

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GENESIS, LEADERSHIP, OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES OF KARBI MILITANT MOVEMENT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Ethnic militant movement in Northeast India is not a new phenomenon. Many of the ethnic tribes in the region have their own ethnic militant group trying to preserve and protect their culture and its people. There have been a number of militancy activities and ethnic movement in different parts of Northeast India and often found peculiar character in each state.

In Karbi Anglong, there are various factors contributed for the genesis and growth of Karbi militant movement. The militant leaders express themselves in political and economic term of the movement. This has enabled them to adopt a strong ideological stand. They also manifested their dissatisfaction over the state government of step-motherly treatment meted to the hill tribals of Assam and statehood demand was opted as a justification for separate existence of the people. The militant leaders also have the opinion that by having self-rule the Karbis can find more scope for development and self-determination. They further strengthened their stand that the Karbis living in the hill district of Assam have different identities, traditions, cultures, languages, etc. which have great differences with the mainland Assam.

The militant leaders with bold declaration began with a series of rebellious protest and exposed the state government and its machineries for suppressing and domination over indigenous tribals in the hill districts of Assam. The Karbi militant movement has demanded for self-rule with a defined territory and aim for emancipation from the oppressive and exploitative nature of the state government on the Karbis.

The powers conferred to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) was not equipped to handle immigration and other issues like cultural and social hegemony of dominant ethnic groups and this has continued to eat away into the fabric of political discourse in Assam; the realities of the day seemed to lead the Karbi people into yet

another long series of confrontations with not just the state apparatus, but also with the dominant groups associated with the state.<sup>183</sup>

#### Proposed Karbi State Demand Area in Assam



#### 4.2 Genesis of Karbi Militant Movement

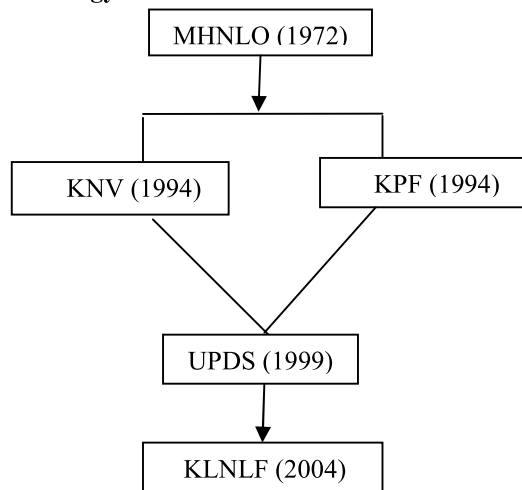
In 1972, Parliamentary, Legislative Assembly and District Council election was held simultaneously in the month of February. The Mikir Hills Progressive Party (MHPP) placed their candidates in all the election hoping that they will win and could strengthen the separate state movement. But to their surprise, only two of their candidates were elected as Member of District Council (MDC). The MHPP thought that the ruling party will guide the fate of the Karbis in a positive way, but contrary to the expectation, the situation became worsen. So, the MHPP members seriously felt that it would not be possible to demand separate state through democratic means. In the same year, some young and energetic members formed the Mikir Hills Nationalist Liberation Organization

<sup>183</sup> Sanjay Barbora, "Autonomy or Death": Assessing Ethnic Autonomy Arrangements in Assam, Northeast India, Calcutta: Calcutta Research Group, 2005, paper available at [http:// www.onlineministries.creighton.edu/.../NESRC/Sanjay/AutonomyCRG.doc](http://www.onlineministries.creighton.edu/.../NESRC/Sanjay/AutonomyCRG.doc) (accessed on 8/12/14)

(MHNLO) and switched on to violent movement for fulfilling the demand of separate state. They prepared to take aggressive action in support of statehood movement. The movement was led by Dorsing Terang, Premeswar Ronghang, Sonaram Terang, Lindok Ronghang, Hari Kanta Ronghang, Chandra Sing Terang, Bronson Terang and Harsing Taro. It was the first Karbi organization who adopts the cult of militancy. The MHNLO comprises primarily of youths who set to strengthen the statehood movement and to protect their tribe. They also sought to protect the social, economic and political interests of the Karbis. The main objective of MHNLO was to achieve separate state through arms movement by following the path of militancy. Dorsing Terang, Captain of MHNLO convened a secret meeting at Langlokso and gave a clarion call to the Karbi youth to go for self-rule and pledge for arm movement for the achievement of Karbi Statehood. The ‘pledge cards’ were distributed to all members which had to be signed with their blood as a commitment to strengthen the movement but interestingly, none had signed on the pledge cards provided. However, they started showing their presence by arson of bridges and road blockades, etc. in the district. In this connection, the state government launched suppressive measures by targeting the leaders. Many of the leaders were arrested, tortured by the police and some of them were even remanded to custody.

On February 18, 1973 a delegation team comprising – Bapuram Singnar, Longsodar Kathar, Roy Inghi, Sarsing Terang and Nihang Teron was sent to New Delhi and a memorandum was submitted to the Prime Minister of India for granting full-fledged state to the Karbis, but they were returned empty handed and their effort were in vain.<sup>184</sup> Figure 4.1 illustrates the Chronology of Karbi Militant Movement in Assam.

**Figure 4.1: Chronology of Karbi Militant Movement in Assam**



<sup>184</sup> Barelong Terang, *The History of Karbi*, Diphu: Kaweso Rongpipi, 2003, p. 95

### 4.3 The Birth of Organized Karbi Militant Movement

Some scholars believe that the emergence and explosion of ethnic militant movements were the result of perceived injustice, deprivation and marginalization of some ethnic groups.<sup>185</sup> After a gap of twentytwo years organized Karbi militants' movement again emerged in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The rebirth of Karbi militant may be traced to the deliberate and successful attempt made by Naga National Council in Nagaland, Revolutionary Government of Manipur in Manipur and Mizo National Front in Mizoram. One cannot overlook the contribution of armed cadres and leaders in achieving their Statehood by sacrificing their lives for their people.

