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Documentary Erasure: Sexual Violence, the Politics of Counting, and the Gendering of Ethnic Conflict in Manipur

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Abstract—Feminist scholarship on ethnic conflict has established that women's bodies carry the symbolic weight of communal boundaries, and that wartime sexual violence operates as a strategy of collective humiliation rather than as private criminality. This article argues that symbolic analysis alone cannot explain how gendered harm survives its own public exposure. Drawing on the conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in Manipur since May 2023, it identifies a second mechanism: the documentary regime through which the state records, classifies, and compensates for violence. Of the 6,523 First Information Reports registered by August 2023, eleven concerned crimes against women and children. Ex gratia lists count the dead but hold no category for rape. A 142-day communications blackout removed the channels through which survivors reach police, lawyers and journalists. India appears in no United Nations register of conflict-related sexual violence. The article also reads the May 2023 stripping of two Kuki-Zo women against the Kangla Fort protest of 2004, arguing that perpetrators expropriated a repertoire Manipuri women had themselves built for resistance. It closes with proposals for disaggregated conflict data, gender-specific compensation categories and shutdown exemptions for reporting infrastructure.

Keywords: conflict-related sexual violence; Manipur, ethnic conflict; documentary erasure; intersectionality; Northeast India

I. INTRODUCTION

On 4 May 2023, one day after ethnic violence broke out across Manipur, a mob in Kangpokpi district stripped two Kuki-Zo women, marched them along a public road and assaulted them. India learned of it on 19 July, when a recording of the assault circulated online. Seventy-six days separated the act from its disclosure. The Supreme Court of India would later observe that the First Information Report took fourteen days to reach the register, and that the state police had known of the assault well before the video reached the public. Neither delay was accidental. Each was produced by a working arrangement of policing, communications policy and record-keeping that this article treats as an object of analysis in its own right.

Feminist scholarship offers a well-developed account of why such an assault happens. Women are positioned as bearers of communal honour and as the biological and cultural reproducers of the collective, so violation of a woman reads, within patriarchal grammar, as violation of the community she is made to stand for (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Handrahan, 2004). Rape in ethnic conflict follows a strategic rather than an opportunistic logic (Brownmiller, 1975; Weitsman, 2008). Cockburn (2013) situates the violence of wartime along a continuum that runs through peacetime, combat and reconstruction, so that what happens in an ethnic riot is continuous with what happens in a kitchen. This literature explains motive and meaning with considerable force.

It explains rather little about the aftermath. If wartime sexual violence is symbolically legible, why does public exposure so rarely translate into legal consequences? Manipur is a useful place to press that question, because the exposure was total. The video reached every newspaper in the country, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance, the United Nations issued a

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statement, and the European Parliament debated the conflict. Three years later, the trials arising from those cases have barely moved. Something absorbed the shock.

This article argues for a documentary-absorbing mechanism. States not only allow or encourage violence but also document it, and the categories they document are the ones that count as having occurred. In Manipur, gendered harm was recorded at a fraction of its scale, late, and under headings that could not capture it. Eleven First Information Reports to 6,523 is not a description of the conflict. It is an artefact of the apparatus that produced it. A death with no rape in the compensation schedule is not just a disservice to the survivors; it is a statement, in the state's own numbers, that there was no rape. Prolonged communications outages don't just make it harder for the displaced to communicate; they also cut off the reporting system on which any future count relies.

The argument proceeds in three parts. The first re-reads the May 2023 assault against the backdrop of the July 2004 Kangla Fort protest, when twelve Meitei women stripped outside the headquarters of the Assam Rifles to protest the custodial rape and killing of Thangjam Manorama. The two events share a vocabulary of the exposed female body and invert its politics, revealing how ethnic nationalism raids the archive of local feminist practice. The second part sets out what I call the arithmetic of erasure, using official figures released through the Right to Information Act, Supreme Court orders, and United Nations reporting. The third examines the 142-day internet shutdown as a gendered instrument. A concluding section draws out what follows for feminist conflict theory and for policy.

