

From Dr. R.S. Dewan,  
C/o Dr. H.D. Locksley, Dept. of Chemistry,  
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Date: 8 October 1984

Dear Friend,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of 28 Sept. 1984 enclosing the materials concerning the Centre for World Indigenous Studies. I am most grateful to you and to your influential organization, CWIS, for taking effective initiatives to protect the rights of the indigenous nationalities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in their own traditional homeland. Your sympathetic response to our appeals for help has greatly inspired us to continue our legitimate struggle for survival from the violent Muslim Bengalis invasion. Your help and your compassion for the people of the CHT have given us hope and confidence.

It is very encouraging to know that you are kindly persuading the World Council of Indigenous Peoples to bring the CHT issue to the attention of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and that you have a plan to publicise the plight of the nationalities of the CHT in the CWIS journal, "Window on the Fourth World" and also the Centre's reprint service, "Fourth World Papers". As you know, Lt.-Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad, the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh, is the most powerful man in the country. His Prime Minister, Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan, has virtually no power. It would be kind of you if you would write to President Ershad instead of his prime minister. I believe your letter would bring tremendous pressure to bear on the regime of Bangladesh which is heavily dependent on American aid.

The distribution of your journal and indeed any journals, dealing with human rights violation, in Asia will not be easy. Because most of the Asian countries will not allow it to be circulated if it exposes human rights violations in those countries. It will be possible to circulate it to the ethnic groups who are living in the western world. I have no contact with other ethnic groups except the people of the CHT who are living in exile or have been forced to flee the country. Even I do not write to the people who are still living in the CHT as I fear for their safety. There are no human rights in the CHT and our people have no official and police protection. They always live in constant fear and terror. I think that your journal can be distributed through each ethnic group living outside their country. I shall be most grateful to you if you would kindly send me a copy of your journal which will contain a paper on the CHT crisis. I would like to circulate that paper to various governments, human rights pressure groups and the United Nations bodies such as the Commission on Human Rights and the International/-

International Labour Organization.

I fully appreciate your endeavour to encourage indigenous groups to work together, to assist and support one another. The situation in the CHT is, perhaps, more complicated than any other issue in the neighbouring areas. For example, Bangladesh is not a secular country. Nor is it democratic. Islamic fundamentalism is growing rapidly in Bangladesh. Since 1947, the legendary British rule of law and justice has disappeared completely from Bangladesh. All successive governments of Bangladesh did not speak the language of justice, humanity and tolerance. They systematically exterminated the indigenous plough-land farmers in the valleys in order to seize their farmland<sup>s</sup> for the outsider Muslim Bengali settlers. In the wake of government-directed violence tens of thousands of tribal people fled their homeland and sought refuge in the neighbouring secular states. All these tribal refugees either from the CHT or other districts of Bangladesh are Buddhists, Hindus and Christians. If they are sent back to Bangladesh they will either be killed by the Bangladesh armed forces or die of starvation. Their ancestral homes, villages and farm lands have already been given to the outsider Muslim Bengalis. In these circumstances the people of the CHT will not contemplate to do anything which will undermine their position.

I gather that your prestigious organization has tremendous influence with the American Senators and Representatives. I shall be tremendously grateful to you if you would kindly take the matter up with the American Foreign Affairs Committee which is well placed to bring pressure against the brutal Government of Bangladesh. The people of the CHT need your help. With best wishes.

Yours

*Ramendu*

To  
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