In the late 1990s when the statehood demand by Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) and their frontal organizations were at their peak, section of the like-minded youth gathered together and gave birth to Karbi militant movement in Assam for strengthening the statehood movement and to protect the Karbi tribe from untold suppressions. The Karbi people of the district have reached a state of utter frustration for the reasons which were explained earlier.

During those years the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) were demanding an Autonomous State consisting of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts. Incidentally, these are the only two hills districts in Assam which were given the option either to join Meghalaya or to remain in Assam when Meghalaya was created as an Autonomous State in 1970, consisting of Khasia-Jaintia and the Garo Hills districts. Within few years, however, particularly the youths in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills became disillusioned with Assam, complaining that it was discriminating in matter of all round development and thereby led to identity crisis of the tribals in the hill districts. The ASDC launched a moderate and democratic movement for Statehood. The party won majority of seats in Autonomous District Council in both the districts of Assam. Majority of the seats from these two Hill districts to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the lone seat to Lok Sabha were also won by ASDC for fifteen years starting since 1986.

The ASDC demanded for an autonomous state within Assam as per the provision of Article 244(A) of Indian Constitution but never talked of separation from India.

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<sup>185</sup> G, Fawehinmi, *Ethnic Clashes Erupt in Southern Oil Town*, Ethno-Net Publication, 2003, [www.iosrjournals.org/..E01462937.pdf](http://www.iosrjournals.org/..E01462937.pdf) (accessed on 24/2/14)

However the delay and lackadaisical attitude of the government in conceding to their demands has angered a section of the Karbi youth who resorted to militancy.

In the field survey it was found that 90% of the respondents were of the opinion that the Karbi language has been suppressed in the state. Assamese language has been imposed in educational institutions of the territory inspite of declaration in Official Language Act XXXIII of 1960. It clearly stated that there will be no imposition of Assamese in non-Assamese speaking population and permission would be given to use English as official language in the two hills district of Assam. It was also found that 87.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that due to systematized cultural assimilation the cultural identity of the Karbis was in jeopardy and contributed for unrest and growth of militancy in the territory. 84.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that due to economic exploitation by the state, the Karbi Anglong has become a budding ground for militant organizations. There were inequality of distribution of wealth and no specific policies were adopted to improve the economic condition of the tribal populace in the territory. 95.5% of the respondents opined that statehood demand was the main factor which is responsible for the growth of Militants movement by the Karbis and the detailed list of opinion is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Public Opinion for the Birth of Karbi Militant in Assam**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Can't say</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Language Supression	162 (90%)	11 (6.2%)	7 (3.8%)	180 (100%)
Cultural Assimilation	157 (87.2%)	08 (4.4)	15 (8.4%)	180 (100%)
Economic Exploitation	152 (84.4%)	10 (5.6%)	18 (10%)	180 (100%)
Statehood	172 (95.5%)	03 (1.7%)	05 (2.8%)	180 (100%)

Source: Field Survey

The field study has also found that the spread of primary education and study of general courses is some how increases but the scope for higher and professional studies are limited. The educated youths seek for government jobs but find none. All these have led to loss of hope and uncertain future. These frustrated youngmen spearheaded the violent movement. They thought that only through armed movement, it can draw the attention of the government for negotiation on Karbi issue. And after attaining full-fledged statehood the hill tribes living in the hill districts of Assam could work-out for their own development and protection of their rich culture. The movement leaders believe in violence as means to supplement their stated objectives. The Karbi militants are active in the state of Assam particularly in the district of Karbi Anglong. The militants that are active in the territory include the Karbi National Volunteer (KNV), Karbi People's Force (KPF), United People Democratic Solidary (UPDS) and Karbi Longri and North Cachar

Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF). The statehood demand made by the Karbis' militant was not a sudden and abrupt. It is the result of long suffering and political suppression experienced by the Karbis in this part of the country and now we hear of the 'Karbi Militants'.

#### **4.3.1 Formation of Karbi National Volunteers (KNV)**

The emergence and explosion of militant movement is not the result of a single factor. The major issue responsible for the emergence and explosion of ethnic militant movements in Assam state is the perception by the elites of the various ethnic groups who believe that the structure and operations of the Assam state has completely failed to protect the interest and ethnic aspiration. Sequences of peaceful protests, memorandums, petitions and meetings to the State and Union Government were made by the Karbis. But still the Karbis' demands are kept at bay by the authority. The people have realized the futility of the ideology and technique of prayers and petitions through democratic means.

In order to strengthen the statehood movement and to get attention from the government on Karbi issues, section of youths and perturbed students' leaders formed a militant group known as People's Guard (PG) in tune with the People's War Group (PWG) in the first part of 1990s. The organized Karbi militant group was given birth after seven (7) years of patiently waiting from the government to response on Karbi statehood issue. The PG was later upgraded and rechristened as Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) on March 22, 1994 with an objective of liberating Karbi Anglong from State 'colonialists' attitude.<sup>186</sup> Its cadres started for training in arms to Nagaland and Bangladesh. The founder Chairman was Pradip Terang alias P.Dilli and General Secretary was Harsing Timung alias H.E. Kathar. They called upon his compatriots to join for arms movement to draw the attention of the government for the protection of the indigenous tribes in the district from all sorts of political discrimination, injustice and economic exploitation. H.E. Kathar was initially the member of Karbi Students Association, Central Executive Committee. He was also the Assistant General Secretary of Hawaipur KSA Branch. Kathar was with Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) which was in league CPI (ML) in two hill districts of Assam.

