

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission

22 February 2011

To
The Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Prime Minister's Office
Tejgaon, Dhaka

Re: Concern over reports of recent violence in Langadu, Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts

The International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) takes this opportunity to convey its respectful greetings to you.

The commission is deeply concerned by the recent reports of violence against Jumma people in several places in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

On 17 February 2011, we received reports that about 300 Bangali settlers attacked and burnt down Jumma people's homes in Rangipara village in Langadu upazilla of Rangamati district. The Bangali settlers allegedly are said to have instigated this attack after they found the dead body of a Bangali settler in a nearby village. During this time, we were informed that although members of the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) were present, they did nothing to stop the attacks and prevent the Jumma peoples' houses from being burnt down.

A day after this incident, there were allegations that members of the Army were raiding homes of the Jummas and beating up villagers in Kudukchari of Rangamati, following protests made by the Jummas against the attacks in Langadu. We have also received reports that people in Baghaihat, Rangamati have been prevented from commemorating the anniversary of the arson attacks in Baghaihat in February 2010 through memorial and mourning ceremonies and programmes.

Over the past few decades, there have been several occasions wherein Bangali settlers are alleged to have attacked Jumma settlements following the death, injury or other harm to a Bangali settler, allegedly caused by a Jumma individual or group. In each case, the attackers did not wait to obtain conclusive evidence of the truth or otherwise of the allegation. There have been allegations, in each of these cases, of complicity between the settlers and the members of the security forces, either in the form of direct involvement in the attacks, or tacit support, in either case, leaving the Jummas without adequate protection from violent attacks. In none of these cases has an impartial and independent enquiry been conducted under government auspices. Consequently, those responsible have evaded prosecution and punishment, and, no deterrent measures have been taken by the government to prevent the recurrence of such attacks.

Co-Chairpersons:
Sultana Kamal, Lord Eric Avebury, Ida Nicolaisen

Members:
Shapan Adnan, Lars-Anders Baer
Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Sara Hossain
Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Lee Swepton
Robert Evans, Hideaki Uemura

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A year has passed since the arson attacks in Baghahat, Rangamati and Khagrachhari town, which led to the burning down of more than 500 homes, mostly of the Jummas. The CHTC notes with much disappointment that no impartial enquiry has been conducted under governmental auspices to determine the identity of the attackers and to punish those guilty, and to rehabilitate and compensate the victims and to take adequate deterrent and protective measures.

Under these circumstances we urge the government to:

1. Form a high-level impartial commission of enquiry, under governmental auspices, but independent of the government, to investigate into the recent attacks in Langadu, Rangamati and the February 2010 arson attacks in Baghahat, Rangamati and in Khagrachhari town.
2. Identify or help identify those individuals, whether government employees or otherwise, who are responsible for the attacks by commission, omission, abetment or conspiracy.
3. Facilitate the punishment of those guilty for acts, omissions, abetment or conspiracy, and to take measures for the protection of those vulnerable, and to take appropriate measures to prevent such occurrences in future.

The CHTC is immensely troubled by the fact that members of the government security forces, who are doing such gallant work as part of the global UN peacekeeping forces, are implicated as colluders with the Bangali settlers in carrying out such attacks against the indigenous people of the country, time and again.

We urge the government to issue instructions to military, para-military, police and para-police personnel posted in the CHT to protect all communities, without discrimination, and to provide special protection to communities that have a recent history of such attacks or vulnerability.

Violations of such instructions should be dealt with in a strict manner.

On behalf of the CHT Commission

Yours sincerely
Eric Avebury

Eric Avebury
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission

Sincerely yours
Sultana Kamal

Sultana Kamal
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission

Yours Sincerely
Ida Nicolaisen

Ida Nicolaisen
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission

cc to:

1. Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, MP, Honorable Deputy Leader of the House & Chairperson, National Committee for Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord.
2. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
3. Barrister Shafique Ahmed, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
4. Mr. Syed Ashraful Islam, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
5. Mr. Rezaul Karim Hira, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Land, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
6. Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, Honourable Chairman, CHT Regional Council, Rangamati.
7. Mr. Dipankar Talukdar MP, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of CHT Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
8. Dr. Hasan Mahmud, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
9. Mr. Promod Mankin, MP, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Cultural, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
10. Mohammad Shah Alam, MP and Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ministry of CHT Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
11. Mr. Jatindra Lal Tripura, MP and Chairman, CHT Task Force on Returnee Refugees and Internally Displaced People, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Khagrachari.
12. Mr. Bir Bahadur, MP and Chairman, CHT Development Board, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Rangamati.
13. Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury, Chairperson, CHT Land Commission.
14. Mizanur Rahman, Chairman of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).