

## Devout Naga Apprise at Nagalim

### Taking Responsibility for Nation Building:

The Nagas believe the time has come when they must make a realistic assessment of the distance they have covered in their journey as a people.

Our pioneering elders took the right step in launching the Naga struggle. Countless Nagas from all tribes have paid an extremely heavy price for their struggle. The Nagas of today are proud of and grateful for the main achievement from this sacrificial struggle which is that "Naga Nationality" has become a fact nobody can deny or dispute. We confess our individual and collective failures and hurts and believe all Nagas must appreciate one another's sacrifices. This has enabled us to sustain our journey and we thank God together for this achievement.

We believe our pioneering and present national workers have not sacrificed in vain for India and the world to recognize the reality of our sovereign status. As our claim is based on the facts of our history Nagas have no doubts about the legitimacy of their historical and political rights.

We fully understand that the very ancient Indian nation with her internal diversities cannot adopt our view of Naga sovereignty so easily. This is a problem the Government of India (GOI) will eventually have to resolve with the understanding and support of the Indian public and in dialogue with the Naga people. For the Nagas, few as they are, it has not been possible for them to wage their struggle and at the same time reach out adequately to the people of India to enable them to understand the Naga story as they perceive it. This is an urgent task that the Nagas must pursue in order to strengthen our struggle.

Nagas want to let the people of India to know that their struggle is not secessionist because the pioneering leaders made their position clear in writing and action long before 1947. Nagas are not anti-India or "anti-national" but we are an honorable legitimate neighbor of India. Therefore, Nagas expect the great people of India and their government to respect them as such. This has been the position of the Nagas from the very beginning of their struggle.

The Naga struggle has gone on actively for nearly a century. The NSCN (IM) is still in the process of negotiation with the GOI for a settlement. The Naga people believe that their national groups should now evolve a mutually agreed approach/position in order to achieve a settlement with strength and unity. This would enable our people to heal our wounded relationships, build stability and confidence in ourselves, and enable development of the Naga nation. Such a common approach we pray would help achieve an honorable settlement with India.

We believe that in the vastly changed world today the Nagas need to interpret their identity in a relevant manner. As the Forum for Naga Reconciliation's (FNR) Advent Seasons Greetings (December 2014) clearly says, "To have an identity implies a boundary, but in a world of multiple unique identities and boundaries, the Naga boundary must be reflexive and permeable. It is absolutely essential for us to craft an identity and sense of belonging that is distinct but multiple, and discursive and integrative at the same time. Our self-understanding as churches, villages, and tribes must go beyond cultural and geographic categories. This is the unique political paradigm of the Post-Modern world to which we must adapt if we are to survive and contribute as a people."

Let the Naga people know that we have not lost anything as long as we remain united and determined to build our peoplehood in the true spirit of magnanimity and inclusiveness. To regain and restore the unity with which we started the Naga struggle, our people have to listen and dialogue heart to heart as individuals, as leaders, and as communities at the level of empathy, honesty and mutual trust capable of healing our divisions. This would make our journey of common hope a reality.

The Naga people must urgently reaffirm their shared responsibility in nurturing a dynamic and a just society. Any serious breakdown of order is a wake-up call to a society. Every Naga must also realize the fact that we cannot become a people deserving of respect without practicing values of compassion, truth, and justice in our thoughts and actions. These qualities of integrity are essential so that a common aspiration of the people will be realized.

We should no longer weaken our unity by blaming and demonizing one another for what we have not yet achieved. In fact, we must make our weaknesses our common strength by learning from our own mistakes. We also fully agree with the FNR Advent Seasons Greetings: "We must not let the past suffocate us or dictate our future; we need to creatively reinterpret the past narratives for the sake of a shared Naga future." Working for the Naga future should be inclusive of all generations, particularly empowering the younger people and women to play a special part in constructing Naga peoplehood and nationality according to their wisdom and understanding of the changing world they will live in.

The FNR, having consulted the churches and the leaders of the wider civil society, calls upon Nagas of all ages and genders to take on the costly responsibility of working for a peaceful and just Naga society. To help bring about such a society it is essential that the leaders of our national groups adopt a mutually agreed approach/position. This will require all of us to go way beyond the destructive luxury of accusing and condemning one another to take the Naga struggle to a new level which we will all be proud of.

We now intend to conduct a conversation on these matters with immediate effect. We hope that this conversation will create a change in the climate in a way that reflects the transformed realities and the voice of the people, while remaining true to the

historical and political rights of the Nagas.

KUKNALIM

(This statement is an outcome of the meeting between participants of the Church, Civil Society leaders, and Forum for Naga Reconciliation from March 9-11, 2015)

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