

# Effects of the Insurgency activities on the people as well as the Nokmas, Village Council and Village Leaders of Garo Hills, Meghalaya

## Abstract

Today we find that the whole world is worried about the activities of various insurgent/ terrorist groups threatening peace, security and peaceful co-existence. Insurgency in North – East India first started in Naga Hills District of Assam in the early part of post independent era. In North East in general and Garo Hills of Meghalaya in particular, the insurgent groups have created an environment of insecurity on the lives of the people. Some of the expressions of insurgency activities are killing, kidnapping, demanding of money and even bombing of some public places like markets or stations. This study will try to examine and highlight the activities as indicated in the title.

**Keywords:** Activities, Insurgent, Worried, People, Insecurity.

## Introduction

The motive behind the emergence of insurgency groups in Meghalaya is to fight for the independent as well as to protect the indigenous settlers. The non-indigenous settlers coming from various parts of India and the rampant unchecked foreigners coming to settle in Garo Hills have been the sources of fear among the indigenous people. The negligence both by the state and the Central Government particularly for the youths has given rise to a sense of deprivation and exclusion. The fear of identity in the midst of non-indigenous as well as fear of being reduced to minority like that of state of Tripura, growing corruption and so on, prompted the indigenous youths to form militant groups hoping to get protected through arms struggle. Even within state, the Garos feel that they are ill-treated and discriminated by the Khasis and the Jaintias socially, politically and economically. For that reason they desired to carve out of Meghalaya as an independent separate 'A'chik State'. But we have seen and experienced that such separation is not possible through arm struggle. The Militant groups so formed do not have clear political ideology and vision. They are also deviating away from their main objectives and goals. Hence they lost the support of the people.

## Aims of the study

1. To examine the effects of insurgency activities on the life of the people of Garo Hills
2. To highlight the effect of insurgency on Nokmas, Village Council and Village Leaders of Garo Hills, Meghalaya

As we know that hopes have been expressed in many quarters that with the formation of the State of Meghalaya, development process will take in all parts of the state. The political leaders have fore told of sea changes in the development process through proper management of all the means of resources such as natural resources and human resources as well. However, all these expectations were belied and the State still remain backward and excluded from this development process taking place in rests of the country. It must be noted that political leaders particularly in Garo Hills have failed much in their obligation and duties. Though Garo Hills have produces stalwarts and popular political leaders such as Captain Willimson A. Sangma, the first C.M of Meghalaya and P. A Sangma, the former Lok Sabha Speaker as a matter of the fact almost all Chief Ministers of the State were from Garo Hills, even the present Dr. Mukul Sangma belongs to Garo Hills, surprisingly Garo Hills remained backward when we compare with counterpart of Khasi and Jaintia Hills of the State. The fact is quite clear that almost all political leaders of Garo Hills failed miserably to



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do justice, to bring development and progress in their respective constituencies. So in the absence of development, poverty and job opportunities is comparatively less, the educated youth in particular were having a kind of social exclusion and frustrations which were manifested in movements such as peaceful means as well as violence means.

#### **Effects of Insurgent Activities**

Garro Hills is noted for natural beauty and rich in mineral wealth if exploited properly it would bring about development to the whole region. Garro Hills is also known for natural vegetations and very rich in forest resources such as timber, rubber, lac, etc. If peace prevails in the region it would have sustained the livelihood of people to a large extent. Though in the early year's peace and tranquillity prevailed in Garro Hills, however, in the last three decades, the insurgent groups have reign supreme and convert it into an unsafe region where the outsiders hesitate to come.

The emergence of insurgency in Garro Hills has affected the law and order. It has really affected the governmental machinery to maintain law and order. Business houses, traders, contractors, government officials were served demand notes if not comply with dire consequences they have to face. So in this way it has affected the economy of the whole region. Developmental fund which is supposed to develop the region got diverted into the purse of the outfits. It is a common knowledge that one insurgency group emerge one after another. The reason behind is due to easy money making. In the absence of job opportunities, insurgency is like a flourishing industry which provides alternative employment. Unemployed youths in most occasions are attracted to them. The situation becomes unpredictable and worse day by day as many youths join the outfit. It is imperative to mention here that because of the above mentioned factors insurgency is growing. According to the newspaper reports killing, kidnapping and abduction of children/businessmen, contractors, government officials for ransom happen frequently.

The effect of insurgency is not touching only to the rich people, government officials, business men etc but it has affected the leaders of the villages as well. Most of the time the traditional leaders such as Nokma, Sardar, Head man, executive members of the villages in Garro Hills are the most sufferers in the sense that they are the target point in the remote areas/villages. If they are not complied with their demands or orders they have to face the consequence. In most occasions the Nokmas/Sardars/Headman etc. are harassed, kidnapped and sometimes lost their lives in case they are suspect as police informer or cooperate with the police/government. It so happened also if they refused/failed to provide food and shelter in their houses or villages they are beaten up by them and sometimes at gun point they are targeted.

Consequently the traditional leaders in the interior villages had faced lots of problems of insurgent activities in to the region. In such a critical situation, some Nokmas/Sardars/Headman etc have left their villagers in search for a safe place.

#### **Probable Recommendations and Conclusion**

To bring back the normalcy in Garro Hills the youths must be properly utilized in nation-building activities. If the human resource is properly utilised particularly the youth of today will be asset of tomorrow. For that I would like to suggest some measures for proper utilization of human resources particularly of Garro Hills :-

1. Children must be given proper education from the grass root level onwards. More colleges and Technical Educational Institutions needed to be set up so that youths of today can equip themselves with technical know-how. This will definitely change their mind sets and they will not only depend on government jobs but can outside to work in private enterprises or set up their own firms.
2. Garro Hills need Industrialization which can help in absorbing the youths. Government must take initiative to attract and bring big Industrialists to invest and set up industries on the basis of locally available resources.
3. Government must have the policy to establish small-scale and cottage industries to encourage the unemployed youths to be employed and earn their livelihood.
4. The youth must be given proper training so that they can start new industries, business centres, etc of their own.
5. It is undeniable fact that political solution is also the ultimate solution and political good – will is required to tackling the problems. If all the political parties of Garro Hills sit together and take definite programme and plan of action in solving insurgency problems, there is strong hope for amicable solution.
6. Another important point to be noted here is that Government of Meghalaya must give scope to the surrendered extremists for a proper rehabilitation and other financial benefits. In this way different groups will be growing at very short intervals to get the benefits offer by government with the good intention of bringing them to the main stream.
7. Looking at the formation of different insurgent groups within a few period of time in Garro Hills, it is an urgent time and right time on the part of the state and central governments to win the militants from both sides. It should not encourage or use one in order to neutralise another. This will be a self defeating step.
8. The insurgency problems in Garro Hills should be given priority and serious attention otherwise the theory of 'son of the soil' will break the ideal of federal government which constitutes one of the basic pillars of Indian Constitution.
9. Last but not the least to curb the menace of insurgency problem, the NGOs and religious institutions of Garro Hills can play as mediators between the insurgent groups and the government in the sense that through their peace methods – dialogue, reconciliation, counselling, etc they can provide important avenues to bring them back to the negotiable table. Of course,

some NGOs like Shalom Meghalaya, United Christian Peace forum (UCPF), etc have come forward to tackle this problem. However, not much success has been achieved in this direction. Therefore, to bring development and progress in Garo Hills, ensuring peace and security is the prerequisite conditions.

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