In the hill districts of Assam the communist ideology was revived and strengthened by Dr. Jayanta Rongpi who is the follower of Vinod Mishra, the political architect of the process of re-orientation of CPI (ML) Liberation in India. Interview with the political leaders of Karbi Anglong reveals that though H.E. Kathar was with ASDC-CPI (ML) he was the admirer and disciple of Bhaskar Nandi, the polit-buro member of

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<sup>186</sup> As mentioned earlier in the statement of the problems

the CPI-ML (PCC) faction. Nandi was the founder President of Swadhikar NGO which based at Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and their outfit claim to be working for upholding the rights of the tribal people in Lalgarh and other parts of Bengal.

H.E. Kathar along with his comrades later gave birth to Karbi National Volunteer (Ad-hoc) in Dikhlem area of Hawaipur, West Karbi Anglong. H.E Kathar was the founder General Secretary of KNV and P.Dilli was the Co-ordinator then. First arms' training was imparted by NSCN member called Jonathan Zeliang in a remote village of Amlet in West Karbi Anglong. For the first time around 25 Karbi militants took up arms training at Amlet. Initially there were around 35 members in the KNV including the office bearers. The KNV counted much on the help extended from the NSCN (IM). It appears that they had assurance of imparting arms training, providing arms and ammunition and moral support. An instruction in guerilla warfare techniques is being imparted to the Karbi militants. H.E. Kathar was later exorcized from Karbi Students' Association (KSA) because of his involvement in arms activities. The KNV's aim was not to wage war against the Government of India but they took to arms for registering a violent protest to fulfill their Statehood demand and maintaining demographic supremacy in their own homeland- Karbi Anglong by the Karbis themselves. They also lost faith on the political leaders for false promises. The leaders were prompt and energetic to Karbis' demands in the early stage but after winning the election they began to forget their role. To check such irresponsible leaders the KNV was given birth by like minded youth.

#### **4.3.2 Formation of Karbi People's Force (KPF)**

Under the one party system of ASDC's rule from 1986 in Karbi Anglong and NC Hills, there was a language and cultural renaissance. And the seed of nationalism was sowed in the minds of thousand of Indigenous tribes living in the two hill districts of Assam. But those individuals, families or villages who are not at par with the plans and policies of ASDC are victimized. Sometime, the party went to the extent of boycott or threats. Under such occasions many of innocent people were chased out from the villages and they were even killed. The Karbi People's Force (KPF) was formed on September 12, 1994 with the object to defend the Karbi tribe from any unprovoked attack and to pressurize the government on Autonomous State demand by the Karbis. In the manifesto circulated by Longki Rongpi on behalf of the KPF stated that,

*“In India, the bigger nationalities by controlling the government and its machineries exercise a harsh dominion over the smaller nationalities like the Karbis. The oppression on the smaller nationalities will continue unless they are allowed to govern themselves. Autonomy will give them a political identity and socio-economic freedom. Oppressed and dominion over the*

*smaller nationalities shall be ended by India at any cost. It shall save the Government of India from disgrace and condemnation by outside world.*

*Though the KPF has its reservation regarding the effectiveness of the autonomy as envisaged in the Article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution, it is willing to give a fair trial, respecting the opinion of majority Karbis who at this time believe to be magic wand which will wield away all impediments coming in their path towards progress and prosperity. The KPF shall therefore struggle for early creation of an Autonomous State comprising Karbi Anglong and Norh Cachar Hills districts of Assam as per provision in the said Article 244 (A). But shall kept its option open for demanding a greater degree of autonomy as the envisaged Article fall short of expectation.*

*In India, it is true that, the smaller nationalities' raising their demands through peaceful means is futile. The peaceful agitation need to be buttressed by armed resistance group only the the government will concede their demands. Otherwise, it shows a callous disregard to the legitimate aspiration of these oppressed people and the spiritual and human values underlying a non-violent struggle. So, treading along the constitutional path is inadequate, the KPF will proof by taking armed resistance as mode of struggle.*

*A natural extension of the KPF's struggle is to end the dominion of the bigger nationalities over the smaller nationalities. It is the struggle against the dominion of the nation over the other. The KPF therefore struggle for the achievement for genuine autonomy for the Karbis and other oppressed nationalities and to end the dominion of the bigger nationalities over them. The struggle will continue forever unless they are given to govern themselves".<sup>187</sup>*

In the initial stage, the KPF cadres were the victimized and oppressed family members during the ASDC's rule. The group was fully backed by NSCN (IM) of Nagaland. In the course of arms struggle for statehood, the top brass leaders of KPF Longsing Hanse (Howraghat), Ajay Bey (Rechohidi) and Pratap Teron (Hongkram) died in an encounter with Security Forces on December 6, 1998 in a place called Langlokso which is sixteen kilometers from Langsoli-et and the movement leaders considered them as the first martyrs who sacrificed their lives and blood for the cause of Karbi Statehood. Intelligence information was leaked through one Deben Enghi to the Security Forces who was also a deserter of the organization. Later in the early period, this group merged with KNV as they shared common basis, method and objectives in demanding Karbi Statehood and to fight for a definite territory for the Karbis within the purview of Indian Constitution.

