

AN APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF ALL PEACE-LOVING COUNTRIES,
ALL CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE, ALL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS
INCLUDING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES OF
THE WORLD TO COMPEL GOVERNMENTS OF BANGLADESH TO STOP GENOCIDE
IN CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

Dear Friends,

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, the largest district in Bangladesh with an area of 5199 sq. miles is inhabited mostly by the tribal people, who are ethnically different from Bengalees. These tribal people are also not Muslims by faith. They are mostly Buddhists, Hindus and Christians. In 1947, when India was divided, 97.5 percent of the population of the district were non-Muslims and tribals. During the British period it was governed directly by the Governor of Bengal and administered under Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900. There was separate police administration and except Deputy Commissioner, who was British, and a few other high officials, all other Govt. functionaries including police personnel were locally recruited. There were also three tribal Chiefs, who used to help the Deputy Commissioner in administering the district. All local administration was run by the tribal people. According to Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900, the non-tribal people were not allowed to settle in the district permanently nor they could purchase land from the tribal people and under rule 51 of the said Regulation, they could be expelled from the district when they were thought undesirable or found doing anything prejudicial to the interest of the tribal people.

But after 1947, when this district became part of Pakistan, the situation gradually changed. Though the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation was not abrogated or nullified, its rules were not followed. The Government of Pakistan systematically put the Regulation into disuse and started to bring Muslim population into the district in order to increase the Muslim population. The Government of Pakistan disbanded Chittagong Hill Tracts Police force, which was previously constituted with only the tribal people and transferred all tribal police officers to other districts of the East Pakistan. The Government also transferred all civilian tribal officers from this district to other districts.

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In the name of getting cheap power supply, the Govt. built a huge dam at Kaptai as a result of which about 100,000 (hundred thousand) tribal people were uprooted from their ancestral homes and were given only nominal compensation for the lands and houses. Tribal people were not given any jobs in the Karnaphuli Project (where the dam was built) though they were evicted almost without any compensation. There is not a single tribal man in the project now.

In the name of creating jobs for the people and industrialisation, the Govt. established a huge paper mill at Chandraghona. But here also practically no tribal people are employed. The then Govt. of Pakistan established other industries in the district acquiring the lands of the tribal people but the tribal people were not employed in any of the industries. The then Govt. of Pakistan systematically increased the Muslim population in the district by bringing them from other districts and allowing them to settle and acquire lands in violation of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation which was still not abrogated or nullified and technically the district was still administered in accordance with this old Regulation.

In 1961, there was serious riot in the district against the tribal people when about 60,000 (sixty thousand) tribal people fled to India. The riot was stopped by the Govt. only when the Indian Govt. lodged a strong protest with the Govt. of Pakistan. The Govt. of Srilanka also lodged a protest with the Pakistani Govt.

During the liberation war of Bangladesh, many Muslims from neighbouring district^S_A of Chittagong and Noakhali occupied the lands of the tribal people with the help of the Pakistan Army. The tribal people never got their lands back even after liberation of Bangladesh. But the real tragedy came to the tribal people only after liberation of Bangladesh.

Soon after independence of Bangladesh about 400 tribal people were killed by Bangladesh Army in the name of their so called "search for Rajakars and Albadars" (supporters of Pakistan), hundreds of houses were burnt and looted, many girls and women were raped and tortured. Their reckless killings and oppression compelled the tribal people to organize resistance and demand autonomy. Their leader, Mr. M.N. Larma, an MP, led a delegation to Mr. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and submitted a memorandum demanding regional autonomy.

But Sheikh Mujib did not pay any heed and instead increased oppression in the name of establishing law and order. In the name of "search for Rajakars and Albadars", he started combing operation with his army and police forces in the district. His Airforce also made heavy bombing raids on the tribal villages.

During Mujib's regime more non-tribal people were allowed to settle in the district permanently. Repatriated Bengalees were rehabilitated in different parts of the district by expelling the tribal people from their homes and agricultural lands. The policy of Sheikh Mujib's Govt. was to force the tribal people to lose their identity in the greater Bengalee society of the country and outnumber them by the Bengalee settlers in order to destroy the possibility of any political unrest or popular movement by the tribal people in the district.

After the overthrow of Sheikh Mujib, a delegation consisting of 67 representatives from the district met Justice A.S. Sayem, the then President of Bangladesh, on 19th Nov., 1975, and submitted a memorandum to him demanding regional autonomy.

