

REJOINER AGAINST THE FMR, FCAA, AFSPA, CAA AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF INDIA'S AGGRESSION TO SUPPRESS THE NAGAS

We, the '**Concerned Citizens**' of Kohima Nagaland, celebrate the 16th. May 2024, at Kohima, which is the '**Naga Plebiscite Day**' and on this occasion, we issue this rejoinder to remind us of our past and to move ahead with clarity of thought, integrity and steadfast moral courage. The Naga Plebiscite is a remarkable day for the Nagas because it stands on the principles of the core message of "**Leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times**". The Naga Plebiscite reaffirms our declaration in our Memorandum to the Simon Commission on 10th. Jan. 1929 at Kohima, and the Independence Declaration on 14th Aug. in 1947, and it is never a new thing.

The Nagas are a race of indigenous people who live in their ancestral land for ages, sandwiched between India and Myanmar. The Nagas have charted a clear goal for their existence as a free nation from the beginning and that has been made very clear several times and specifically on three landmark events in the form of **The Memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, The Naga Independence Day declared on 14th Aug. in 1947, and The Naga Plebiscite' on 16th May 1951**. These events make the Naga political history unique, unchallengeable, unquestionable and different from the rest of the other people and their land and many principalities that forms the Indian Union.

Historical events and records affirm that India used the most barbaric and inhumane military aggression to forcibly occupy the land of the Nagas against their wishes. The Nagas are neither **separatists, revolutionaries, reactionaries, nor of secessionists** because Nagas are not Indians and their lands are not a part of the Indian Union from the beginning. And because of its inalienable and irrefutable rights, the Nagas' genuine movement for self-defense refuse to die in spite of all attempts by India to silence the Nagas. All measures to erase the unthinkable atrocities committed by India through its military on the Nagas from the Naga memory not only fail but the wounds refuses to heal. The Naga Political Movement for self-determination has persisted as one of the longest freedom struggles for self-defense in the world. When the military aggression failed to suppress the Nagas, India has been employing different other means to suppress the Nagas. The most recent decision of the Indian Govt. to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) is one such.

India's Relation with the Nagas: Ever since India came into being as an independent nation, its relation with the people of the Nagas has been marred with unfathomable and unspeakable heinous crimes against humanity. Firsthand accounts of such insane and barbaric crimes committed on the Nagas have been recorded by various

authors and most notably by an eminent social activist in his book “The Naga Saga”. The conduct and attitude of India towards the Nagas has been grounded on oppression, military aggressions, human right violations, exploitations and the demeanor of a bully that has no respect for the rights of lesser entities.

This is evident from how India in connivance with the then Burma divided the Nagas and their land with an arbitrary line without the consent of the Naga local traditional dwellers. The alleged boundary line passing through and inside of the house of the Chief of Longwa village in Mon Dist. Nagaland testifies to this fact. It is important to understand that the people were there for ages, much before any arbitrary line was drawn.

(a) Recent military aggression by India; The Oting Massacre: On the night of the 4th of Dec. 2021 the Indian paramilitary forces staged an ambush at Oting, Mon Dist. Nagaland wherein 13 young innocent promising unarmed daily wage Naga workers were savagely ambushed and killed in cold blood. Evidences revealed that after killing the innocent laborers, the Indian paramilitary forces were caught in the process of trying to dress the victims in military fatigues to blame them as armed insurgents and to justify their killings for ulterior motives. Often the paramilitary personnel stage such false encounters. In spite of telltale signs and un-missable evidences of cold blooded murder of the innocents in this botched fake encounter, India, has hushed up the investigation to protect the guilty and has denied justice to the victims till date.

b) Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA): India continues to misuse military power for oppression and aggression over the Nagas through AFSPA which is in force in Nagaland till today. The Indian Govt. in its intent to continue to exercise the abuse of military power over the Nagas, promulgated the infamous AFSPA of 1958” which empowers the Indian Army to arrest without any warrant, or shoot and kill anyone on mere suspicion, without question and without any accountability or liability for their actions. In practice, AFSPA is a license to kill with impunity and in a civilized world, there is no room for such barbaric laws to exist, we can never tolerate the AFSPA.

(c) The Free Movement Regime (FMR) and scrapping thereof: Initiated in the 1970, the FMR allows movement of people living near the arbitrary so called international border to travel up to 16 km without a visa. There are four districts of Nagaland where this arbitrary line passes through and about 400 villages scattered on either side where they cross the supposed border on a daily basis for farming for survival. The Naga ethnic tribals were already in homogeneous existence long before independent India came into being and ages before any arbitrary line was drawn by India's Nehru and Burma's Unu. On 20th Jan 2024, India announced the abrogation of the FMR and the decision to permanently fence the so called Indo-Myanmar border. Such an inhuman fence will deprive those villagers their basic needs of food and rights to their own lands. Such a fence is not only an encroachment into the ancestral Nagas’

lands but also a crime against humanity in general and the Nagas in particular. It is therefore incumbent upon the civilized societies to oppose such an oppressive act.