II. FROM SYMBOLIC BOUNDARY TO DOCUMENTARY REGIME

II.I. WOMEN AS BOUNDARY MARKERS

The proposition that ethnicity is produced through the regulation of women is now settled ground in feminist international relations. Yuval-Davis (1997) showed that national collectivities reproduce themselves biologically, culturally and symbolically through women, making women's sexuality a matter of collective governance rather than individual choice. Handrahan (2004) developed the security implications: ethnicity is created and maintained in part through male control of gender identities, so that women's rights become hostage to contests between men. Enloe (2000) traced the same logic through militarisation, where the soldier's identity is stabilised by a female figure he is understood to defend.

South Asian scholarship has grounded these claims in specific histories. Menon and Bhasin (1998) documented the Partition of 1947, when official estimates recorded 50,000 Muslim women abducted in India and 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women abducted in Pakistan. About 30,000 women were recovered over eight years, of whom 20,728 were Muslim and 9,032 were Hindu and Sikh. The recovery operation itself treated women as property to be returned to the "rightful" country, and in many instances the women's own wishes were ignored in favour of their return to a country that had not yet been determined. Butalia (1998) documented killings carried out by families to prevent their women from falling into the other community. This article makes the link that Banerjee et al. (2004) made: the everyday violence against women in South Asia devalues women's lives in advance, and spectacular communal violence draws on an already existing infrastructure.

II.II. HONOUR, SHAME AND THE EVERYDAY

A second strand concerns the destructive power of sexual violence in South Asian contexts in particular. According to Akpinar (2003), honour in these societies is not an individual moral value but a collective one, held by the family or community and managed through women's behaviour. Shame therefore transfers. An assault on one woman discredits a lineage, which is why the assault is useful to an adversary and why families are complicit in silence afterwards. Akpinar's material concerns migration, not war, but the mechanism she describes is the one on which the perpetrators of war rely.

MacKinnon (1989) takes the argument one step further and denies the distinction between rape and sex. She says that using the term rape violence, not sex, to describe what happened during wartime, maintains the illusion that sex is not always violent. Rape is more accurately seen as a continuum of a society that eroticises male supremacy, where what occurs during war is an

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exaggeration of what occurs during peace. When applied to Manipur, this reading does not allow the Kangpokpi assault to be interpreted as a mob run amok. The mob was able to draw on the repertoire of humiliation that was already present in the culture to which it belonged.

Banerjee et al. (2004) supply the connective tissue. Dowry deaths, honour killings and domestic violence create, in advance and in peacetime, a rule that women's bodies are not their own. That arrangement is then activated on a large scale by communal violence. The authors refer to the Punjabi saying ‘zar, zan, zameen’ (gold, woman, land), all forms of property, to demonstrate the full extent of women's assimilation to the category of the possessable. Fernandes (2014) makes the following methodological point: gender in South Asia cannot be analysed through universalist feminist models but must be situated in colonial modernity, nationalist reform and the postcolonial state, all of which recruited women as bearers of cultural authenticity. Read together, this strand implies that ethnic conflict does not introduce a gendered logic. It inherits one and puts it to work.

II.III. STRATEGIC RAPE AND ITS CRITICS

A parallel body of work established that wartime rape is instrumental. Brownmiller (1975) argued that wartime rape communicates among men, using women as the medium. Salzman (1998) analysed the Bosnian rape camps as an instrument of ethnic cleansing, and Snyder et al. (2006) documented the systematic organisation behind them. Weitsman (2008) showed how assumptions about the heritability of ethnicity shaped policies of forced impregnation, with the same act serving opposing demographic purposes in patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Card (2008) analysed the resulting paradox for the victim, whose survival is instrumentalised. Carpenter (2000) noted early that the discourse of genocidal rape had obscured the children it produced.