Now a total of 57,000 (fiftyseven thousand) armed forces (also including Bangladesh Rifles, Police and Ansars) are deployed in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Three military cantonments have been established at Dighinala, Ruma and Alikadam and three Brigade Command Offices have been established at Rangamati, Kaptai and Bandarban. One Naval base has been established at Kaptai. Two special Police battalions have been posted at Barkal and Mahalchari. The Sector Headquarters for Bangladesh Rifles has been established at Rangamati while two Wing Headquarters for the same have been established at Kaptai and Ramgarh. Three Ansar battalions have also been posted - one at Khagrachari, the other at Ghagra and the third at Bandarban.

Previously there were only 12 Police Stations in the district. Now the number has been increased to 28 and the strength of the Police force has also been increased greatly. Now the total strength of the armed forces is such that there is one armed personnel for every ten hillman. In the name of establishing law and order and searching for the miscreants, Army/Police camps have been set up in every market place and in all places where there are Govt. establishments. Most of the schools in the countryside are under their occupation.

The military also occupied many Govt. offices and Rest Houses. Even the old office of the Deputy Commissioner at Rangamati is now under the occupation of the Bangladesh Rifles. Now the total number of armed forces at Rangamati, the Headquarters of the district, exceeds the total number of civilian population of the town.

In order to coerce the public to withdraw their support from "Shantibahini" (tribal resistance group) and to liquidate the guerrillas by starvation the Bangladesh Govt. let loose a reign of terror in the district. The Army and Police carried out inhuman repressive measures against the tribals and burnt down the villages.

The following are only a few examples of crimes carried out by the Bangladesh Army and Police against the tribal people:-

(a) In the early months of 1977, the Govt. sent troops to massacre the inhabitants of Matiranga, Guimara, Manikchari, Lakshmichari etc. 50 tribals were shot dead, 23 women were tortured to death, 54 men died in pits, many women were raped, the villagers were robbed of their property and the houses were set on fire. 5000 tribals were pushed into Tripura, India. But the Govt. of India sent them back to the hostile Bangladeshi Army's disposal after negotiating for their safety with the Bangladesh Govt.

(b) In December, 1978, and January, 1979, the Bangladeshi troops invaded a big area comprising Dumdumya Mouza (No 150 Mouza; "Mouza" is an administrative unit which includes a number of villages), Maidong Mouza (No 138) and Panchari Mouza (No 137). The total area is about 175 sq. miles; it includes about 50 villages and its population is about 75000.

i) On 22 Dec., 1978, all the 22 villages of the Dumdumya Mouza were completely burnt to ashes.

ii) On 9 Jan., 1979, all the houses of the Maidong Mouza were set on fire.

iii) On 16 Jan., 1979, Panchari Mouza and all the Subalong valley villages were wiped out.

iv) Basanta Muni Tontongya, 30 yrs old, son of Bayanta, village Bagakhali, Dumdumya Mouza, was shot dead.

v) Roalsoang Pankho, 42 yrs. old, son of Dulkhob, village Noapara, Dumdumya Mouza, was shot dead.

vi) Mrs. Chandramala Chakma, 25 yrs. old, wife of Meyaram, village Mandira Chara Mukh, Dumdumya Mouza, was kidnapped by Army. No trace.

vii) Miss Gurimila Chakma, 18 yrs. old, daughter of Bansiram, village Mandira Chara Mukh, Dumdumya Mouza, was kidnapped by Army. No trace.

viii) Mrs. Anal Devi Chakma, 22 yrs. old, w/o Mangal Chandra, village Denha Tejori Bhuatalichara, was shot dead.

ix) Mrs. Bunga Kajhi Chakma, 71 yrs. old, w/o Kesharmuni, village Chakrakada Mone, Panchari Mouza, was burnt alive in her house by the Army.

x) All the cattle, poultry and foodstuff were taken away or destroyed by the troops.

The youngmen of village Gargajyachari, 4 miles south of Sub-Divisional Headquarters, Khagrachari, were on village defence duty against childlifters on March 5, 1979. Some Army men moving incognito came and arrested them and took them to the Khagrachari military camp. The Army made meat of them by cutting them to pieces with their own tagals (broad knife), first separating the muscles from the bones in peculiar joy. The victims were :

i) Samiran Talukder, 16 yrs. old boy, 1st. year I.A. student, Khagrachari College, s/o Mr. Chittomuni.

ii) Alomoy Talukder, 17 yrs. old boy, 2nd year I.A. student, Khagrachari College, s/o Mr. Jatindra Bikash.

iii) Hallwa Chakma, 16 yrs. old boy, farmer, s/o Mr. Bangali Chand.