The present dispensation of the Govt. of India continues to uphold Nehru's legacy of arrogant aggression against the Nagas by its decision to end the FMR. What makes it even more cruel, inhumane and criminally predisposed is that it has decided to end the FMR at the behest of the sitting Chief Minister of India's Manipur, who is already infamous for the alleged ethnic cleansing orchestrated on a section of its tribal Christian population, thus making the present ruling dispensation in Delhi a notorious partner in crime that the dispensation in Manipur is accused of.

What makes it more malicious in the policies of India towards the populace is that it decided to end the FMR on the strength of the justification given by the Chief Minister who accuses the existence of FMR to justify and condone the occurrence of unimaginable violence and crimes committed on a section of the tribals under his watch. To cover up the crimes on ethnic minorities in Manipur, another crime is being manufactured against the ethnic tribals in the whole region around the arbitrary international border in the form of abrogating the FMR and the proposal to erect permanent fencing to divide the indigenous ethnic tribals.

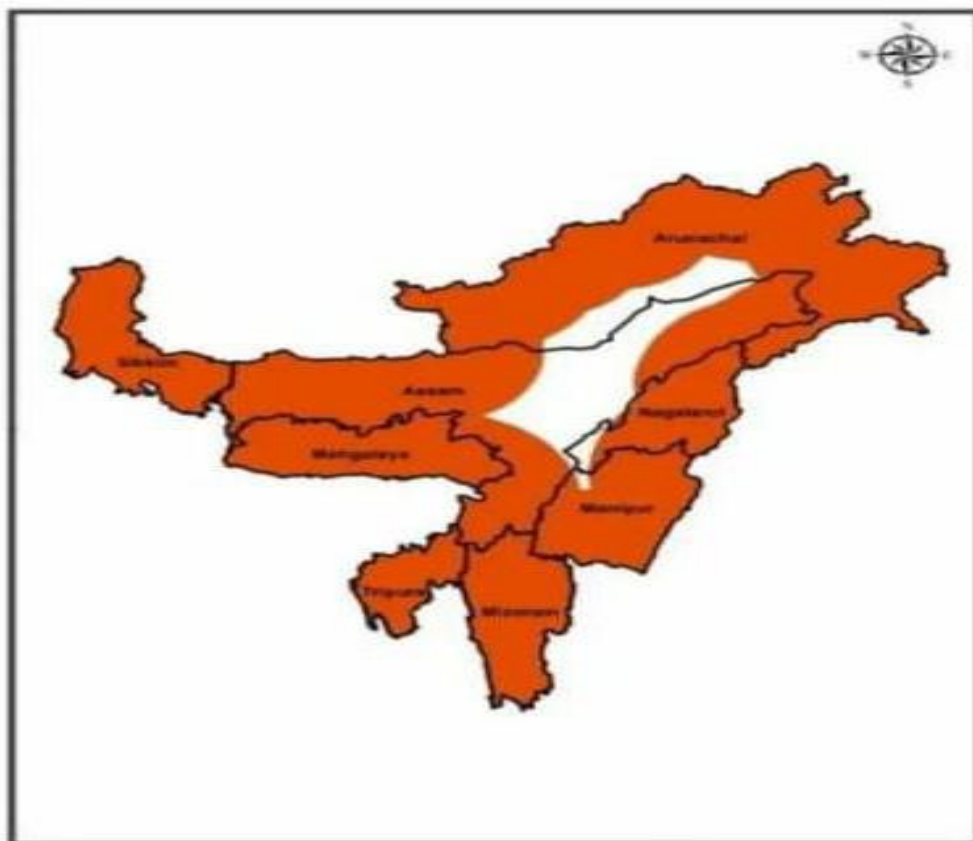
Why should Nagas and other ethnic tribals be punished for Manipur's manufactured crisis? If India wishes to erect a fence on its eastern border in the interest of security, it must do so in Assam bordering the land of the Nagas. This would not only ensure India's security, but also initiate the process of solution to the Indo-Naga conflict.

(d) Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023: The Govt. of India recently passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023. In section 1A, subsection 2 clause (c), which deals with the forest excluded from the purview of protection and thus states, *“The following categories of land shall not be covered under the provisions of this Act, namely:—...such forest land,—(i) as is **situated within a distance of one hundred kilometres along international borders or Line of Control or Line of Actual Control, as the case may be, proposed to be used for construction of strategic linear project of national importance and concerning national security;**”*.

