



NORTH EAST CATHOLIC RESEARCH FORUM
C/O NECCOD , Yusuf Sadan, 1 Ashok Place,
Gole DakKhana, New Delhi - 110001.
web:www.necarf.org, Email:info@necarf.org

New Delhi,
December 10, 2021

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

Sub: A Clarion Call for Repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA)

Dear Modi ji,

At the outset, the North East Catholic Research Forum (NECARF), would like to express heartfelt condolence at the shocking and untimely demise of India's first and most decorated Chief of Defense Staff, Late Gen. Bipin Rawat, and along with him, his dear wife and 12 other officers following a helicopter crash at Coonoor in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu. We grieve with the Nation and hope and pray the Nation will come to terms with this harsh and bitter reality, sooner than later.

That Modi ji, we have been closely following your strategic and far-reaching foreign policy and programmes across several countries. We follow your charismatic leadership at the United Nations and COP26, and most recently, your meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican, very closely. The pace and momentum of image building and striking new deals and bilateral agreements with Nations have been unprecedented. As members of an organization consisting of mature, responsible, and conscious citizens, we wish you and the country well.

We also come to you today, in the backdrop of the most horrendous and incomprehensible Oting incident in Mon District, Nagaland. At least six innocent youth in the prime of their age, returning from rat hole coal mining work in a pick-up truck, were shot dead and two severely injured, reportedly, by 21 Para (Special Forces), and allegedly in collusion with the Assam Rifles, who claims to be 'Friends of the Hill People'. As if this was not awful enough, the army personnel shot dead another seven villagers who reportedly went looking for their missing village youth. Nothing whatsoever, can justify this dastardly act of cowardice, of attacking unarmed innocent daily wagers at broad daylight between 3.30 pm and 4.30 pm on Dec. 4, 2021 - ironically, by the so-called elite force, and later brushed off as an incident that took place due to a mistaken identity.



NORTH EAST CATHOLIC RESEARCH FORUM
C/O NECCOD , Yusuf Sadan, 1 Ashok Place,
Gole DakKhana, New Delhi - 110001.
web:www.necarf.org, Email:info@necarf.org

We would therefore, like to place on record our utter sense of condemnation at this most heinous and inhuman act of the Indian army, and are firm in our belief that their action was an outcome of sweeping powers given under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, which you will agree with us, has been a blot on India's efforts to solemnly uphold Human and Constitutional Rights for all its Citizens. We may also remind you that Oting-like incidents have been happening too often in the States of North East Region wherever AFSPA is enforced – the main reason why the entire region today is up in arms, condemning this horrendous crime against humanity.

We would like to believe that you have swung into action to facilitate swift justice and to ensure that anxiety among the youth in particular, and people of the region in general, does not spiral out of control. Needless to elaborate, but a region as sensitive as the North East, is emotionally drifting away by the day from India because of incidents like what we saw in Oting on December 4. We want to be doubly sure and plead of you to rise to the occasion and help bridge the sharp trust deficit and the growing fear and anxiety among the youth. And in our considered opinion, the best way of ensuring that would be to immediately repeal the draconian AFSPA.

We understand the economic imperatives and careful maneuvering of geopolitical dynamics you are striking a balance with your political acumen and highest skills of governance. We are with you on your vision that drives your mission to take India to greater heights, towards a trillion-dollar economy. That nothing should come in your way that could hamper fructifying your Act East Policy, the sooner the better. But we would like to intervene and interject precisely here so that you take a step back to examine whether such a grand plan could be bulldozed at the cost of the people who own the ancestral lands and resources protected under relevant provisions of the Constitution, and whose primary and foremost interests you hold dear to your heart, towards contributing to the long term national development.

That Modi ji, the Akhand Bharat philosophy and mission should be as much about people as it is about territories, properties, highways, minerals, forests, rivers, etc. Not only should it mean that India owns the land and resources within national territories but also cares about its peoples. A monolithic Hindustan sans inclusion and affection as one big diverse family would be antithetical to what India is in essence – a conglomeration of great civilizations. The *niyat* (intention) need to be “our land, our people”.



NORTH EAST CATHOLIC RESEARCH FORUM
C/O NECCOD , Yusuf Sadan, 1 Ashok Place,
Gole DakKhana, New Delhi - 110001.
web:www.necarf.org, Email:info@necarf.org

The despicable army killings that went on for years seem to suggest, though, that it is about “*jaisi niyat, waisi niti*”. That the *niyat* is, “my land, my property, my resources, my territory”, and not the people. It also constrains us into suspecting that the presence of the Indian Army in the region is not to ensure peace and allow people to live with dignity, but to suppress and subjugate.

We therefore, humbly appeal to you that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 is repealed as soon as possible, so that the Indian Army does not take cover under this law and continue to kill innocent people with impunity.

On behalf of the North East Catholic Research Forum (NECARF),

(James Pochury)
Convenor
Northeast Catholic Research Forum

(Dr. Michael Lunminthang Haokip)
Co-Convenor
Northeast Catholic Research Forum