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<sup>187</sup> Mondol Sing Bey, *op.cit*, pp.46-47

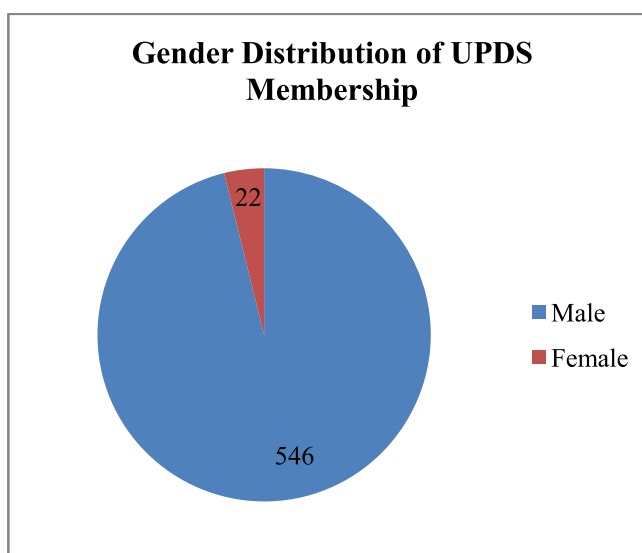


### 4.3.3 Formation of United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)

The conglomeration of two Karbi militant groups- the KNV and KPF gave birth to United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) on March 22, 1999. The ultimate aim of the UPDS is for achieving the demand for self-determination and to govern own affairs with define territory.

In the first General Council meeting of the UPDS held on March 22, 1999, it was felt that the insensitivity of the Union Government and the State Government of Assam towards Karbis' demand through democratic political movement. Hence it was felt necessary to launch a joint armed struggle for creation of '*Hemprek Kangthim*' (Self-determination) for the Karbis and other indigenious tribes living in Karbi Anglong under the provision of Article 244(A) or article 3 of the Constitution of India. Since people of Karbi Anglong have long been in search for lasting peace. The UPDS, in pursuit of their objectives have relentlessly struggled to draw the attention of the Union Government towards the plight and political aspiration of the people of Karbi Anglong. The UPDS leaders and cadres have made exemplary sacrifices to achieve separate statehood for the Karbis. In recognition of the sacrifices made by the UPDS leaders, cadres and sympathizers, the Government in 2001 invited the UPDS leaders for peace-talks. The organization signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India on May, 23, 2002. Altogether there are 546 male members including 22 women members in UPDS organization and the pie chart is shown in Figure 4.2

**Figure 4.2: Gender Distribution of UPDS Membership**



From the pie chart, it was revealed that the gender distribution in UPDS membership, the male counter part is higher. And there exist disproportionate ratio between the two genders. May be the militant tactics of the movement is not suited for the female folks and this substantially accounts for the dominance of male in terms of membership. Many female folks joined the movement for overcoming insecurity and to have freedom by having arms in their hands. The female cadres mainly help in cooking, transporting of small arms and carry message to other for the organization.

#### 4.3.4 Formation of Karbi Longri and North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)

Before the UPDS signed Ceasefire agreement with the Government a General Meeting was held at ‘*Rongbin*’ to discuss the matter. In the meeting some members were not in favour of signing ceasefire agreement with the Government for several reasons. And a rift between the UPDS (pro-talk) and UPDS (anti-talk) was widened up. The anti-talk members felt that the movement should be first built up and more members should be recruited for historic movement. In the midst some of the members wanted to negotiate with the government on their demand for early solution to Karbis’ issues. Later the UPDS (anti-talk) faction renamed themselves as Karbi Longri & North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) and formally given birth on May 16, 2004 with its armed wing called Karbi Nationalist People’s Resistance (KNPR). The movement has ignited under the leadership of P. Dilli and H.E. Kathar. But due to internal issues and interfering of some external agency the top brass leader H.E Kathar and Willingson Timung were executed.

**Table 4.2: Structure of KLNLF membership in Karbi Anglong**

Sl. No.	Ranks and Files	Number of Strength
1.	Central Executive Committee	: 08
2.	Lieutenant	: 01
3.	Colonel	: 01
4.	Major	: 01
5.	Captain	: 02
6.	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant	: 02
7.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant	: 09
8.	Sergeant Major	: 10
9.	Sergeant	: 24
10.	Corporal	: 33
11.	Lance Corporal	: 22
12.	General cadres	: 299
<b>Total</b>		<b>: 412</b>

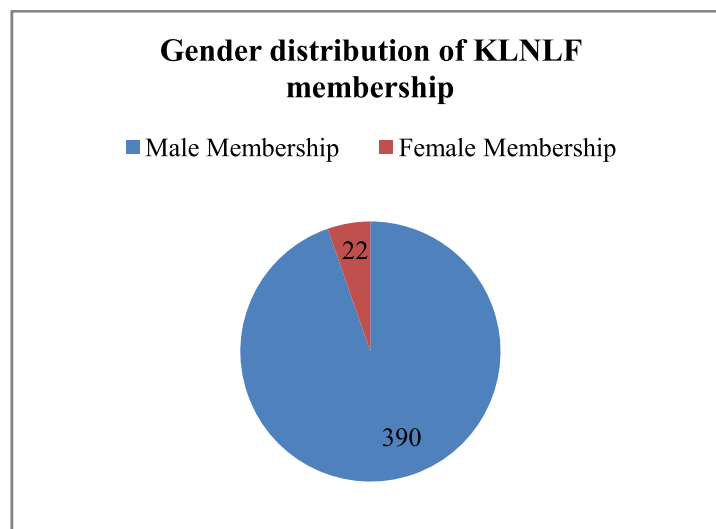
Source: Interview with KLNLF leaders at Diphu

The movement tried to make a strong base in Karbi Anglong and to put pressure on the government to address the Karbi issue. After sixteen years of armed movement

with 412 sturdy members, the KLNLF declared unilateral ceasefire on December 31, 2009 to start negotiation process with the Union Government on the movement's demands.

We observed that the KLNLF are dominated by the male gender. However, female members are pertinent of the movement. Female members who joined into this movement played as much active role as the men. The number of female members is proportionally insignificant when compared to the male membership of the movement. Out of 412 memberships, only 22 members belong to female and the rest 390 belonged to the male counterpart as shown in Figure 4.3

**Figure 4.3: Gender distribution of KLNLF membership**



The disproportionate ratio between male and female members of the movement may be due to high exposure to life risks which the female gender may not be able to bear. The militant tactics of the movement is not suited for the female folks and this substantially accounts for the dominance of male in terms of membership. The few female members of this organization may not necessarily be deep-rooted in their subscription of the goals or objective of the movement. Many female folks joined the movement for overcoming insecurity and to have freedom by having arms in their hands.

