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Sub: An appeal to save the Chakma and other tribes of the  
Chittagong Hill Tracts from the total annihilation by the  
Bangladesh Government.

Dear Brother,

May I present to you the following reports about the plight of the tribal refugees in the Indian State of Mizoram and the failure of the Bangladesh Government to continue the dialogue with the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), the only political party in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT):

1. A report entitled, "Plight of Chakma refugees of Bhusan Chara of Chittagong Hill Tracts, now in Mizoram of India", sent by a member of the JSS on 23rd January 1986.
2. A report on the recent talks between the Bangladesh Government and the JSS, sent by a member of the JSS on 23rd January 1986.

In May and June 1984, the Bangladesh army (7th and 26th Bengal), the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR - 17th Battalion) and Bengali settlers launched surprise attacks on the indigenous inhabitants of Bhusan Chara, Gorosthan, Bhusan Bagh, Tarengya Ghat, Het Bhoariya, Suguri Para, Choto Harina and so on in the Barkal Upazilla (Sub-District) killing at least 300 tribal people mostly women and children, burning the houses, looting valuables and destroying Buddhist temples. The Bangladesh army also pursued a "scorched earth" campaign for a month between 20 September and 19 October 1984 in order to evict the villagers of Bar Kalak, Othyal Chari, Harin Hat Para, Mong Chari, Shivram Para and Bamer Subalong in the Gaba Chari area of the Subalong valley. As a result of these massacres and scorched earth campaign, about 18,000 tribal people fled to Mizoram. But the Mizoram Administration pushed most of them back to Bangladesh. However, the Indian Government has kindly given shelter to over 4,000 refugees at Tibira Ghat and Tagalak Bak in the Demagiri Sub-Division of the Lunglei District of Mizoram. Those refugees who were sent back to Bangladesh could not return to their homes because their villages had already been distributed to the Bengali settlers. They took refuge in the neighbouring upland forests and their fate is not known.

Under intense pressure from the international community, the Government of Bangladesh has reluctantly agreed to repatriate the tribal refugees of Tagalak Bak and Tibira Ghat camps. But before returning to Bangladesh the refugees demanded an assurance that they would be provided with security, adequate compensation and their own villages and farmlands which are now under the occupation of the Bengali settlers. Their delegation met the Deputy Commissioner of the Rangamati District at the Choto Harina Union Council Office to press for their demands and requested him to remove the Bengali settlers from their villages. This Senior Bengali Officer refused to give the delegation such assurances. On the contrary, he angrily replied, "Look, I don't care whether you come back or not, I assure you this much, Bangladesh government will never take back the Bengalees from your areas but it will send more and more." This frank admission by the Bangladesh Government's representative exposes the sinister motive of his government and confirms the importance of the refugees' genuine demands. In these insecure circumstances the refugees fear going back to Bangladesh.

Recently the Statesman Weekly of March 15, 1986, reported that the Mizoram Administration was deporting the refugees against their will to Bangladesh. Our past bitter experience shows that these refugees have no chance to survive in the extremely hostile Bangladesh. For example, as a consequence of the Bangladeshi regime's genocidal campaigns in the areas of Banraibari-Beltali-Belchari and Telafang-Ashalong-Gurangapara-Tabalchari-Barnala in the Feni valley in June and September, 1981, respectively, 10,000 tribal people died and some 18,000 tribals took refuge in the Tripura State

from Bangladesh. But the world community forced the Bangladeshi military regime to repatriate the refugees. They agreed to go back to Bangladesh on the government's promise that they would be given full protection from repression and that they would get back their villages and farmlands in addition to sufficient financial help for their rehabilitation. It is, perhaps, needless to say that the Bangladeshi regime did not keep its promises. Mr. Michael Roche (the Secretary of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, California 94704, U.S.A.) visited the CHT to investigate the genocidal crimes committed by the Bangladesh Authorities against the innocent indigenous people of the CHT. He gave a very clear picture of the plight of these refugees in his report published in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter - "...early this year, some 18,000 of them were repatriated to Bangladesh. These tribal people were met at the border by hostile Bangladesh officials and were given the equivalent of \$ 8 and were left to their fates. Return to their native villages is, of course, impossible for these refugees because their homes and possessions have been appropriated by Bengali settlers, so they join the tens of thousands of homeless now in the Hill Tracts. Harassed by government authorities, unable to flee the country and without any means of support, they live in limbo in a land where the quality of tribal life approaches the infernal." It is feared that many of them died of starvation and diseases. Their fates are not still known.

