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P R E S S R E L E A S E

URGENT CALL TO ALL ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS IN MANIPUR

Abide by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions; sign Geneva Call Deeds of Commitment — or lay down arms that terrorise our people

The Manipur International Youth Centre (MIYC) calls on every armed opposition group operating in Manipur — whether under Suspension of Operations (SoO) arrangements, de-facto control, or informal militia structures — to publicly declare their adherence to **Common Article 3** of the Four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and to sign, without delay, the relevant **Deed(s) of Commitment** facilitated by Geneva Call if the group insists its cause is a genuine armed struggle. Those groups that refuse to make and implement such commitments must immediately cease extortion, forced displacement, targeted attacks on civilians, ethnic cleansing and all criminal behaviours that terrorise the people of Manipur.

MIYC issues this appeal because the legitimacy of any political struggle rests not only on its ends but on the means used to pursue them. The continued suffering of ordinary Manipuris — displacement, sexual violence, forced recruitment, extortion, collecting illegal taxes on the highways, seizure of public property and attacks that appear to target civilians on ethnic lines — is intolerable, unlawful, and will forever stain the moral claim of those who practice it. Forced displacement and patterns of violence raise serious questions about compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights norms; such conduct must stop now.

What Common Article 3 requires — why it matters

Common Article 3 is the minimum humanitarian standard the Geneva Conventions require in **non-international armed conflicts**. It obliges *all parties* to conflicts — including organised armed groups — to treat persons not taking part in hostilities humanely and to prohibit certain atrocious acts at all times, including:

1. violence to life and person (murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, torture);
2. taking of hostages;
3. outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; and
4. passing of sentences and carrying out executions without judicial guarantees recognised as indispensable.

These are non-derogable minimum rules designed to protect civilians, detainees and those hors de combat in internal armed conflicts. Common Article 3 therefore provides a legal floor to which every organised armed non-state actor (ANSA) must conform.

Equally, MIYC reminds the Government of India that it has enacted the **Geneva Conventions Act, 1960** to give domestic effect to its international obligations under the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. This legislation is not symbolic—it requires the Indian State, including its armed forces and



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agencies, to respect and enforce the humanitarian protections enshrined in the Conventions. Any deviation, whether through excessive military operations, arbitrary detention, or collective punishment of communities (e.g.; barring the Meiteis from using the national highways after May 3, 2023), constitutes not only a breach of international law but also a violation of India's own statute. MIYC urges India to uphold this law faithfully, ensuring that the treatment of civilians in Manipur and elsewhere is consistent with the fundamental humanitarian principles it has pledged to protect.

Further, India must demonstrate adherence not only through rhetoric but through verifiable compliance: ensuring protection of civilians, prosecuting perpetrators of war crimes, and providing unhindered humanitarian access. Failure to operationalise the Geneva Conventions Act in Manipur undermines both India's international credibility and the universal principles of humanitarian law.

What the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment is — and how it helps

Geneva Call, founded in 2000, offers a practical, legally respectful mechanism for armed non-State actors (ANSA) to publicly pledge to respect specific humanitarian norms that they cannot formally ratify as non-state entities. The Deed of Commitment is not political recognition; it is a unilateral, public undertaking by an armed actor to implement obligations mirroring international law (for example: bans on anti-personnel mines, protection of children in armed conflict, prohibition of sexual violence, protection of health care, and measures to prevent starvation). Deeds are countersigned by Geneva Call and deposited under neutral custody so that commitments are transparent, monitored and verifiable. Where implemented in other contexts, Deeds have reduced civilian harm and provided a pathway toward accountability and humanitarian access.

Our demands — clear, practical, immediate

- 1. Public declaration of Common Article 3 adherence.** Every organised armed group in Manipur must issue a public declaration acknowledging that Common Article 3 applies to the situation in which it operates and commit to full compliance. This declaration should be communicated to Geneva Call, ICRC, neutral humanitarian actors, and to the people of Manipur.
- 2. Signature of appropriate Geneva Call Deed(s) of Commitment.** Where applicable, groups must sign the relevant Deed(s) (e.g., on protection of children, prohibition of sexual violence, health-care protection, prevention of starvation, and/or ban on anti-personnel mines). Signing is a concrete step that translates legal obligations into public, monitored promises.
- 3. Immediate cessation of acts that terrorise civilians.** Stop extortion, forced displacement, hostage-taking, targeted ethnic attacks, destruction of civilian infrastructure, blockade of free movement on national highways and all actions that violate Common Article 3 and human rights norms. Allow safe return and remedy for displaced families.
- 4. End recruitment and use of children.** Immediately release children associated with armed forces and commit to never recruit persons under eighteen (18). Document and cooperate with child protection actors.



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5. **Guarantee humanitarian access and independent monitoring.** Permit neutral humanitarian organisations — and Geneva Call where relevant — to monitor compliance, verify implementation, and assist victims without interference. Transparency is the first step to rebuilding trust.

Why MIYC believes this course is necessary

1. **Moral and legal legitimacy.** A political or national struggle that tolerates mass harm to the population it claims to represent forfeits moral authority. Compliance with Common Article 3 and public Deeds of Commitment restores a measure of legitimacy and protects civilian life.
2. **Practical benefits.** Documented experience from other conflicts shows that when armed groups accept clear, monitored rules they reduce civilian casualties, facilitate humanitarian relief, and open space for political dialogue.
3. **Accountability, not impunity.** MIYC does not seek to shield perpetrators. On the contrary, transparent commitments make it possible to identify violations, name perpetrators, and support criminal or disciplinary processes where warranted. Silence and concealment are the enemies of justice.

A sincere appeal — Turning Principles into Practice

MIYC appeals to those who continue to terrorise civilians: continued violations will deepen the isolation of your cause and harden public rejection. The people of Manipur — Meitei, Kuki, Naga and all communities — will not accept violence dressed as liberation. Any armed group willing to make clear and verifiable humanitarian commitments will find support from civil society. By declaring respect for Common Article 3 and signing the Geneva Call Deeds of Commitment, you demonstrate that your struggle, if genuine, is rooted in the protection of your own people. MIYC pledges to amplify such commitments, encourage monitoring, and advocate for humanitarian access and dialogue.

The path to political emancipation is hard; it is never served by targeting the very communities whose lives and dignity must be preserved. If your struggle is genuine, prove it by the single most credible action you can take: respect the law of war, protect civilians, and sign the Deed(s) of Commitment.

MIYC stands for a Manipur where political aspiration and human dignity are never in conflict. We call on every actor — insurgent and state alike — to choose humanity first.

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