On 9 April, 1979, at 0200 hours, the Army raided civilian quarters of the District Headquarters, Rangamati, and took away 70 people among whom were:-

i) Mr. Chandra Mohan Dewan, aged 91, retired Police Officer.

ii) Mr. Pulin Chandra Dewan, aged 72, retired District Engineer.

iii) Mrs. Dewan, w/o Mr. Pulin Chandra Dewan, aged 60. All of them were thrown into pits. Even tribal Govt. servants were not

exempted. (iv) Mr. Jagat Jyoti Chakma, Accounts Officer, Bangladesh

Small Industry Corporation, Rangamati, (v) Mr. Purnendu Chakma,

Sub-Divisional Co-operative Officer, Rangamati, (vi) Mr. Ramesh

Chandra Chakma, Clerk, Forest Office, (vii) Mr. Gnanendriya Chakma,

Public Relation Officer, Rangamati Development Board, were tortured.

Among other prominent tribal people who were arrested and detained

in the Army camp were (viii) Mr. Puranjoy Khisa and his family,

(ix) Mr. Arabinda Chakma and members of his family, (x) Mr. Santimoy

Dewan, Chairman, Balukhali Union Parishad. (xi) Mr. Kalpa Ranjan

Chakma, who was a prominent Member of President Zia's Bangladesh

Nationalist Party, was also arrested and inhumanly beaten.

(xii) Mrs. Ramani Chakma, w/o a senior Govt. Officer, was detained

by the Army for about a fortnight leaving her four month old breast-

fed baby at her home. Her fault was that her elder brother has

joined the "Shantibahini", the tribal resistance organization, which

is demanding autonomy for their district.

On 5 Jan., 1979, one Mrs. Kandari Chakma, 57 yrs. old, village Rengkhyang, Kaptai Sub-Division, was burnt alive in her own house by the Army. The house was closed from outside and then it was burnt to ashes.

But the most tragic incident occurred at Kamalchari, 2½ miles south of Khagrachari (Sub-Divisional Headquarters). During the liberation war of Bangladesh, while President Ziaur Rahman (then he was a Major) was fleeing away to India in a hurry by a jeep, his jeep fell into the Chengi River at Kamalchari. It was a knee-deep water. The villagers of Kamalchari rescued the jeep and one Mr. Mriganka Chakma s/o Mr. Kali Kumar Chakma, Kamalchari, carried Ziaur Rahman on his back to the other side of the river. On 12 Aug., 1979, Zia's Army shot Mriganka Chakma dead on suspicion in front of his father.

Early on 23 April, 1979, in Kamugopara village, 16 miles south of Khagrachari, the Army led by Captain Abul Kalam Mahmud shot dead (1) Mr. Shindhu Kumar Chakma, aged 40 yrs., (2) Mr. Anabil Chakma, aged 25 yrs., (3) Anabils younger brother, aged 18 yrs., (4) the only son of Sarada Chakma, aged 20 yrs., (5) Mr. Arun Kanti Chakma, a student of Class VIII of Pujgang High School. The bodies of the victims were burnt in the presence of the members of the bereaved families. Before leaving the place Captain Abul Kalam gave stern warning and said "such shall be the fate of every Chakma, remember this, all right?"

On 16th March, 1979, Bangladesh Army rounded up all men, women and children of the two villages, Khagrachari and Khabong Paria, adjacent to Khagrachari Sub-Divisional Headquarters, and beat every one of them mercilessly. Some of them were hung from the trees and beaten. Even senior and old tribal officers of the Govt. like (1) Mr. Satya Brata Chakma, Sub-Divisional Food Controller, (2) Mr. Debabrata Chakma, Thana Agriculture Officer, and teachers of Khagrachari College like (3) Prof. Bodhisatta Dewan, (4) Prof. Progabir Chakma, and (5) Prof. Madhu Mongal Chakma were badly beaten.