Buss (2009) has since questioned how far the weapon-of-war frame can travel. Treating rape as a strategy, she argues, privileges the cases where a command structure can be shown and leaves the diffuse, opportunistic and locally organised violence of communal riots poorly theorised. It also encourages a focus on prosecutable individual acts at the expense of the conditions that make such acts routine. Manipur sits precisely in this gap. The assaults were carried out by mobs, not battalions. No order has been produced. The state disclaims responsibility while its own police force has divided along ethnic lines. The weapon-of-war frame captures the symbolism and misses the machinery.

II.IV. THE DOCUMENTARY TURN

The framework I propose treats the state’s recording practices as constitutive rather than descriptive. Four instruments do most of the work. The First Information Report determines whether an event enters the criminal justice system, and its registration depends on a police officer who may share the accused’s ethnicity. The relief camp register determines who is displaced and, by omission, what happened to them before displacement. The ex gratia schedule prices injuries and, in doing so, enumerates which injuries the state recognises. The communications order determines whether testimony can circulate while it is still fresh.

None of these instruments is gender-neutral, nor is any usually read as an instrument of gendered power. Yet their combined effect in Manipur has produced an official account of the conflict in which sexual violence accounts for less than one per cent of the record. That figure then circulates, appearing in status reports, parliamentary answers, and international assessments. The erasure becomes evidence. McDuie-Ra (2012) argued that violence against women in India’s militarised frontier is routinely explained away by reference to culture, which displaces attention from the institutions that produce impunity. The documentary lens follows that displacement to its source.

III. SOURCES AND METHOD

This is a qualitative study based on documentary analysis of publicly available material, not on fieldwork with survivors. Four sets of source material are used. The first includes official records, such as figures released by the Manipur Home Department under the Right to Information Act, the Supreme Court of India's orders and observations in its suo motu proceedings, and notifications issued by the state government suspending telecommunication services. The second comprises institutional

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reporting by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the United Nations Secretary-General's annual reports on conflict-related sexual violence, and the International Crisis Group. The third consists of Indian journalism throughout the period, focusing on publications with continuous coverage rather than episodic reporting. The fourth comprises the peer-reviewed scholarship cited above.

The approach has both a weakness and an advantage. It is based on records, and therefore cannot recover the voices of the survivors themselves, and it can also reproduce the silences it examines. Survivor testimony has always been the basis of knowledge here, as feminist research has long maintained. The power is that the record itself is the object of study. Survivor testimony cannot see from the inside the classification work that is revealed by reading official documents against one another and against the events they purport to describe. When figures differ across sources, I state the range and the source of each figure, rather than picking the most impressive one.

Three further limitations should be stated plainly. First, an argument about undercounting cannot establish the true figure it claims is missing; the analysis shows that the official count is implausible, not what a plausible count would be. Second, the conflict is ongoing, so figures released in 2026 will be revised. Third, the analysis treats the two communities asymmetrically because the documented pattern of sexual violence in this conflict is asymmetrical. However, the absence of a record cuts both ways, and Meitei survivors of sexual violence are equally invisible in the ex gratia schedule. The argument concerns the apparatus, not the moral standing of either community.

IV. THE CONFLICT AND ITS OFFICIAL RECORD

Violence erupted on 3 May 2023, following a tribal solidarity march in the hill districts, held in response to a Manipur High Court direction on Scheduled Tribe status for the Meitei community. Within weeks, the state had partitioned along a line of checkpoints and buffer zones separating the Meitei-majority Imphal valley from the Kuki-Zo hills. Both communities armed themselves, largely with weapons taken from state armouries; by October 2023, an estimated 6,000 weapons and 600,000 rounds of ammunition had been removed from police stores.

Government figures placed the death toll at 258 by November 2024, with more than 1,100 injured and over 60,000 displaced. Roughly 4,800 houses were burned, and some 386 religious structures were damaged. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2024) recorded 67,000 conflict displacements in Manipur during 2023, out of 69,000 across South Asia, meaning a single Indian state accounted for 97 per cent of the region's conflict displacement that year. Three years on, the state Home Department reported 174 relief camps still operating in March 2026 and 731 deaths among displaced persons living in camps and prefabricated housing since the violence began, with Churachandpur recording 248 of them. Disclosures made under the Right to Information Act in April 2026 recorded 7,894 houses destroyed and 2,646 partially destroyed, and 217 deaths compensated through ex gratia payment to next of kin.