#### **4.4 Leadership Structure**

Leadership structure played important role for meeting the movement's objective. Visionary and pragmatic leaders can lead the members to the right direction. It is the pivotal part where the organization is moving. If there is no systematic arrangement of

leadership there will chaos and misunderstanding. The leadership structures of Karbi Militant Movement in different phases are discussed in brief.

Beginning from Mikir Hills Nationalist Liberation Organisation (MHNLO) in 1972 the leaders are taking rigorous initiative for strengthening their organization. The MHNLO was initiated under the leadership of Dorsing Terang, who was also the Captain of the organization. And the members include Premeswar Ronghang, Sonaram Terang, Lindok Ronghang, Hari Kanta Ronghang, Chandra Sing Terang, Bronson Terang and Harsing Taro.

The Karbi National Volunteer (KNV) was formed under the leadership of Pradip Terang alias Pongbi Dilli and Harsing Timung alias H.E. Kathar. From his personal description, he considered himself as visionary leader. H.E. Kathar was also a man of leadership with concrete vision for the Karbis to demand their rights through armed movement. Before its formation H.E. Kathar was one of the active member of the Karbi Student Association in Hawaipur Branch of West Karbi Anglong.

The Karbi People's Force (KPF) was formed under the leadership of Longsing Hanse, Ajay Bey, Pratap Teron. Longsing Hanse was also the active member of Greater Guwahati Karbi Student Association while pursuing his bachelor's degree in Guwahati. He appeared some competitive examination to try his luck in governmental job. But his luck did not favour him therefore they formed the KPF to serve its people and society in broader way. He believed in the pragmatic of life. Later both KNV and KPF merged together as they shared common basis, method and objectives and formed the United Peoples' Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) on March 22, 1999 during a joint meeting held at Langtibuk under Singhason Constituency. The founder Chairman was Kiri Rongphar alias Gandhi Teron and General Secretary Horen Sing Bey alias Sai Ding-eh of UPDS but both were arrested on October 22, 1999. The outfit Commander-in-Chief was Welson Kro but he died of injuries during an encounter with the Security Forces on August 22, 2002 in Karbi Anglong district. The portfolios of the present leadership of UPDS:

Chairman	: Mohon Timung alias Longsodar Senar
Vice-Chairman	: Ke-ap Tisso
General Secretary	: Horen Sing Bey alias Sai Ding-eh
Joint Secretary (Home)	: Surya Rogphar alias Tung-eh Nongoda
Joint Secretary (Political)	: Kangjang Terang alias Wojaru Mukrang
Commnder-in-Chief	: Akar Teron
Publicity Secretary	: Munthi Parsik Langneh

The Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) was also said to be fighting for the cause of the Karbi tribe and its declared objective is to attain '*Hemprek*

*Kangthim'* meaning self-rule or separate statehood under the provision of the Indian Constitution. The leadership structure of KLNLF is Pradip Terang alias Pongbi Dilli as the Chairman and Harsing Timung alias H.E. Kathar was the General Secretary till January 2, 2005. The Commander-in-Chief was Mensing Tokbi alias Willingson Timung; Laden Ronghang was the Publicity Secretary where Central Publicity Cell in charge was given to Rupsing Teron alias Thong Teron. And Riso Tokbi alias Biren Lekthe was the Assistant Foreign Secretary. The portfolios of the present leadership of KLNLF:

Chairman	: Pradip Terang alias Pongbi Dilli
Vice Chairman-cum- Foreign Secretary	: Habe Tokbi alias Biren Lekthe
General Secretary	: Rupsing Teron alias Thong Teron
Commander-in-Chief	: Binaram Singnar alias Songja Timung
Publicity Secretary	: Rijak Dera
Auditor General	: Prakash Kathar
Treasure	: Vai Dilli

#### **4.5 Objectives**

The main objective of the Karbi militants is to have self-rule or autonomy for Karbi tribe. They want non-interference in taking any decision for the welfare and development of the people with a defined territory. So that it can govern themselves with freewill and autonomy.

Self-rule or autonomy is defined as free choice of one's own act without external interference and especially as the freedom of the people of a given territory to determine their own political, social and economic status. The right to self-determination of peoples is fundamental principles in international law.

In Karbi militant movement context, Self-rule or autonomy mainly refers to the non-interference of Karbi's politics, socio-economic life by the state not total cessation from India. The demand of the different political groups of the ethnic Karbis centers on creation of a Statehood. The Karbi militant demands creation of a separate statehood for Karbi Anglong and contiguous Karbi-dominated areas of Assam and Meghalaya under Article 3 of the Indian Constitution with additional powers under Article 371 of the Indian Constitution. An option for implemetation of Article 244 (A) to the Constitution of India was kept if the government fails to fulfilled self-rule. But below that the militant's leaders resolved not to accept from the government. The other objective of the militant movement is the expulsion of those who came to Karbi Anglong after 1951, introduction of Inner Line Permit (ILP) and an economic package to the region.