On 21 Feb., 1979, the Army burnt down the entire village of Pujgang 20 miles north of Khagrachari. On Feb., 1979, the Army burnt down villages of Dhudukchara and Logang area about 26 miles north of Khagrachari. On March 7, 1979, the entire village of Babuchara under Dighinala Police Station was destroyed. On March 13, 1979, Udalbagan village about 22 miles east of Khagrachari was burnt down. On the same day the Army burnt down Logang village for the 2nd time. On March 29, 1979, Durgachara village was also burnt down.

On 15 Oct., 1979, about 40 members of the Mahalchari Police battalion went to Mubhachari village, about 16 miles south of Khagrachari, and were attacked by Guerrilla group and about 30 of them were killed. In retaliation the Army burnt down several villages within a radius of 16 sq. miles. Many men and women were arrested and their fate is still not known. The Army also killed several people who were passing through the place by river/road not knowing anything about the incident beforehand.

In early Nov., 1979, about 30 personnel of the Army were killed at Adharakchara while returning from combing operation by the members of the "Shantibahini". In retaliation the Army burnt down the entire area covering about 50/60 sq. miles. They killed even the cattle of the villagers and roasted some of them for their feast. Now the entire area is still abandoned and the people have been in the forest. On 23 Dec., 1979, the Army also destroyed the villages of Bangahata, Thakujiyamakalak, Gulshakhali, Mala and killed many tribal people including Buddhist priests Ven. Bannitananda Bhikkhu of Thakujiyamakalak and Ven. Ajara Bhikkhu. The entire family consisting of 7 members of Rangabap Chakma was also killed by the Army. One Mrs. Kamala Chakma was raped and then put to death. Now about 40/50 thousand inhabitants of these villages in jungles in great distress. The Govt. are settling Bengalee Moslems, from outside the district, in all these villages.

In August, 1979, the Govt. issued a secret circular to all District Commissioners of the country and advised them to prepare the list of the landless people in their respective districts. Now these landless people from other districts are being taken to Chittagong Hill Tracts in Govt.-hired buses, trucks and trains in large numbers and are being settled on the lands of the tribal people. These people are supplied with wheat free of cost, house building grant and a pair of cattle for ploughing by the Govt. It was learnt that the Govt. have been distributing the wheat, which they received for Food for Work Projects. It was also learnt that the Govt. is distributing about 60,000 maunds of wheat every month to these people.

Since the Bengalee Moslems have occupied the lands of the tribals there had been clashes and riots and 30 Bengalees were killed. Now the Army has established camps near the new settlers and has been training them with small arms. Many of them have been recruited as Ansars (Islamic Guards) and they are being given training in the use of small arms by the Army.

In the early part of Jan., 1980, the Army burnt down several villages of Matiranga Police Station and about 4000 tribal people fled to India. This news was broadcast by All India Radio from Delhi.

Previously there were only three Sub-Divisions in the District. Now the Govt. have created three more Sub-Divisions. This has been done with a view to making the administrative unit smaller and to bringing more Bengalees in the district. Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board was established ostensibly to make quick development but as a matter of fact to get the development funds granted easily for the Army. With this money of the Board, strategic roads for the use of the Army are being built. New school buildings, office buildings and Rest Houses are being built but all for the Army's use only: Any Army personnel who are transferred to Rangamati, can claim these buildings for their use. No foreigner is allowed to go to the countryside. The Bangladesh Govt. preach maintenance of world peace, equal treatment for all, cry in support of the black people of Rhodesia and South Africa but in their own country they are trying to exterminate the entire tribal population (six hundred thousand) of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As a matter of fact, on 26 May, 1979, Brigadier Hannan and Lt. Col. Salam declared in a public meeting at Panchari, 16 miles north of Khagrachari, "We want only the soil, and not the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts" District Commissioner, Mr. Ali Haider Khan, and Mr. Abdul Awal, previously Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Division, warned the tribal leaders several times by saying that they could be extinct in the next 5 yrs.

At present 12,000 to 15,000 tribals are in detention inside and outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts jails including underground pits attached to every Military camp in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They have been detained and imprisoned without charge and without trial and under routine and most inhuman torture.

It is estimated that about 25,000 to 30,000 tribal people were put to death or crippled.

We appeal to all peace-loving Governments, all humanitarian organizations and all conscientious people to come forward to save the 600,000 tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts from total extinction.

Dated, January 16, 1980

B. S. Suman

"Jana Sanghati Samiti"

(Chittagong Hill Tracts People's League)