

Intervention on Agenda Item No. 4 : Human Rights

By : Neingulo Krome, Executive Member, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, at the 11th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Headquarters, New York. May 15, 2012.

Mr. Chairman, respected Members of the Permanent Forum, distinguished dignitaries of the United Nations, indigenous brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen,

Six weeks ago, when **Mr. Christof Heyns, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions** came to our part of the world at Guwahati on the 28th of March 2012, I said on the record that more than 300,000 Nagas have died as a result of the Indo – Naga conflict since the 1950s. And I said this in the back-drop of a petition I filed in December 2010 under the Right to Information Act (RTI) on behalf of Amnesty International to verify if any person or persons were judicially executed or awarded Capital Punishment in Nagaland and the subsequent response of the State Government that there is no record of any Judicial killing or Capital Punishment in the entire state of Nagaland, goes to say that all the killings that took place were either extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. This is the basic human rights situation for over 60 years now in the Naga areas of North-East India and Eastern Naga areas of Burma (Myanmar) which I am relating to you not with anger or hatred, but merely stating it as a *“matter of fact”* and maybe to also say that we have stopped counting since the above-mentioned figures are that of what was recorded in late 1970s.

Mr. Heyns who was allowed to visit only 5 states in India, namely: Gujarat; Kerala; Jammu and Kashmir, Assam; and West Bengal, on his Country Mission to India released a 9-page report to the media on the eve of his departure from India after taking into accounts the numerous cases of gross violations of human rights by various state actors, perpetrated under the “Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958, mentioned; *“ A law such as AFSPA has no role to play in a democracy and should be scrapped. The repeal of this law will not only bring domestic law more in line with international standards, but also send out a powerful message that instead of a military approach the government is committed to respect for the right to life of all people of the country.”*

Having said that, I want to share once again that the Government of India have signed “Ceasefire Agreements” with leaders of Naga Political groups and have been holding political negotiations at the Prime Ministerial level for almost 15 years now which is filled with all kinds of anticipations as well as speculations. But the question is; is the Government of India sincere to its commitment to solve the problem through peaceful negotiation for which the Ceasefires were entered into? Or is it just buying time to prepare itself to strike again? And from what we can analyze through some of the actions and attitudes in the recent times indicates that “sincerity” seems to have taken the back seat. But as far as the Naga leaders are concerned, I do not hesitate to say that they have sacrificed whatever they can, swallowing their pains and prides for the sake of the people on the ground to create space for all kinds of provocative attitudes towards reasoning, which often is sadly seen as “going weak”. Unless proved otherwise, this kind of attitudes cannot take any kind of peace processes forward.

On the other hand, our experience have also taught us that divisions within struggling people has always been the biggest problem towards realization of our aspirations, because of the many advantages it gives to adversaries and the undeniable disadvantages it creates for ourselves. And likewise, for about 30 years, we have seen how our own people became our own obstacle. And so not to be outdone by our own internal contradictions, Nagas have initiated a reconciliation process amongst themselves calling it “A Journey of Common Hope”. This process which started in 2008 has almost fulfilled the purposes for which it has been initiated, but sadly seen by Government of India as a “Potential Threat” rather than seeing it through “common eyes” and understanding that it is for the “common good”.

Mr. Chair, I will conclude with the “cover story” of our human rights situation and to say that, Nagas like all other indigenous peoples of the world are only struggling for their legitimate and inborn right to self-determination; and that it is only my humble privilege to take this opportunity to share my solidarity with all struggling Indigenous communities in this forum. At the same time and with all due respect I cannot help but implore upon this august house to say that this forum has grown over the decades from that of a mere Working Group to that of an Expert Mechanism and a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations. And also to assert that it has “come of age” to be a forum that can also ACT ON and not just LISTEN ON, for posterity to remember that the pioneering Indigenous leaders in the United Nations did not fail in their time to safeguard and protect the welfare of the future and upcoming Indigenous generations although we also acknowledge that much has been done and achieved, but not enough yet to be able to say that we have redressed past conquest which is the basic minimum requirement to restore our humanity.

Thank you and Kuknalim !