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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination
and Protection of Minorities

GENEVA

Working Group on Indigenous Populations

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A submission made by Rajkumari Chandra Kalindi Roy, Mr. Subodh Bikash Chakma and Mr. Ramendu Shekhar Dewan on behalf of the Jumma Nation (the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts).

Madame Chairman, Honourable Members of the Working Group, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving us the floor. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves - we are Jumma people coming from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region of Bangladesh.

We are making this submission to provide the Working Group with hard facts which, we believe, would help it in setting effective standards for Indigenous Peoples.

Despite repeated requests by the humane international community, the Bangladesh Government (BG) has not stopped its ethnic-cleansing campaign in the CHT. It has not yet done away with the military rule in the area although democracy has been restored in the rest of Bangladesh. On the other hand, the BG is setting up more military camps and bringing in more Bangladeshi infiltrators in the CHT as part of its Bangladeshization and Islamization of the CHT scheme. In the past year, over 600 gross human rights violations have been committed by the Bangladeshi infiltrators in league with the Military Forces. These violations ranged from looting, arson, religious persecution, rape to detention, torture, murder and mass-killings. Over and above, restriction on the free movement of the Jumma people and also on the supply of essential commodities to the Jummas has not yet been lifted. In short, nothing has changed in the CHT even after the removal of the Military Dictator, Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad, from power.

The BG is not only massacring the Jumma people but it is also indulging in the massive cover-up of those massacres. It killed some 1600 Jummas, most of whom were old people, women and children, at Logang concentration camp on 10 April, 1992. Initially, the BG had denied having committed this massacre. However, it failed to conceal the massacre fully because of the presence of a western human rights activist and her group in the area at the time of occurrence. The international community was shocked by such horrible mass-killings and compelled the BG to set up an inquiry into the Logang massacre. The latter dextrously appointed Justice (retired) Sultan Hossain Khan, a zealous supporter of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, to investigate the said mass-killings. He toed the Government line, suppressed information, distorted facts and fabricated evidence....page /2-

evidence. Therefore, his report is not true, credible and worthy of being called an impartial one. Justice Khan has certainly attempted to cover up the large extent of the Logang massacre, to shield Begum Khaleda Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and her Military lieutenants - Gen. Mohammad Nuruddin Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Army, Maj. Gen. Mahmudul Hasan, the then General Officer Commanding of the Shittagong Division of the Bangladesh Army, Brig. Sharif Aziz, the Commander of the Khagrachari Zone and all the Military Commanders of the Panchari area - from the blame of premeditating and executing the massacre, and to cover up the Government-funded Bangladeshization and Islamisation of the CHT scheme. We would respectfully suggest to the Working Group to send a U.N. Special Rapporteur to Logang to find out the truth.

The humane international community also pressurised the BG to resolve the crisis in the CHT by political means. To dump her own blame on the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), Begum Khaleda Rahman declared that the CHT crisis could not be solved politically because of the resistance activities of the Shanti Bahini (SB), the armed wing of the JSS. Having heard of her announcement, the peace-loving JSS decided to facilitate the peace-process again as it had done many times before. It announced unilateral cease-fire from Aug. 10 to Nov. 10, 1992, and requested the BG to constitute an All Party Parliamentary Committee to negotiate with the JSS for a political solution. This suggestion was strongly supported by most of the Opposition Parties. Yet the BG rejected the JSS proposal indicating that its announcement was nothing but a public relations exercise and that it was not interested in finding a negotiated political solution. However, the compassionate international community compelled it to form the Bangladesh Government Commission (BGC) to negotiate with the JSS.

Then the BG set the date and venue of the First Round of the Dialogue for Sept. 12, 1992, at Khagrachari Circuit House, without consulting the JSS. Even it did not have the elementary courtesy of notifying the JSS of the framework of the proposed dialogue. The BG simply announced the meeting on the national Radio and Television clearly to placate the donor countries. The JSS was unable to attend the meeting because of the absence of security measures for its delegation. It, however, still wanted a Dialogue with the BGC and requested the BG to agree the ground rules through the Liaison Committee. Ignoring this normal procedure, the BG fixed a new date for the First Round of Oct. 21, 1992, again without consultation. It began to appear that the BG was not really interested in talking, nor did it want a genuine political solution. But the BG went through the motions of setting up these meetings, while making it impossible for the JSS to attend, in the hope that the international community would blame the JSS for the failure. However, it must have realised that....page /3-

that the peremptory way it called the first two meetings would cause an unfavourable impression, and it did finally consult the JSS before the third date was fixed, of Nov. 5, 1992. At the First Round, Col. Oli Ahmed, the Chairman of the BGC, refused to accept the JSS charter of five demands on the grounds that the demand for a separate legislature was outside the framework of the Unitary Constitution of Bangladesh. To test the sincerity of the BG, the JSS abandoned its demand for a separate legislature, opted for a Regional Council with powers of internal self-Government, and submitted its charter of modified demands to the BGC on Dec. 4, 1992, well ahead of the Second Round scheduled for 26 Dec., 1992.

At the Second Round, the JSS modified demands could not be discussed because Col. Ahmed did not circulate the JSS charter before the meeting began. His deliberate dilatory tactics show clearly that the BG is not negotiating seriously to seek a political settlement. On the other hand, he commented that the JSS modified demands still amounted to independence. However, the BGC suggested that the Third Round would be held in the first week of Feb., 1993, to discuss the JSS modified demands and that it would set the date for the meeting. But it did not fix the date nor did it care to notify the JSS about the cancellation of the proposed Round. So due to the lack of sincerity on the part of the BG, the Third Round did not take place in the first week of Feb. The BG continued to drag its feet on the negotiation till it got past the Bangladesh Aid Consortium Meeting which, we understand, was held in April last. After getting the foreign aid, it held the Third Round on 22 May, 1993, and let the cat out of the bag by spelling out its decision on the modified demands of the JSS. The BG rejected all the basic and genuine demands of the JSS confirming the Jumma people's fear that it has no intention to find a negotiated political solution.

The BG also refused to meet the just demands of the Jumma refugees. It certainly means that it does not want to normalise the situation in the CHT for their safe return. Yet the BG is trying to repatriate them. This hypocrisy clearly exposes its sinister motive. There is no doubt that it is plotting to solve the Jumma refugee problem once and for all by killing them after forcibly repatriating them into Bangladesh. We fervently appeal to you to place the Jumma refugees under the care of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees till they are repatriated and rehabilitated in their native villages.

We earnestly appeal to you again to pressurise the BG to concede to the just demands of the JSS.

We would like to thank you once again for giving us the opportunity to present our statement.

.7.1993

1. Rajkumari Chandra Kalindi Roy
2. Mr. Subodh Bikash Chakma
3. Mr. Ramendu Shekhar Dewan