While on one hand the Govt. of India is promoting the conservation of forests, on the other hand it is engaged in amending environmental laws that renders the judiciary powerless to protect the same forest and areas that were once protected under the same law prior to amendment, the reference of 100 km from the present so called international border smacks of malice and will engulf almost all of the present Nagaland, say 98%, and threatens the green forest cover of Nagaland. Such a policy of India is hypocrisy at best and exploitation at worst. A close look at the map of India will reveal that there are hardly any forests bordering the so called national/international border of India except for the ones in the northeast including Nagaland. This law

therefore is specifically crafted to exploit the tribals and the land resources towards the northeast of India, more in particularly to Nagaland by taking away 98% of its Land under this treacherous Act. The referred amendment Act is as below:

THE NEW FOREST CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL (RENAMING THE EXISTING FOREST CONSERVATION ACT TO VAN (SANRAKSHAN EVAM SAMVARDHAN) ADHINIYAM, CONVENIENTLY EXCLUDING THE NON-HINDI SPEAKING POPULATION WHO WILL BE LARGELY AFFECTED BY THIS ACT), THAT WAS RECENTLY PASSED BY THE LOK SABHA, WILL REMOVE THE NEED FOR FOREST CLEARANCE FOR DEFENSE-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN 100KM FROM INTERNATIONAL BORDERS. APART FROM THE OBVIOUS ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS, ONE MAJOR CAUSE FOR CONCERN IS THE FACT THAT THIS BILL WILL ALLOW THE UNION GOVERNMENT FREE ACCESS TO THESE LANDS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES. SIMPLY PUT, THE RIGHTS TO THE LANDS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE. AND ALMOST ALL OF THE NORTHEAST IS WITHIN THIS 100KM BUFFER AREA.



(e) What makes such an act even more suspicious is the thrust by the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) which is a centrally Sponsored Scheme with a mission to acquire additional 6.5 lakh hectares of land for palm oil by 2025-26 so as to raise the area under palm oil cultivation to 10 lakh hectares by 2025-26 and 16.7 lakh hectares by 2029-30.

Although the NMEO-OP may not be a linear project per se, it is apparently a project of national importance and given the poor record of India's tyrannical attitude towards the Nagas, the speculation and apprehension on the potential for acquisition of tribal lands on the pretext of national security interest, for economic exploitation while also devastating the land and water for palm oil cultivation, is not without cause, and not forgetting the close proximity of the edible oil barons to the ruling dispensation. Even though it is an established fact that oil palm is a plant extremely notorious for its excessive requirement of pesticides, chemicals, fertilizers, and huge quantity of water consumption that disrupts the water table and adversely affects the ecosystem beyond redemption, there is an increased push for the cultivation of oil palm in Nagaland.

(f) Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 was passed by the Parliament of India on 11 Dec. 2019. This Act allows people of certain religious community to become citizens of India through an alternative accelerated pathway whereby requirement of naturalization of citizenship was reduced from 12 years to 6 years of residence. India is an over populated country and under the present dispensation is gradually leaning towards a non-secular radical nation that seeks to bring immigrants of selective religious community to grant them citizenship through the CAA. There is a high tendency for these immigrants to be pushed to Nagaland and other states in the northeast of India.

For instance, in 2022, in Nagaland, the month of May alone saw 2.46 lakhs ILP registrations with 1.51 lakh renewals. This is a staggering 3 lakh plus addition into the population demography in just one month alone. This is a regular happening each month. Refer Morung Express dated 24.06.2022. Nagaland is in a very vulnerable position, and in the backdrop of CAA, all the immigrants who are allowed to reside can quickly be relocated into our lands and overwhelm the demography. The CAA is another means by which India tends to destroy the Naga demography and social fabric through Citizenship politics.

India's move to suppress the Nagas through violent as well as non violent means remains exposed. Many project masquerading as development would be thrust to destroy the Naga society and exploit its lands. The Nagas must remain vigilant against India's deceptive aggression. The Indo-Naga conflict is one of the longest conflicts that continue till today. It continues to persist so because India refuses to acknowledge the ground realities of its occupational aggression or its policies of oppression that it continues to perpetrate as recently as the scrapping of FMR and the proposal to erect

fencing, FCAA, CAA, AFSPA, NMEO-OP. Such acts shall only serve to push the wedge of mistrust deeper into the Indo-Naga political conflict that refuses to cease.

The Nagas wishes no enmity with India. It only seeks to be a friendly neighbor and remain free as had always been for ages before independent India was born.

Dated Kohima 16 .05. 2024.

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| 1. Vixepu Swu | 2. Kuolachalie Seyie |
| 3. Pheluophelie Kesiezie | 4. Kekuosetuo Nakhro |
| 5. Rüdolie Nagi | 6. C. Pankathung Lotha |
| 7. Visa Meru Zeliang | 8. Savilie Kruneilie |
| 9. John Lohe | 10. Robert Solo |
| 11. Khevito T Shohe | 12. Tolina Awomi |
| 13. Rokorieno Seyie | 14. Thsepetsolu Lohe |