

COSW DEPLORES THE USE OF VIOLENCE IN THE INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN MANIPUR, INDIA, AND ESPECIALLY THE TARGETTED ILL-TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN THAT CONFLICT AND IN OTHER CONFLICTS AROUND THE WORLD

As Commonwealth women's affairs ministers end their meeting in The Bahamas (21-23 August 2023), the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) draws attention to evidence from several conflicts around the world of the targeted abuse of women, including rape, as a conscious strategy of conflict. Using attacks on women to demoralize or destroy a national or cultural group is deplorable. Such ill-treatment is an abuse of human rights and a war crime and should be investigated with the full force of the law.

COSW joins many other organisations in India and around the world to express profound concern at the inter-communal violence taking place over several weeks in the state of Manipur, in the east of India. The ill-treatment and abuse of women, including rape, which has been widely reported¹, is especially disturbing.

COSW condemns the use of hate speech in social media, public statements and in other situations, which appears to be increasing all around the world. Encouraging hatred of vulnerable groups, including the overt and covert encouragement of violence against them, is a breach of basic decency, and of humanitarian values and international conventions, including the Commonwealth values and principles.

COSW calls on the parties in Manipur and in other conflicts to engage in confidence building and dialogue as a way to end violence and conflict. We call on international organisations to support mediation and to promote and facilitate dialogue. COSW calls on the Commonwealth institutions and Women's Affairs Ministers to challenge and condemn hate speech and to make full use of national and international law. Those who abuse women, whether through actions or hate speech, must be brought to justice. **ENDS**

Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work

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NOTE FOR EDITORS: COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers. This statement can be found on the COSW website www.cosw.info/news

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¹ See for example Manipur violence: What is happening and why – BBC 20 July 2023
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-66260730>