These numbers are detailed. They are also, on the question this article asks, almost silent. Table 1 sets the two registers side by side.

Table 1: What the official record of the Manipur conflict counts and does not count

Domain	Enumerated in official records	Not enumerated
Mortality	258 deaths (Nov 2024); 217 ex gratia payments to next of kin; 731 deaths in relief camps by 2026	Deaths of survivors of sexual violence; cause of death disaggregated by sex

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Displacement	60,000+ displaced; 174 relief camps (Mar 2026); 3,000 prefabricated houses	Sex disaggregation; circumstance of flight; women-headed displaced households
Property	7,894 houses destroyed; 2,646 partially destroyed; 386 religious structures damaged	Loss of land or livelihood held in women's names
Criminal process	6,523 FIRs; 5,101 arson cases; 252 arrests; 12,740 preventive detentions	Sexual violence beyond the 11 FIRs and 17 CBI cases; complaints refused registration
Compensation	Death and property loss under standing schedules	Sexual violence as an enumerated category of injury

Source: Compiled by the author from Government of Manipur disclosures under the Right to Information Act (2026), orders of the Supreme Court of India (2023) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2024).

The asymmetry is the finding. Displacement figures are reported by district and by camp but not by sex, making it impossible to determine from official data how many of the 60,000 displaced are women, how many head households, or how many left home after an assault. The record is granular for property and mortality but blank for gendered injury. A researcher working only from government sources would conclude that the Manipur conflict was a crisis of arson and displacement in which women were incidentally present.

V. AN EXPROPRIATED REPERTOIRE: KANGLA 2004 AND KANGPOKPI 2023

On 11 July 2004, the body of Thangjam Manorama Devi was found near Imphal, hours after personnel of the 17 Assam Rifles removed her from her home on suspicion of insurgent links. The post-mortem revealed gunshot wounds to her genitals and injuries consistent with rape. On 15 July, twelve women of the Meira Paibi, most in their sixties and seventies, gathered outside the Kangla Fort headquarters of the Assam Rifles, removed their clothes, and held banners reading 'Indian Army Rape Us' and 'Take Our Flesh'.

The protest has been analysed at length. Bora (2010) reads the gesture as a claim addressed to a state that has forfeited its protective pretensions, made in a register the state cannot answer. Misri (2011) examines the political motherhood through which the protesters authorised themselves, and the patriarchal idiom of maternal authority that made the gesture legible. Basnet (2019) considers the act of stripping the body a counterpublic act, in which the state's tool of humiliation is turned into a tool of accusation. Despite their differences, these readings agree on the essential move. The women turned the semiotics of the exposed female body, used by the security apparatus against Manorama, outwards.

In Kangpokpi, 19 years later, a mob repeated the same act with the polarity inverted. Two Kuki-Zo women were stripped, exposed on a road in front of a crowd, and recorded. The recording was the goal. Where the imas were showing themselves to indict an audience, the mob was showing the women to make an audience and circulated the evidence so that a community should know what had been done to its own.

I want to call this relation by its right name, for it can be sentimentalised easily. It is not a tale of a feminist tradition betrayed. It is a tale of the fragility of protest repertoires. A repertoire of contention is public by construction. Its meaning requires shared recognition, and that recognition is open to all within the shared culture, including those with the opposite intention. The Manipur body in 2004 said: you have already violated us; there is nothing more to threaten. By 2023, the exposed body in Manipur may

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also signify: We have violated you, and everyone knows it. The second meaning did not replace the first but parasitised it. The gesture was charged precisely because the area had been "legible" for two decades.

This is an observation to amend a standard claim in the literature. Feminist analysis typically views women's embodied resistance as an alternative to the symbolic economy that treats women's bodies as communal property, a step outside it. The Manipur sequence suggests that resistance operates within that economy and can be recaptured by it. Cockburn's continuum of violence describes a temporal line running from peacetime through war. What Kangla and Kangpokpi describe is a continuum of signification: the same act, the same body, the same public, redirected. Any account of women's agency in conflict that does not reckon with this reversibility will overstate what the gesture secures.