The international concern and ever-increasing resistance activities of the Jana Samhati Samiti have compelled the Bangladeshi regime to seek a solution to the CHT crisis through negotiation. The JSS agreed to meet with the representatives of the Bangladesh Government on condition that the Bengali settlement in the CHT would be stopped. This condition was accepted by the latter and a meeting between the JSS and the government took place on 21st October 1985. Both sides recognised that the CHT issue was political and that it should be solved politically. They also decided that they would meet again on 26th December 1985. But the Bangladesh Government failed to participate in the proposed talks. It also did not keep the promise that it would stop Bengali immigration into the CHT.

This failure of the Bangladeshi regime to continue the dialogue with the JSS is one of the long series of its broken promises. It proposes to negotiate with the JSS and then backs down on its proposals unilaterally. For example, on 27 July 1982, General Hossain Mohammad Ershad, Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) of Bangladesh, declared at both Rangamati and Khagrachari that he wanted a political solution to the CHT problem and that he would like to meet both the leaders of the JSS and other leaders of the CHT people. Then on the advice of Major General Monnaf, the G.O.C. of the CHT area, two committees were set up and a charter of demands was made. The JSS also expressed its willingness to meet the government leaders to find a political solution. Then the military dictator did not show any interest in the talks at all. He often announces his desire to negotiate with the JSS for a political solution before he goes abroad or he seeks foreign aid. After returning home or getting foreign aid he cancels his announcement. His frequent misleading propaganda verging on deception has given rise to a popular joke in Dhaka that the abbreviation for Chief Martial Law Administrator, CMLA, actually stands for Cancel My Last Announcement.

I appeal earnestly to you to protect the tribal refugees in India and those who have been deported from India to Bangladesh until the rights of the indigenous people of the CHT are restored fully by the international community. The situation in the CHT is worsening as the fundamentally hostile Bangladeshi regime is intensifying its racial and genocidal activities in the area.

To

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Yours sincerely

*Ramendu*

PLIGHT OF CHAKMA REFUGEES OF BHUSAN CHARA, CHOTO HARINA OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, NOW IN MIZORAM OF INDIA. (This report was sent by a Member of the Jana Samhati Samiti or JSS on 23rd January 1986).

The inhuman massacre of the tribals in Bhusan Chara, Choto Harina areas from 31st May, 1984, to 3rd June, 1984, has resulted in mass exodus of Chakma tribals from their ancestral homeland to save their lives from the paws of Bangladesh government and its army, para-military forces and illegal Bengali Muslim infiltrators in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The massacre took place with a view to make room for the Bengali Muslims of Bangladesh. It is an open secret of Bangladesh government which is implementing its policy of extermination of tribals through its evil designs for which many Chakma tribals were inhumanly massacred in Bhusan Chara, Choto Harina areas under P.S. (Police Station or Sub-District) Barkal, while more than 4,000 tribals had to take refuge in Mizoram of India. The Bengali Muslims have occupied the land properties of the Chakma tribals who were forced to leave behind all their ancestral land properties and take refuge in Mizoram of India.

The refugees were sheltered in two camps set up at Tripura Ghat and Tagolok Bak under Demagiri sub-division, Mizoram, immediately after the 31st May, 1984 massacre. Since then Bangladesh government had remained indifferent to the question of repatriating the Chakma refugees back to their homeland. The refugees have been suffering due to inadequate supply of ration and medical facilities provided for them.

It is learnt that ration and medical supplies have now been stopped for the refugees.

On the question of repatriation of the Chakma refugees, a flag meeting was held on 29th November, 1985, between the SDO (Sub-Divisional Officer) of Lunglei, Mizoram and the Upa Zilla (Sub-District) Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Barkal, CHT, Bangladesh and a magistrate of Barkal Upa Zilla, including Upendra Lal Chakma, a former M.P. of CHT.

A meeting was also arranged between the Bangladesh officials and the Chakma refugees in order to facilitate their early repatriation to their homeland. The BSF (Border Security Force - India) and the Mizoram administration sent 11 representatives of Chakma refugees to meet the deputy commissioner of Rangamati, CHT, at the Union Council Office, Choto Harina. Shanti Kumar Chakma and Jubo Lakkho Chakma, refugees, when raised the question of taking back the Bengali Muslims from their homelands, the deputy commissioner is said to have replied angrily - "Look, I don't care whether you come back or not, I assure you this much, Bangladesh government will never take back the Bengalees from your areas but it will send more and more". At one point, the Nirbahi Officer of Barkal Upa Zilla, threatened one Chakma refugee in India, named Jubo Lakkho Chakma, to have him arrested with criminal cases instituted against him. The refugees feel insecure to go back as there is no guarantee of life and property for them.

