be conducted in Manipur on 19 and 26 April 2024.<sup>4</sup> While the election commission has indicated that arrangements will be made for voters located in relief camps within Manipur, no arrangements have been made yet to enable those displaced outside Manipur to vote in the 2024 elections.<sup>5</sup>

### Investigations and accountability:

In August 2023, India's Supreme Court had formed a committee to investigate survivor relief and accountability for violations,<sup>6</sup> and also mandated the issuance of essential documentation for those displaced<sup>7</sup>, but the Supreme Court and the central government are yet to condemn or address the role of state and state-backed actors in the violence. More recently in March 2024,

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<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, India: UN experts alarmed by continuing abuses in Manipur, 4 September 2023, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/india-un-experts-alarmed-continuing-abuses-manipur> [accessed 4 September 2023].

<sup>2</sup> Manipur: Four Meitei Muslims shot dead in Thoubal, curfew reimposed in valley districts, Scroll, 2 January 2024, available at: <https://scroll.in/latest/1061469/manipur-four-meitei-muslims-shot-dead-in-thoubal-curfew-reimposed-in-valley-districts> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Yaqut Ali, With 7 Killed in 48 Hours, Opposition Again Calls on Modi to Address the Violence in Manipur, The Wire, 19 January 2024, available at: <https://thewire.in/security/with-7-killed-in-48-hours-opposition-again-calls-on-modi-to-address-the-violence-in-manipur> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>3</sup> Rajan Chaudhary, Manipur: Thousands Still Residing in Relief Camps, With No Way Forward as Homes and Villages Lay in Ruins! The Mooknayak, 26 January 2024, available at: <https://en.themooknayak.com/tribal-news/manipur-thousands-still-residing-in-relief-camps-with-no-way-forward-as-homes-and-villages-lay-in-ruins> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Maitri Porecha, Doctors' team flag poor living conditions in Manipur relief camps, The Hindu, 5 September 2023, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/doctors-flag-poor-living-conditions-in-manipur-relief-camps/article67270164.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>4</sup> 2024 General elections | These are the Lok Sabha constituencies, Assemblies going to polls in Phase 1, The Hindu, 23 March 2024, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha/2024-lok-sabha-assembly-election-phase-1-states-constituencies-schedule/article67980008.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Lok Sabha Election in Manipur 2024: Date, schedule, constituency details, The Times of India, 16 March 2024, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/lok-sabha-election-in-manipur-2024-date-schedule-constituency-details/articleshow/108548135.cms> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>5</sup> Umanand Jaiswal, Manipur: 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs request Election Commission to make voting arrangements for displaced residents, Telegraph India, 27 March 2024, available at: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/elections/lok-sabha-election-2024/manipur-10-kuki-zo-mlas-request-election-commission-of-india-to-make-voting-arrangements-for-displaced-residents/cid/2009377> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Ten MLAs urged ECI to arrange voting for 50,000 displaced Kuki-Zo people outside Manipur, The Hindu, 26 March 2024, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha/arrange-voting-for-50000-displaced-kuki-zo-people-outside-manipur-eci-urged/article67993842.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>6</sup> 'Enquire Into Violence Against Women In Manipur From May 4': Supreme Court Explains Mandate Of Committee Of Three Women Judges, Live Law, 10 August 2023, available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/enquire-into-violence-against-women-in-manipur-from-may-4-supreme-court-explains-mandate-of-committee-of-three-women-judges-234931> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>7</sup> Padmakshi Sharma, Manipur Violence | Issue Aadhaar Cards To Displaced Persons After UIDAI Verification: Supreme Court, Live Law, 25 September 2023, available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/manipur-violence-issue-aadhaar-cards-to-displaced-persons-after-uidai-verification-supreme-court-238672> [accessed 27 March 2024].

the court-appointed committee raised concerns regarding recent spurts of violence in Manipur and the court directed the state of Manipur and other investigating agencies to outline the progress of investigations and file a status report indicating chargesheets filed.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding cases of sexual violence, the Manipur State Commission for Women had registered 59 cases of sexual crimes against women, of which five cases were handed over to the Central Bureau for Investigation (CBI).<sup>9</sup> The CBI was reported to have filed a chargesheet on 16 October 2023 in connection with the incident in May 2023 in which women were gang-raped, stripped and paraded by a violent mob.<sup>10</sup> Updates on other cases have not been reported.

On 20 November 2023, the Manipur government informed the Supreme Court that INR 50,000,000 had been credited to a bank account to dedicated to paying compensation to survivors of sexual assault.<sup>11</sup> However, no information was provided on the number of women who have been or will be compensated using these funds.

#### Other developments:

On 21 February 2024, the Manipur High Court modified its order dated 27 March 2023 to delete the paragraph recommending the inclusion of the Meitei community as a 'Scheduled Tribe' in the state, which had been instrumental in instigating the massive violence in Manipur.<sup>12</sup> In 2023, the Supreme Court had pointed out that this order was beyond the scope of the High Court's jurisdiction.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Manipur violence: Supreme Court seeks probe status reports from govt, agencies, The Indian Express, 13 March 2024, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/manipur-violence-supreme-court-seeks-probe-status-reports-from-govt-agencies-9208731/> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Anmol Kumar Bawa, Manipur Violence | Judges Committee Raises Concerns About Armed Protests By Weaponised Outfits, Supreme Court Seeks Union's View, Live Law, 11 March 2024, available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/manipur-violence-judges-committee-raises-concerns-about-armed-protests-by-weaponised-outfits-supreme-court-seeks-unions-view-251896> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>9</sup> Manipur panel files 59 sexual violence cases, 5 handed to CBI, Hindustan Times, 17 September 2023, available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/manipur-panel-files-59-sexual-violence-cases-5-handed-to-cbi-101694888199950.html> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>10</sup> CBI files chargesheet against six accused in Manipur sexual violence case, The Hindu, 16 October 2023, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/cbi-files-chargesheet-against-six-accused-in-manipur-sexual-violence-case/article67427457.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>11</sup> Vijaita Singh, ₹5 crore released for women survivors of sexual assault, other crimes in Manipur, SC told, The Hindu, 20 November 2023, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/5-crore-released-for-women-survivors-of-sexual-assault-other-crimes-in-manipur-sc-told/article67554828.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Manipur Govt Allocates Rs 5-Crore as Sexual Violence Compensation, No Info on How Many to Receive It, The Wire, 21 November 2023, available at: <https://thewire.in/government/manipur-govt-allocates-rs-5-crore-as-sexual-violence-compensation-no-info-on-how-many-to-receive-it> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Manipur: Rs 5 crore released for women who faced sexual violence, state tells Supreme Court. Scroll, 21 November 2023, available at: <https://scroll.in/latest/1059384/manipur-rs-5-crore-released-for-women-who-faced-sexual-violence-state-tells-supreme-court> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>12</sup> Sukrita Baruah, Meiteis in ST list: Manipur HC deletes contentious clause, The Indian Express, 23 February 2024, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/manipur-high-court-revokes-inclusion-order-meitei-community-st-list-9175443/> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Sumir Karmakar, Manipur High Court revokes inclusion order for Meitei community in ST List, Deccan Herald, 22 February 2024, available at: <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/manipur/manipurhigh-court-revokes-inclusion-order-for-meitei-community-in-st-list-2905883> [accessed 27 March 2024]; Abhinay Lakshman, ST tag for Meiteis | Manipur High Court withdraws contentious part of its order, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-hc-modifies-contentious-order-on-st-status-for-meiteis/article67871656.ece> [accessed 27 March 2024].

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



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