VI. The Arithmetic of Erasure

By August 2023, the state of Manipur had informed the Supreme Court that it had registered 6,523 First Information Reports related to the violence, along with 5,101 cases of arson, 252 arrests, and 12,740 preventive detentions. Of these 6,523 reports, eleven concerned violence against women and children. The Court subsequently directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to take over seventeen such cases.

Eleven of 6,523 is 0.17 per cent. Placed alongside what is known about sexual violence in comparable conflicts, the figure is not credible as a description of events. Weitsman (2008) records that up to ninety per cent of surviving Tutsi women experienced some form of sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide, with estimates of those raped ranging from 250,000 to 500,000. Estimates for Bosnia run into the tens of thousands (Salzman, 1998; Snyder et al., 2006). At Partition, official estimates alone recorded 83,000 abducted women across the two dominions, and rehabilitation workers considered that figure conservative (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). The United Nations Security Council (2026) verified 9,788 cases of conflict-related sexual violence across twenty-one countries during 2025, more than double the 4,617 cases verified for 2024, with women and girls constituting the overwhelming majority of victims in both years. Every one of those reports states that the verified figures represent only a fraction of the incidence.

The comparison should be handled carefully. Manipur is smaller in scale than Rwanda or Bosnia, and no responsible reading would transfer their ratios to it. The point is not that Manipur must have produced a specific number of assaults. It is that no conflict that displaced 60,000 people, burned nearly 8,000 houses, and generated 6,523 criminal complaints has ever, anywhere, produced sexual violence in eleven incidents. The figure describes a register, not a population. What follows sets out the four mechanisms that produced it, each requiring a different remedy.

VI.I. ETHNIC CAPTURE OF THE REGISTERING AUTHORITY

An FIR is registered by a police officer. In Manipur, the police force was divided along the same lines as the population, with Meitei personnel withdrawing to the valley and Kuki-Zo personnel to the hills. A survivor from one community seeking registration against members of the other faced an officer with an ethnic interest in the outcome. The Supreme Court itself observed significant delays between the commission of grave offences and the registration of even zero FIRs. Where the registering authority is captured, the register measures the capture, not the crime.

VI.II. CATEGORY UNAVAILABILITY

The ex-gratia schedule recognises death by paying the next of kin. It has no line for rape. Compensation for survivors exists in Indian law under Section 357A of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the associated victim compensation schemes. The Supreme Court expressly empowered the Justice Gita Mittal Committee to direct the state on assessment and disbursal. But a discretionary remedy administered by a committee is not the same as an enumerated category in a standing schedule. The first produces individual awards. The second produces a count.

VI.III. TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT

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The fourteen-day delay between the Kangpokpi assault and the FIR, and the seventy-six-day delay before the public is made aware of it, are not merely delays in justice. They alter what can be recorded. Medical evidence degrades. Witnesses are transferred to camps in other districts. When a report is registered, the incident competes with everything that has transpired since then for investigators' attention. Delay is a form of filtering technology.

VI.IV. INTERNATIONAL INVISIBILITY

The United Nations Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence covers designated situations of concern, twenty-one in the most recent cycle (United Nations Security Council, 2026). India is not among them, so Manipur appears in no international register of conflict-related sexual violence, however extensively it may be reported in the Indian press. The listing mechanism was designed for situations where a state has collapsed or an international mission is deployed. Its unintended consequence is that gendered violence in the internal conflicts of consolidated democracies falls outside the principal global instrument for counting it. Manipur is thus minimised domestically and invisible internationally, and each absence corroborates the other.

The cumulative effect deserves a name. Erasure here is not a euphemism for denial. Denial contests a claim. Erasure removes the conditions under which a claim can be made, and it does so through ordinary administrative competence. Each of the four mechanisms is a routine feature of Indian criminal procedure and international reporting practice. None was designed to conceal sexual violence. Together, they perform concealment with a reliability that a deliberate policy would struggle to match.