The Chakma refugees are reported to have submitted a memorandum on 2nd January, 1986, to Bangladesh government with some conditions for their repatriation. The memorandum submitted by the Chakma refugees to the Bangladesh Officials at Lunglei, Mizoram, is said to have contained the following points:

1. To take back the Bengali Muslim infiltrators from their areas.
2. Bangladesh government is to return their land property, gardens and their houses to the owners.
3. To compensate for the affected houses, gardens etc.
4. To ensure the guarantee of safety from all sorts of tortures by the Bangladesh army, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and other government agencies.
5. To ensure the removal of additional BDR and army camps from Bhusan Chara and Choto Harina.
6. To ensure food and cash amount to the repatriated refugees on long term basis by the Bangladesh government so that they may become self-reliant.
7. To ensure the guarantee of constructive supervision of the above mentioned (1-6) terms and conditions through a representative of Indian government or any other country.

Reliable reports say that the Mizoram administration which is hostile to the Chakmas, is indifferent to the problems of the Chakma refugees. Its policemen are reported to have molested and assaulted Chakma refugee men and women in the refugee camps.

As reported by Chakma refugees who took refuge in India in 1979 and 1981, Bangladesh government did not keep its commitment of rehabilitation and compensation to the refugees after their return. So the fate of these Chakma refugees remains full of uncertainty as Bangladesh government refuses to give them guarantee of life and property and against their repatriation. Only future knows what awaits their fate.

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From an article; "Final solution depends on Centre & MNF", carried in the Statesman Weekly (Calcutta) of March 15, 1986 (page 13)- "According to figures released by Aizawl (Mizoram), about 3,400 Bangladesh Chakmas were repatriated till mid-February and another 600 refugees were to be sent back thereafter, but the indications are that the deportations are continuing from the Tablabagh (Tagalabak) and Tiperaghat camps."

A REPORT ON THE RECENT TALKS BETWEEN THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT AND THE JANA SAMHATI SAMITI (JSS) - sent by a Member of the JSS on January 23, 1986.

"We have been trying our utmost to achieve our political rights through constitutional method and peacefully from Bangladesh government since the independence of Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujib regime gave a deaf ear to our delegation led by our late leader M.N. Larma in 1972 when a demand for autonomy of Chittagong Hill Tracts was placed. Thereafter Zia regime also did not accept our cause. But instead, it started infiltration of Bengali Muslims in CHT more nakedly in order to uproot the Jumma people (CHT people) from their homeland. Ershad's regime also continued the heinous policy of Islamisation and Militarisation in CHT. In spite of that, Ershad's government being under immense pressure from outside world and our struggle being on a greater momentum against the Militarisation and infiltration of Bengali Muslims illegally in CHT, had no other option but to come for a dialogue with the party (JSS) on the basis of political process under terms and conditions. Ershad's government had to set up a liaison committee with our approval. The committee is headed by Upendra Lal Chakma, a former M.P. of CHT.

The terms and conditions are:-

1. Credentials of the representatives of Bangladesh government.
2. Total stoppage of infiltration of Bengali Muslims in CHT.
3. A press release to be given by the Bangladesh government regarding the dialogue before hand etc.

Under these terms and conditions, a dialogue was held between our party JSS and Bangladesh government on 21st Oct. 1985. In the dialogue, it was decided that the problem of Chittagong Hill Tracts is -

1. A political and National problem.
2. This problem is to be solved politically.

In continuation of the first dialogue, a second dialogue was to be held on 26th Dec. 1985. But at the last moment the dialogue could not take place as scheduled due to Bangladesh government's insincerity and difference of opinion among the military junta.

If there is any progress regarding dialogue with Bangladesh government in the near future, we would let you know the result as soon as possible.

With regard to present situation in CHT, the Bangladesh government is trying its utmost to exterminate us with its military might. It is increasing its military camps and keeping its economic blockade so that our Jumma people are crushed. Its military campaigns against innocent tribal villagers are being carried out systematically and our Jumma people are being victimised of cruel atrocities by Bangladesh forces. Although Bangladesh government declares that it has stopped infiltration of Bengali Muslims in