In practice, the right to self-determination despite seeming breadth has been treated as an extremely narrow right. State fear of secession and government fear of revolution have combined to restrict the right to self-determination to little more than a right to sovereignty for those state and colonies that currently exist.<sup>188</sup> Therefore the Karbi militant demands stick to Article 3 or Article 244 (A) of the Indian constitution for immediate implementation. Many of the excluded and partially excluded areas were given separate statehood and remaining member of 'excluded and partially excluded areas' in Assam happen to be Karbi Anglong and NC Hills district. Peoples of the two hill districts has been claiming for Statehood for the past several decades but the government's lackadaisical attitude towards its demand led to proliferation of numerous armed movement by the indigenous tribal. The Karbi militants' leader feels that armed movement is the only option to draw attention of the Union Government towards their legitimate claim.<sup>189</sup>

#### **4.6 Areas of Operation**

The main area of operation of the Karbi Militants is Karbi Anglong (East and West) district of Assam. Irregular activities of Karbi militant also experience in Umrangso (Dima Hasao district), Barak Valley (Cachar district), Sonitpur district, part of Nagaon and Golaghat district of Assam, Khasi-Jaintias Hills of Meghalaya and in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **4.7 External Linkages**

The Karbi Militant was maintaining close links with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The Karbi Militants has provided logistic support in return for weapons and ammunitions from ULFA. Due to the support extended by Karbi militant groups two major bases- '28<sup>th</sup> Battalion' and '709<sup>th</sup> Battalion' of ULFA operated from Karbi Anglong district.

The Karbi Militants also established a strategic alliance with National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) of Nagaland. Many of the Karbi Militants were given training by the NSCN-IM and were also provided it with arms and ammunitions. The Karbi militants were reported to have procured arms and ammunitions from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan with the support extended by NSCN-IM.

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<sup>188</sup> Surya Narain Yadav and Indu Baghel, *Human Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New Delhi: Jnanada Prakashan, 2009, p.12

<sup>189</sup> Pear Ali Ahmed, *op.cit.* 2010. pp.83-85

The Karbi militants kept a close linked with Manipur based People's Liberation Army (PLA). The Karbi militants exchange views and seek helps from them while crossing border to Bangladesh and other foreign countries. The Commander-in-Chief Willingson Timung and few other cadres received guerilla warfare from PLA.

For some time, the Karbi Militants were also in league with Manipur based tribal militant group-Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA). The ZRA has imparted training and provided arms and ammunitions to the Karbi Militants somewhere in Churachandpur district of Manipur. The Karbi militants were also kept good relationship with Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D), a militant group of Hmar tribe. It also shares a working relationship with the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT).

#### **4.8 Foreign Training**

The Karbi militants undertook foreign training to Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar on handling arms and making explosive. One batch each went to Bhutan and Bangladesh and two batches to Manipur and Myanmar to learn the skill of guerilla tactics, weaponry and physical training.

#### **4.9 Resources**

Organisation are used to secure and mobilized resources for achieving the movement's goal. Resources can be material which includes money, capital and physical. Another resource be moral which comprises of solidarity or support for the movement's goal. Convincing of the peopl on the plan, policy and objective of the movement need to be done. In an organization human resources also plays significant role as the volunteers, members and leaders are interdependent and recruitment need to be done carefully and the last resources comprises of prior activities experience, understanding the issues and collective of action.

In order to sustain and keep the organization survives the Karbi militant collected monthly/annual taxes from the people of Karbi Anglong. Collection ranging from Rs. 100/- to Rs 1000/- and above depending on their monthly income and other assets, vehicles, machineries, etc. They also demand money from businessmen, contractors and manager of tea estate in various places in the state for their organization. Other resources adopted by Karbi militant for strengthening of the movement includes moral, socio-organisational, human and culture. Leaders of the movement sometime met the village headman and discuss about the present issues which suppress the Karbi tribe. They try to strengthen the human resource by recruiting members from various part of the territory.

While interviewing P. Dilli <sup>190</sup> for the purpose of the present study, he revealed that ‘they mobilize material resource for running the organization as the fighting is for the Karbi people. Besides, they also appeal to various departments in the district to extend support which ranges from 2 percent to 5 percent of their total fund allocation’. He also response that his organization did not received any voluntary financial support from individual other than through extortion and ransom. The Karbi militant was lacking in mobilization of resources in various fields. Inability to mobilized resources effectively may bring failure to any movement- both social and militant movement.

#### **4.10 Strategy of the Movement**

The Karbi militant movements are presumed as non-partisan, non-religious organization founded to defend, protect and promote the interests of the Karbi people. The movement was formed to champion the statehood demand by the Karbis. Some of the strategies adopted by the militants are to keep the Karbi tribe in constant mobilization psychologically, culturally and politically without any differences. Organized and indoctrinated Karbi Anglong for autonomy and gratification in every way.

The movement has some strategy to draw the attention of government and to negotiate the issues. The two chief important strategies were; sell the idea to influential individuals leading grassroots organization as a facilitator to reach the Karbi masses as well as to nurture the blessing of Karbi elite because their support is vital if the idea is to become a success. During the election of the Council, Assembly or Parliamentary they create pre-poll violences to demonstrate the government of their presence. And a warning to the political leaders for considering the Karbi issue after winning the election. On the other hand, it brings an atmosphere of fear-psychosis among the public while exercising their franchise so that they will cast their vote for the candidate(s) secretly supported by the militants.

The Karbi militant also has carried out a number of attacks since their formation, using a variety of tactics and with varied degrees of success. The two common strategies have been grenade attacks and ambushes of public transports. The group has also used bandhs, economic blockades, kidnapping and arson for attacks against Indian security forces and rival ethnic groups to creates havoc and draw the attention of the government.

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<sup>190</sup> Pradip Terang alias P. Dilli, is the present Chairman, KLNLF and was founder Co-ordinator of KNV. He was interviewed in his Diphu resident to provide data and information of the movement. The KLNLF has now signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India and peace-talks are on the process.



They also targeted properties of central government including railways and sometime ambushed the military convoy. They attacked the Hindi speaking population in the district and planned to carry more of such attack on other non-tribal communities for immediate attention of the government. If the governments delay in signing a ceasefire agreement with these militant groups many may fall victims of such attack in the territory.