VII. INFORMATIONAL ENCLOSURE

Manipur's internet shutdown began on 3 May 2023, in the immediate aftermath of the violence, following an earlier shutdown on 28 April in Churachandpur and Pherzawl. The blanket suspension lasted 142 days, ending on 23 September. Three days of access followed. Mobile services were then suspended again, and restrictions continued in some form until 3 December 2023. It was the longest shutdown in India that year and the longest ever imposed in the Northeast. Broadband was restored earlier than mobile data, which mattered little in a state where the overwhelming majority of users access the internet through a phone.

Communications shutdowns are usually assessed as restrictions on expression and commerce. Read through the documentary lens, they are also instruments of gendered impunity for three reasons.

First, the reporting chain for sexual violence in a partitioned state is digital. A Kuki-Zo survivor in a hill camp cannot walk into a valley police station. All that's left is a call to a lawyer, a message to a relief worker, a picture of an injury or a recording. All of these were eliminated by the shutdown. The direct result is the Kangpokpi video that surfaced in July, not May, because the blackout prevented circulation at the time when circulation would have compelled early registration.

Second, shutdowns have differential impacts on genders. Access to a household phone is not equal in India and during displacement, this inequality becomes more pronounced as men are more likely to retain phones when they are working or negotiating. This means that a total ban on mobile data is a disproportionate limitation on women's rights compared to men in the same camp, even though there is no official order to that effect.

Third, the legal standard was inaccessible and not met. In the case of Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020), the Supreme Court held that the suspension of the internet must be of the shortest possible duration, subject to regular review, and that any such interference must be necessary and proportionate. The Manipur orders were issued under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services Rules, which is valid for five days at a time and is extended on a monthly basis. The state's excuse was to avoid misinformation, which really meant to slow down the evidentiary process in a battle with the state's police.

The word enclosure is the correct term. The commons being enclosed is testimonial. Enclosure does not mean the end of speech (the survivors still spoke), but the end of the manner in which speech becomes record.

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VIII. ETHNICISED POLITICAL MOTHERHOOD AND THE LIMITS OF WOMEN'S COLLECTIVES

In this account, the Meira Paibi are in a complex situation. They started off with activities around alcohol prohibition and neighbourhood patrolling in the late 1970s and by 2004 were the most visible women's group in the Northeast of India. In the current conflict, there have been credible reports of members blocking security convoys, hampering relief operations to Kuki-Zo areas, and in some cases, even supporting mob activities. According to the International Crisis Group (2025), the group had a positive image overall, prior to their recent participation in the current conflict.

It's easy to read this as a fall from grace, but one should not do this as it obscures a more fundamental structural point. The authority of the Meira Paibi was not a generic feminist authority, but it was maternal authority, which was given on behalf of the community, the Meitei community. Misri (2011) shows the imas of Kangla drew their power from their role as mothers, and motherhood was also a patriarchal role. Bora (2010) situates the movement in a political context, as the Meitei community's grievance was not about gender alone, but about their relationship with the Indian state.

Political motherhood inherently lends itself to ethnic mobilisation. Any group that states it represents the mothers of a certain people may be asked at any time which people they are referring to. In peaceful times, this question hardly comes up, as the community seems to encompass the entire population. But, in the case of ethnic partition, this question becomes an immediate one and the partition itself gives the answer. In Manipur, it was not a feminist movement giving up its principles, but a maternal authority based movement for a defined community acting as one would expect when the boundary was consolidated.

This affects the field's understanding of women's collective agency in conflict. Handrahan (2004) and Cockburn (2013) point out that women are often not included in formal peace negotiations, but are recognized as informal peace makers. The Manipur example shows that informal women's groups are not necessarily good peace resources, and their asserted authority shapes their response in times of crisis. Layered victimhood can be understood through Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality, as Kuki-Zo women are marginalised as women, tribal minorities and as displaced persons. The other aspect is shown by the Meira Paibi. Intersecting identities affect power and vulnerability and a common gender identity does not necessarily lead to support between ethnic groups.

