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Suspension of Operations

MANIPUR EXPLAINED | 3 OCTOBER 2026

GS III: Internal security | GS II: Governance and peace-building

WHAT IS SoO?

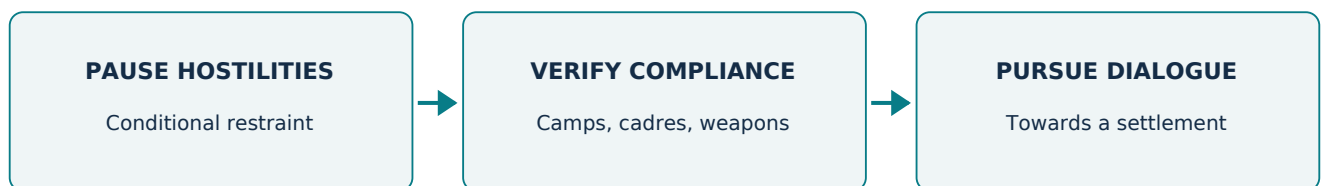
A conditional agreement to pause hostilities between the government's security forces and specified armed groups. The groups observe agreed ground rules; security forces refrain from operations against compliant signatories under the arrangement. It creates space for dialogue towards a negotiated settlement.

Who are the parties in Manipur?

Government of India	Government of Manipur	Signatory armed groups
Union Home Ministry	State government	Groups under KNO and UPF

KNO: Kuki National Organisation | UPF: United People's Front

The pact covers signatory organisations; it does not represent every member of an ethnic community.

**How the arrangement works**

01 Restraint	Signatories stop hostile activity and follow agreed rules; civilian protection remains essential.
02 Designated camps	Cadres stay in specified camps, subject to supervision and verification.
03 Weapons controls	The September 2025 revision provided for weapons to be relocated to nearby CRPF/BSF camps.
04 Monitoring	A Joint Monitoring Group supervises compliance; violations can trigger action and review.
05 Negotiation	The pause facilitates talks. It does not itself resolve political demands.

THE ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION

SoO is a step towards peace, not a completed peace settlement. It does not automatically mean surrender, amnesty, disbanding of groups or acceptance of their political demands. Government authority and criminal law continue to apply.

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Why the pact is in the news

The renewal question: weapons, compliance and trust.

THE REPORTED POSITION

The supplied newspaper report says the Centre had not extended the one-year pact by early October 2026. Government sources link renewal to surrender of weapons. A representative of a SoO group contests the implication of non-compliance and says camp weapons are accounted for. These are competing reported positions, not a verified finding of violation.

A short chronology

22 August 2008	Formal tripartite SoO arrangements with KNO/UPF and their constituents established a framework for restraint and dialogue.
May 2023 onward	Meitei-Kuki-Zo violence sharpened mistrust and brought the pact's operation under renewed criticism.
February 2024	The supplied report records the Manipur government's refusal to extend the agreement.
4 September 2025	A revised tripartite agreement was signed for one year, with stronger camp, weapons and cadre-verification provisions.
September-October 2026	The report describes the pact as awaiting extension after its one-year term ended, amid continuing violence and demands for weapon surrender.

What changed in September 2025?

The official announcement reaffirmed Manipur's territorial integrity and a negotiated route to stability. It provided for relocation of seven camps away from conflict-sensitive areas, reduction of designated camps, transfer of weapons to nearby CRPF/BSF camps, and physical verification to remove foreign nationals from cadre lists, if any. Monitoring was to become stricter, with violations inviting action and review.

Read the disagreement carefully

1. Government concern. The report identifies widespread civilian possession of weapons as a driver of violence. Recovering illicit and looted arms is a security priority across communities.
2. Signatory position. A group representative claims regular inspections account for camp weapons and argues that non-extension does not amount to abrogation. The claim requires verification against monitoring records.
3. Wider opposition. The report records demands from Meitei and Naga voices to end the pact. Their concern highlights the need for a peace process trusted beyond the signatories.

THREE DIFFERENT TERMS

Expiry: the stated period has ended. Abeyance: the arrangement is described as held in suspension. Abrogation: formal ending of the arrangement. Do not infer the precise legal or operational consequences solely from a headline; the agreement and official orders govern them.

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From a pause to durable peace

Assessment: combine enforceable security commitments with an inclusive political process.

Why SoO can help

1. Reduce immediate confrontation. Conditional restraint can lower direct conflict between forces and participating groups, creating room for dialogue and civilian recovery.
2. Make armed actors more accountable. Designated camps and verified weapons inventories can improve visibility over cadres and arms, provided inspections are credible.
3. Preserve a negotiating channel. A structured mechanism allows grievances and compliance disputes to be addressed without every disagreement escalating into confrontation.

Why a pact alone is insufficient

1. Weak enforcement erodes confidence. Unverified weapons, alleged violations or inconsistent responses can make the arrangement appear permissive rather than protective.
2. Signatories are only part of the conflict. A pact with particular armed groups cannot by itself resolve inter-community insecurity, civilian armament, displacement or distrust.
3. Indefinite restraint can freeze the problem. Repeated extensions without substantive progress may preserve armed organisations while leaving the political dispute unresolved.

A practical way forward

Protect civilians	Secure vulnerable settlements, essential routes and relief access through impartial, coordinated policing.
Verify arms and cadres	Audit camp inventories, enforce weapons-custody rules and recover illicit arms across communities with documented procedures.
Clarify the pact's status	Communicate renewal conditions, monitoring findings and consequences of violations to reduce uncertainty.
Restore monitoring credibility	Regular inspections, prompt investigation and proportionate action should accompany a functioning dialogue channel.
Broaden the peace process	Engage affected communities, women, displaced persons and civil society alongside armed-group negotiators.
Link talks to recovery	Set milestones for constitutional dialogue, rehabilitation, safe voluntary return, livelihoods and accountable administration.

MAINS CONNECT

Security enforcement and political dialogue should reinforce each other. A credible SoO mechanism is judged by verified compliance, civilian safety and progress towards a settlement, rather than extension alone.

Practice question - 250 words: "Suspension of Operations agreements can contain insurgent violence, but cannot substitute for an inclusive peace settlement." Discuss with reference to Manipur.