#### **4.11 Publications and Website**

The '*Hemprek Kangthim*' (Self-Determination) is the mouthpiece of the KLNLF which was published by the Central Publicity Cell edited by P.Dilli who is also the Chairman of KLNLF for wide circulation. It was a monthly publication which circulates among the members and to public on various issues. The KLNLF have launched its websites [www.geocities.com/klnlf](http://www.geocities.com/klnlf) in the month of October 2004 to publicize and popularize Karbi legitimate demands to the whole world.

#### **4.12 Propagation and Recruitment**

In order to sustain the movement and get maximum support of the public, they projected their ideology which includes non-material rewards at the level of all values. The militant leaders select different element of relative deprivation and combine them to different ways. The ideology of the movement were formulated on the basis of their perception, assessment and interpretation of its past and the existing deprivation on the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of the society which it relates. They send secret group to different part of the state where the Karbi concentrations are more. They propagated revolutionary ideas and distributed leaflets, pamphlets to the youth and likeminded people to join in the movement. They even circulated manifesto of their movement to the public and seek their cooperation. They recruited any revolutionary minded youth irrespective of sex, age (above 18 years) and above and domicile for the sake of Karbi Statehood.

#### **4.13 Factional Clashes**

Factional clashes or fratricidal killing is very common in arms movement. It is no exception to Karbi militants' context. Clash with other militant organization and killing its own members is common. The Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of KLNLF Mensing Tokbi aliases Willingson Timung along with two other cadres were assassinated on February 2, 2005 at Langlokso forest under Dokmoka Police Station on the behest of General Secretary Harsing Timung alias H.E. Kathar. While interviewing with the organizational leader for the purpose of the present study it was revealed that the

intention of the C-in-C was sinister which could earn bad name for the organization. So he was eliminated from the organization in the initial stage. And at that time the General Secretary was in Bangladesh for organizational purpose. After the death of Willingson Timung the charge of Commander-in-Chief was given to Binaram Singnar alias Songja Timung in March of the same year.

The General Secretary Harsing Timung, his bodyguard and three of his family members including his wife were secretly killed on April 29, 2005 while coming from Bangladesh in a place called Koilator in Tripura. All the four dead bodies have not reached their family members for their last rites. It was suspected to be the handiwork of the PLA militant (a Manipur based militant group) who was also a working partner of KLNLF imparted intelligent tactics and trainings to KLNLF Commander-in-Chief Willingson Timung somewhere in Manipur. Later the same PLA executed the plan of the attack in support of pro-talks faction-UPDS. The PLA betrayed the KLNLF by killing the General Secretary and whole family for their vested interest. At present, the KLNLF is under ceasefire and peace-talks are on with the government.

In an interview carried for the present study, the KLNLF leaders revealed that the vertical split of UPDS in 2004 just after five years of its formation in 1999 have some internal organizational matters. According to the KLNLF leaders' response, following are the reasons for split-up of two Karbi militant groups because of (a) Too early to sign a ceasefire with any Government for political talks (b) Lack of political vision with immaturity (c) Gradual suspect among the rank and file of the movement. (d) Due to short sightedness and egotism of the leaders.

After having two factions of Karbi militants with uncertain future, they started blaming each other using the words available in Karbi vocabulary. The divisions in UPDS came as a result of ideological differences as well as differences in strategy judging from rhetoric that attend such divisions. The UPDS termed the KLNLF as traitors and deserters whereas the KLNLF also called the UPDS as anti-Karbi, pro-Government and so on. This has turned the Karbi militants' movement an internal issue and caused confusion in the minds of the masses. It seemed the UPDS faction was having the upper hand as they were under ceasefire with the government and sometimes carried out joint operation against the KLNLF. Sometimes the leaders of the KLNLF hold back its cadres from responding to several acts of provocation. The division in Karbi militant movement has turned violent as the factions engaged one another in supremacy battles and factional killings. The clash lingered for several years inspite of public appeal to prominent Karbi militant leaders through media and other sources though it yielded little response. They even exchanged war of words in the local dailies reflecting the image of the organization and immaturity.

They are not satisfied with just blaming each other by words and writings but they started infighting and eliminating each other. As a matter of fact both the factions have committed enough crime during the last few years. The militant eliminates each other whenever they got the chances. During the factional clashes the killing includes valiant soldiers to generals, belonging to both underground and over ground leaders and patriot. Their own people are their target and their brothers are the victims. The nature of their factional clashes is characterized by kidnapping, ambush, encounter, treachery and assassination with sophisticated weapons. Many Karbis have given their lives enough to the hands of their own men in the name of arms struggle for statehood. Such act of violence will be termed as the most shameful act in the history of Karbi movement for political independent. Better late than never, the violence of factional clash for supremacy has abridged and the leadership of the movement is re-formulating public image of the movement through activities such as media and appeal of the masses.

#### **4.14 Limitations of Karbi Militant Movement**

There was a time when the civil societies, students and political party campaign against the Karbi Militant Movement as they involved in violent activities and torturing the innocent villagers without any rhyme and reason. Instead of winning the hearts of the civil societies leaders and cadres took law in their own hand. The civilian were sometime labeled as informer to the army and other security agencies. They were beaten up, tortured and even killed for no reason and without knowing the fact. It has created an atmosphere of fear psychosis in the district. Sometime they force the villagers to collect foodstuffs from the nearby market.

The Karbi militant depend upon the foodgrain supplied by the villagers. They came out from their hideout and collect their food supply from the villagers. The limitation here is exchange of fire between the security forces and militant as it may takes place any time-any moment. The physical and mental tortures of the Karbi people were deepened day by day. There were many cases of brutal killing and rape during the course of militant movement in Karbi Anglong. They want to rule the people with the barrel of gun and supreme in their celestial. The weapon inflow from neighbouring state empowers the militants for accelerated violent activities. Many of innocent people have lost their lives in bloody activities of the militants. Aside mindless and needless killings of innocent peoples, they also engage in reckless destruction of public and private property all in a bid to vent their frustration about certain problems.