IX. DISCUSSION

Three implications follow for feminist conflict scholarship.

The first focus is on the subject of analysis. Symbolic explanations of wartime sexual violence explain why it happens and what it means, but fail to explain how it continues to exist after disclosure. The Manipur case shows that impunity is created after the fact, for example, by registering, categorising, compensating, and communicating. While these processes are routine, they are also the ones that cause long-lasting damage. They are much more easily changed than the patriarchal meanings that are in the first place the source of the violence.

The second issue relates to whether resistance can be reversed. The difference between Kangla and Kangpokpi is 19 years and a change of address. Embodied protest is good, as feminist theory celebrates it, but the praise needs to be qualified. There is a common symbolic repertoire that is powerful in that shared economy and can be redirected.

The third concern is the geographical distribution of international attention. The instruments measuring conflict-related sexual violence are tailored to certain conflicts and are not able to measure internal ethnic violence in stable democracies. In these states, where judicial systems are in place, the press is free, and there is no foreign interference, there can be widespread gendered violence that is not widely reported internationally. Buss (2009) warned that the weaponisation of conflict is a way of framing conflict that tends to overemphasise visible command structures, thereby creating a reporting blind spot. Manipur is a case in point within this framework.

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X. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Administrative erasure can be an administrative remedy. Based on the analysis, four measures are proposed:

Registration should not be dependent on a local officer whose ethnicity is not accepted. Rather, third-party registration by the designated officers of another state, as later ordered by the Supreme Court in the case of Manipur, should be available from the very beginning of an ethnic conflict, not after protracted litigation. Routine registration via courts, legal services authorities or magistrates should be the norm, not the exception.

Sexual violence should be an accepted type of injury in compensation schedules, and it should be given a specific award, similar to death and property damage. The main purpose isn't the financial aspect. Rather, a schedule serves as a record-keeping device, and if an injury is not listed, then it is not counted.

State and central authorities should disaggregate conflict data by sex, and displacement data should be captured as part of the process of flight. If the conflict is not disaggregated, the gendered structure of the conflict cannot be determined from official sources, but can only be inferred from journalism.

Communications suspension orders should contain a default exemption for communications of infrastructure, including emergency helplines, legal aid services, and designated channels for reporting sexual violence. The constitutional test is articulated by Anuradha Bhasin; what is required is an operational carve-out that remains effective after the proportionality assessment.

XI. CONCLUSION

On 4 May 2023 in Kangpokpi, two Kuki-Zo women were publicly stripped and faced two separate assaults. The first attack was in the afternoon when a mob attacked. For the next three years, they faced more trauma as they were subjected to routine procedures that were not geared towards them. They were not registered in a police register for 14 days, and their complaint was ignored. There was a compensation schedule without headings to show what had been done to them. They had a communications order in place to prevent their accounts from being shared, and an international reporting system was not appropriate for their country. Finally, the official report of the three-year conflict counted gendered violence as less than one-sixth of one per cent of all criminal cases.

This article argues that the second attack should be treated as seriously as the first and that feminist conflict scholarship has the resources to respond to the attack. The symbolic economy, in which women's bodies are made into communal boundaries, remains the necessary point of departure. The Kangla sequence demonstrates how comprehensively this economy controls even acts designed to evade it. However, symbolism alone does not account for a figure such as eleven out of 6,523. This figure was generated through procedures, and procedures are subject to revision.

Manipur is not an anomaly within the pattern of ethnic conflict; the Partition of 1947, Bosnia, and Rwanda exemplify this pattern, and Manipur mirrors it. What Manipur contributes is a demonstration that a constitutional democracy, equipped with a functioning press, an activist Supreme Court, and abundant public outrage, can still produce an official record in which the gendered violence of its own conflict is scarcely visible. If such a situation is feasible here, then the global tally of conflict-related sexual violence is likely underestimating the phenomenon by a margin that no methodological caveat in a United Nations report currently represents.

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