

Early solution of Bodoland issue urged



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The Bodo Women for Peace Movement (BWPM) has urged the Chief Minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal to take bold step while bringing permanent solution of Bodoland issue through political dialogue and ensure protections of women from unwanted incidents in the [state](#).

A [ten](#)-member delegation team of the Bodo Women for Peace Movement led by Rangina Bargayary, convener of the movement [group](#) met Chief Minister Sonowal today at Dispur and submitted him a memorandum seeking early measures early solutions of various issues related to women peace initiatives responding to need for lasting and permanent solution of Bodoland Movement and other women related issues in Assam.

[As](#) mass and peaceful democratic movement for creation of Bodoland in northern bank of [Brahmaputra](#) valley spearheaded by the All Bodo Students Union, [National](#) Democratic Front of Boroland (Progressive), Peoples Joint Action Committee for Boroland Movement is continuing. The Bodo Women for Peace Movement also would humbly like to [state](#) that a lasting and permanent political resolution of this issue has become pertinent for peace & justice to prevail for Bodos and all communities living in the region.

The Bodos have been demanding for creation of Bodoland [state](#) within their ancestral land which they have inherited from their fore-fathers to preserve & safeguard their distinct identity with their language, enriched cultural heritage & land [rights](#). They have customs and tradition of their own which have made their identity unique not to be easily absorbed into other socio-cultural aggression. Despite having vast ethno-linguistic difference the Bodo people were thrown into the fold of Assam and were victimized to forced assimilation into [Assamese](#) identity after [India](#)'s independence which was uncalled for and a historical blunder. Hence, in spite of the temporary culmination of the movement by signing of two Bodo Accords (20th February 1993 and [10](#)th February, 2003) the Bodo people's demand for creation of separate [state](#) under the provision of Article [2](#) & 3 of the Indian Constitution is still continuing [as](#) a result of utter [failure](#) on the part of Government of [India](#) to concede the demand.

The long pending Bodoland issue and process of tri-partite [level](#) talk for solution of the same has arrived at such [level](#) that it has become necessary for the centre to take concrete [policy](#) decision to settle the issue. It is very encouraging [trend](#) that each and every extremists and militant groups have come forward for the peaceful solution of the problem and civil society all together have also stepped forward to help the Government [as](#) well [as](#) the agitating [group](#) in that regard. But regretfully we have to express our serious concern that the peace process is taking a tardy move and resentment within agitating [group](#) seems to be growing day by day. It was because of your initiative, on the April 25 last tri-partite talk was held in [New Delhi](#) which was attended by the Union [Home](#) Minister of [India](#) Rajnath Singh and Secretaries of Ministry of [Home](#) Affairs and Government of Assam under your leadership. Since then no talk was held despite assurance given to agitating [group](#) to such talk on regular manner.

The entire inhabitants of Bodoland area is looking towards the Government and needful initiative from the end of your honour to step into the matter and pursue the Central Government to expedite the process of tri-partite talk for gaining confidence of the agitating [group](#) for peaceful resolution of the pending issue.

The movement [group](#) expresses grievances on the fact that BTAD and its neighbouring districts, in these last few years have witnessed series of violent conflicts, insurgency, political turmoil, frequent law & order disturbances which have caused untold miseries to downtrodden common public. Like all other north-eastern states, BTAD also faces the challenge of complex political issues like ethnic conflicts, illegal migration, displacement, rampant corruption and social exclusion.

Hence, the region is officially defined [as](#) 'disturbed areas' or the 'insurgency prone areas' and with the declaration of 'Operation All Out' still active, it has intensely traumatized the affected public to silence them to raise voice for their right to live in peace and dignity. With presence of number of armed rebel groups from different communities, the enforcement of the Armed Forces Special Powers [Act \(AFSPA\)](#), 1958 and thereof deployment of large number of troops, the region has become highly militarized and conflict prone zones especially in remote backward areas.