Under these circumstances, ASDC (regional political party) and other civil societies have stepped up massive campaigned against the militants group in the district.

Walling like ‘*No food, No clothes, No Shelter*’ to militant was done by the workers in difference places in Karbi Anglong. The public have risen up against violent activities of militant in the District and brought enmity between the villagers and the militants. Due to prolonged militancy in Karbi Anglong the territory experienced shadow of darkness for decades. The Karbi militants demanding for self-rule or separate statehood has brought prolonged political problems between the Karbi people and the government.

In the field survey it was found that out of 180 respondents 46.1 percent of the respondents have supported the movement by paying taxes, percentage, ransom and other for the militant organisation. And 26.1 percent of the people in survey areas have sheltered the militant once or twice while transition or passing through their villages by militant. And 71.1 percent of the people have indirectly supported the militant movement by not providing information to police or security forces in the territory. During bandhs, blockades in Karbi Anglong calls by the militant groups 99.4 percent of the public extended their support by not attending their offices, not plying their vehicles and by closing business establishment. The given Table 4.3 shows how the public extend their support to militant movement.

**Table 4.3: Civilian Support for the Karbi Militant Movement**

Sl. No	Kinds of Support	Frequency	Percentage
1	Contributing subscription for militant organizations	83 (180)	46.1%
2	Sheltering for the militants	47 (180)	26.1%
3	By not cooperating with Police and Administration in providing information.	128 (180)	71.1%
4	Supporting bandhs, economic blockades called by militant organizations	179 (180)	99.4%

Source: Field Study

In the names of counter-militancy the innocent villagers were targeted by the Army on several occasion. There used to have a fought between the Army and the Karbi militants where the innocent villagers become the victim. Excessive Human Rights violations were committed by both the militants and the security forces. All this happened due to the militants taking shelter in the villages instead of staying in their hideout.

Due to lack of confidential shielding among leaders and cadres of Karbi militant the Government agency could somehow sneak into and convinced some for surrender. They were promised that militant surrendering with arms will be granted amnesty. The government had experienced that amnesty is the feasible policy to eliminate the aggressive activities. Few responded to the call for amnesty and surrendered willingly to the Government. The surrender of the cadres has let down the confidence of those who

keep on indulging in militant activities and it has destabilized the Karbi militancy to some extent. There was always disagreement between the surrendered and anti-talks faction of the militants. And there exist a wide dogma between the two where the innocent publics are facing the brunt.

From the case of Karbi militancy, it can be said that no militant groups can survive without the support of the civil society and no movement can bring fruitful result without unity among leaders of the movement. In the case of Karbi militants there were rift among leaders of the movement. They cannot agree together on several issues and sacrifice for the greater interest of Karbi people. There were also a misunderstanding between cadres and leaders of the militant. The cadres were of the opinion that the leaders are living a comfortable life with the entire fund collected for the movement while they were fighting for the movement with uncertain future. Materially the Karbi militant fails to utilized resources which they have collected. The funds were used for egotism and personal benefit. They utilized it for buying luxury car and construction of private bungalow. All these mismanagement of resources and deviating from targeted goal has led to the weakening of Karbi militant movement.

#### **4.15 Chapter Summary**

The genesis of Karbi militant movement has knotted with the non-fulfillment of Statehood demand. Along with the statehood demand several factors like language suppression, cultural assimilation, demographic invasion, economic exploitation and exertion of sub-national identity has made a strong ideological stand.

In the case of Karbi militant, the leaders are mainly from the middle class sections of the society. And one way or the other involved in social or political party organization. They sense the suppression of the dominant group of the state economically and politically. And most of the cadres and leaders are unemployed youth which tends to have spearheaded the movement. Frustration over the all round repressions and non fulfillment of the Karbi demand for statehood the youth took vigorous action and later gave birth to Karbi militant movement. The founder members of the different Karbi militant groups like MHNLO, KNV, KPF, UPDS and KLNLF have a dream to bring changes in Karbi Anglong through arms struggle. Later, several leaders fall prey at the hand of the government machineries and some were killed in fratricidal killing. All these have contributed for the weakening of the movement.

The UPDS have greater number of educated leaders comparing with the KLNLF. Educated and dedicated leaders with a clear vision for the movement are needed to turn the dream into reality. One must equip with vast knowledge of different ethnic

movements that operate around the world. Lack of knowledge and low level of understanding brings complexity while negotiating their demand with the government.

The Karbi militant demand is for self-rule or autonomy within the framework of the Indian constitution. Unlike other militant groups operating in the region, the UPDS /KLNLF demand is clear and based on Constitutional promise. For the protection of indigenous and minority groups of the territory militant leaders pressurize for introduction of Inner Line Permit (ILP). By nature it is more political than economic as they stress for creation of Karbi State. The militant leaders also demanded for exclusion of illegal migrant who enter the territory after 1951.

The militant has adopted different tactics and mobilized resources for strengthening of the movement. They have undergone training in foreign countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar for combat and improved fire arms. For most of the time they were hiding out secret places because of counter and repressive attack by the state forces. They sometime demand ransom, serve extortion note and kidnapped peoples which forms one of the huge sources of income to the movement. They also collect annual and monthly taxes from different government officials and villagers which attributed to sources of their revenue.

The parochial behaviour of its hegemonic ruling class; cultural subjugation, politics of exclusion played along the line of ethnicity, the indifferent attitude of the state to the welfare and well-being of the indigenous people, injustice and socio-economic exploitation has largely account for the surfacing of ethnic militant movement in Karbi Anglong.