

From Dr. R.S. Dewan,
C/o Dr. H.D. Locksley, Dept. of Chemistry,
Salford University, Salford M5 4WT, England.

Date: 7 Sept. 1984

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

Dear Sir,

May I present to you another evidence relating to the Bangladesh Government's programme of systematic extermination of the indigenous nationalities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). I enclose with the letter a copy of the appeal made by International Fellowship Of Reconciliation to General Hossain Mohammad Ershad of Bangladesh on 17 October 1983.

IFOR has appealed to Gen. Ershad, the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh, to change his regime's genocidal policy against the innocent tribal men, women and children. Under tremendous pressure from public opinion Gen. Ershad declared on 27 July 1982 at Rangamati and Khagrachari that he wanted political solution of the CHT crisis. Encouraged by his announcement the tribal leaders formed committees to negotiate with the Government. But the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) is not a man of his word. Perhaps it is noteworthy that he has failed to keep his promises so frequently that the Bangladeshis take his word with a grain of salt. This has given rise to a joke in Dhaka - CMLA practically stands for "Cancel My Last Announcement". In fact he says one thing and does another. Under the pretext of negotiation for political solution of the CHT crisis he is pursuing the anti-tribal policy more vigorously than his predecessors and carrying out the programme of Islamising the CHT with the usual Islamic zealotry.

Experience has shown that the Bangladeshi regime turns a deaf ear to all appeals made by the Human Rights groups and conscientious people. I believe the donor countries would have to compel the Bangladeshi regime to change its genocidal policy. After all to ask the Bengali military junta to stop genocide in the CHT is like asking the piranha to be on diet. The people of the CHT need your help in their just struggle for survival from the violent Muslim Bengalis invasion.

To

Rudy Ryser Esq.,
Centre for World Indigenous Studies,
P.O. Box 911, Snoqualmie,
Washington 98065, U.S.A.

Yours sincerely

Ramendu Dewan

INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

Hof van Sonoy 15-17

1811 LD Alkmaar Holland

Phone 072-123014

October 17, 1983

General Hossain Mohammed Ershad
Chief Administrator of Martial Law
Government Offices
Dacca
Bangladesh

Dear General Hossain Mohammed Ershad,

Please accept these greetings and the wish for your good health.

On behalf of this Fellowship, whose members live in many countries, I write to express our concern with the course your government has been following in regard to the tribal peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Like so many, we had hoped that a new policy would emerge following the change in government in 1981. It had been a great blot on the international standing of the country to see the treatment of these minority peoples and the confiscation of their lands. Even the British colonialists had been careful of the rights of this segment of the region's population. One hoped for a prompt reversal of the government's policy.

But again we hear tragic news of more incursions into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We understand there continue to be Bengalis sent to live in this area and that they are even trained in the use of weapons as well as given military protection.

We recall that the Bengali people were among the first to rise against British colonialism. Now it appears that they are themselves becoming colonizers.

We are aware that among the tribal people, a movement of armed resistance is in existence, the Shanti Bahini. But we also understand that this is a small movement, not representative of the peaceful and nonviolent culture of the tribal peoples, many of whom are Buddhists. While no doubt many of the tribal people sympathize with the purpose of the Shanti Bahini, they cannot join an armed struggle. But they are caught between the army and this movement and many of them suffer terribly from the consequences. If they refuse to give shelter or support in food aid to the fighters, they are considered traitors and may be killed. If they submit to giving shelter or food, they are in danger from the national army. Thus the ordinary people live in a situation of constant fear. Some try to survive in the jungle, even though they face great suffering there. Others try to flee to India but are driven back.

It is an appalling situation. It shames Bangladesh to treat these ancient minorities in such a way.

Even so, General Ershad, we have great respect for the Bengali people and hope that present policies will be changed. We appeal to you to seek this change, so that the compassionate qualities of Islam will be evident in regard to the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

most sincerely,


James H. Forest, General Secretary