This has had enormous impact on women and children who are the most vulnerable section and bear the major brunt of such conflict with escalating sexual violence [against](#) them, economic hurdles and other social and cultural problems relating to widowhood, school dropout, stigmatization, human- trafficking etc. Whenever, spark of violence erupted be it the conflicts of 2008 in [Udalguri](#) and 2012 in western Assam followed by conflict in Nonkhe and Khagrabari of Baksa district or the inhuman massacre of Santhals on 23rd December, 2014 and riot thereof and [shoot](#)-out case of Balajan Tiniali in [2016](#), it has been witnessed that women and children are more vulnerable and become easy target of [victims](#).

During combing operations or interrogations by army in areas suspected to be infested by militants also, women have had to face numerous difficulties. Young Priya Basumatary's murder in broad daylight on suspicion of being an informer by militants in Chirang district still brings shivers in everyone's mind. On 11th December 2013 two young students from Raidangbari village, a remote area in Chirang district of classes VI & [X](#) were shot down by security personal while they were sleeping and there are long list of grievances which needs attention by both [state](#) & central governments to seek frame-work to resolve pending issues urgently.

It's a bitter truth that in name of maintaining law and order and guarantee citizens' safety, military operations in diverse forms of cordon & search, combing, arrests or interrogations have unfortunately failed to prevent violations of the basic, minimal safeguards to common public irrespective of their sex & age who are allegedly suspected to have links with insurgent groups and gross violation of human [rights](#) under International Convention [as](#) well [as](#) Fundamental Rights guaranteed under Indian Constitution are meted out [against](#) simple tribal folks, especially the Bodos.

Many youths have fallen prey to fake encounters in their prime age, innocent villagers have been alleged to be linkmen of active militant groups for absurd reasons, women & children have been traumatized in different forms to cause mental depression of high order. Hence, common folks from violence affected areas become [victims](#) of manipulative schemes of both the [state](#) and non-[state](#) actors for their benefits. This has triggered large section of population to migrate in urban areas to struggle for their livelihood though unskilled leaving behind the agricultural occupation in their own homeland for labor work with meager wages. It has brought about acute socio-economic disparity in the region and has deteriorated lives of vulnerable section like the old & infirm, women & children in areas affected by violence.

The peace movement said that we and other civil society groups are totally [against](#) militancy and violence. At the same time we are equally [against](#) extra-judicial killings in name of counter-insurgency operations and if militants are [caught](#) let the court and judiciary decide the matter legally.

The Bodo women have traditionally played a major role in social movements and have been informally working for peace in the region though their contributions are hardly recognized [as](#) key stakeholders to be included in formal peace processes. Like any tribal society in north-[east](#) in general & Assam in particular, Bodo women's contribution in cultural and economic sphere is nonetheless significant than men which is illustrated in their tradition of skilled work like handloom & handicrafts, existence of traditional cooperative systems, women's markets etc. Yet, when it comes to decision making women hardly have a say. That BTC Legislative Assembly is not represented by any women in Executive Member's post itself is an example which exhibits that women are not taken seriously in decision making. This has created gender sensitive issues in BTC administration to deprive women participation in right direction in all sectors of economy, education, health, institutions, safety and social [welfare](#). Crime rate and violence [against](#) women & child abuse has rapidly proliferated with frequent rape, witch-hunting, trafficking and violence in many other forms [against](#) women. [Health](#) sector in BTAD is in deplorable condition the hazardous impact of which is more experienced by women and children.

The peace movement urged the CM to take initiative for [start](#) of working for political dialogue, frame short & long term policies for permanent resolution of vexed problems, create atmosphere for rendering legal justice to [victims against](#) whom human [rights](#) violations has been meted out and work for rehabilitation, reconciliation, co-operation, mutual trust and peaceful co-existence with sensitivity under your able leadership and guidance.

‘As violence begets violence to form a vicious cycle of continuous conflicts, we would be grateful to your kind honour if you take initiative to break this violent cycle by showing your largeness in [heart](#) to bring all erring groups for dialogue to pave way for peace process’, the memorandum read.

AT Kokrajhar Bureau

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