

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

Date: 31st July 1986

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 documents regarding the refugees  
who have sought refuge in the Tripura State of India.

1. A copy of the Survival International Urgent Action Bulletin Update,  
UAB/BAN/1C/JUN/1986 under the heading, "Chittagong Hill Tracts:  
More Refugees".
2. A letter written by Mr. Stephen Corry, the Director of Survival  
International, to General Ershad of Bangladesh on 30th June 1986.
3. A letter sent by Mr. Stephen Corry, the Director of Survival  
International, to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India,  
on 4 June 1986.
4. An article, "Nripen's plea to Centre: refugee influx", from the  
Times of India of June 22, 1986.
5. A report, "BSF outposts in Tripura alerted", from the Telegraph  
(India) of 22 June 1986.
6. An editorial article, "On India's Plate", from the Statesman  
Weekly (India) of 19 July 1986.
7. A piece, "Tribes flee torture in hills", from the Observer (London)  
of 20 July 1986.

On the orders of the top military leaders of Bangladesh, Col. Golam Helal Morshed Khan (Brigade Commander, 203 Brigade, Bangladesh Army, Khagrachari), Lt. Col. Ismat Ahmad Choudhury (19 East Bengal Regiment, Zonal Commander, Panchari Zone), Major Shajahan (19 East Bengal Regiment, Second in Command, Panchari Zone), and Mr. Golam Sarwar (Deputy Commissioner of the Khagrachari District) organised the Matiranga-Panchari-Khagrachari massacres on 30th April and 1st May 1986. Then they carried out genocidal campaign in the Dighinala Upazilla (Sub-District) in May and June 1986. As a consequence, some 500 unarmed indigenous people mostly old men, women and children were murdered, over 60 villages were burnt, many Hindu and Buddhist temples were desecrated and destroyed, atleast 10 Buddhist monks were killed, properties were looted, many women were abducted, raped and forcibly converted to Islam, more than 60,000 people were made homeless, over 25,000 refugees have sought refuge in the Tripura State of India, another 20,000 or so refugees are trying to seek shelter in the Tripura State. They have lost their homes, lands and properties, and their villages and farmlands are being appropriated by the Bengali settlers.

The Government of India have kindly lodged 11,120 refugees at Korbuk, 3840 at Silachari, 7460 at Thakumbari, 1076 at Nutan Bazar by 2nd July 1986. Other refugees have taken shelter in the areas of Bhagabantilla, Jaleiya and Raisyabari. More and more refugees are entering Tripura every day as the Bangladesh Government's genocidal activities are continuing unabated. The Bangladeshi regime is depopulating the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) systematically in order to repopulate the region with the majority community of Bangladesh as part of its programme to Islamise the CHT, the traditional homeland of 12 tribes. These refugees need food, clothes and medicine. They are totally dependent on the help and kindness of the international community.

Evidently the Bangladeshi military junta is reluctant to repatriate

these evacuees as it has deliberately pushed them out of their ancestral homeland. Even if the Bangladeshi regime is forced by the international community to take back the refugees, it will not rehabilitate them in their native villages and it will certainly abandon them just after their repatriation. For example, as a result of the government-directed Beltali Belchari-Banraibari and Telafang-Ashalong-Gurangapara-Tabalchari-Barnala massacres in 1981, some 18,000 refugees sought refuge in the Tripura State of India. But the Bangladesh Government denied that they were from the CHT. However, international pressure compelled it to repatriate them. It is, perhaps, note-worthy that the Government of Bangladesh gave assurance to the refugees that they would be provided with adequate financial help and security for their rehabilitation in their own villages. After their repatriation at the border, the evacuees were given an equivalent of US\$8 per family and then they were abandoned by the hostile Bengali officers. They could not return to their villages because their villages and farm lands had already been appropriated by the invading settlers. Their fates are still unknown. It is feared that many of them died of starvation and diseases.

The Bangladesh Government and the Bengali settlers are fundamentally hostile to the indigenous people. So the refugees fear to go back to the scimitars and guns of the Bangladesh armed forces. They have no faith in the Bangladesh Government. They are willing to go back to the CHT if the Bangladeshi regime undertakes to implement the following measures which are deemed absolutely necessary for their existence.

1. Removal of the non-tribal settlers from the Refugees' villages and farmlands.
2. Withdrawal of the military and paramilitary forces from the Refugees' areas.
3. Adequate financial help for the rehabilitation of the Refugees in their native villages.
4. Supervision of the Refugee rehabilitation programme under the auspices of the UNO or any neutral and humane countries.
5. Security for the lives and properties of the Refugees.
6. Inquiry into the Matiranga-Panchari-Khagrachari-Dighinala massacres under the auspices of the UNO or a group of human rights agencies.

If the refugees are deported and the congenial situation for their repatriation is not restored by taking the said measures, then they will certainly face the prospects of death, torture, rape, starvation and forcible conversion to Islam in the concentration camps. Life in the concentration camps under the Bangladesh security forces is so horrifying that when the Bangladesh Government decided to set up another concentration camp at Ghagra (12 miles west of Rangamati) the local people simply fled to other areas. Survival International, on behalf of the CHT refugees, has appealed to the Indian Government not to return the refugees to Bangladesh. At the same time it has also urged the military leader of Bangladesh to stop genocidal activities against the defenceless indigenous population in the CHT. Over and above, Survival International has requested General Ershad of Bangladesh to investigate the massacres of the tribal people and to bring the culprits to trial.

I appeal fervently to you to save the lives of the refugees until the CHT problem is justly resolved and the birth-rights of the Jumma people (the CHT people) are fully re-established.

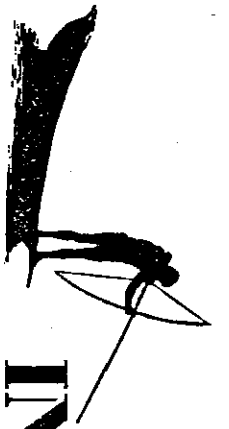
With my best regards.

To

Mr. Rudolph C. Ryser,  
Chairman of the Center for World Indigenous Studies,  
P.O. Box 911, Snoqualmie,  
Washington 98065, U.S.A.

Yours sincerely

*Ramendu*



# SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

FOR THE RIGHTS OF THREATENED TRIBAL PEOPLES

General Ershad  
President of the Republic of Bangladesh  
Bangla Bhavan  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh

28 CRAVEN STREET  
LONDON WC6N 8RT  
ENGLAND  
TELEPHONE: 01-439 3261  
TELEX: 86884 CADDEN-C

30 June 1986

Dear General Ershad,

PERSONS  
KOLAN HASAURT-TENSON ONE  
DIRECTOR  
STEPHEN CORRY

Survival International has been extremely concerned by the latest reports issuing from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of eastern Bangladesh. From a compilation of personal accounts, refugee reports and from media coverage, it seems that the Bangladesh armed forces have been stepping up considerably their operations in the northern part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, while corresponding increases in armed attacks have also been carried out by the Shanti Bahini.

As you are well aware, the escalation in the armed conflict is having a terrible effect on the civilian population of the region. While Bangladesh press sources recount the killing of settlers and the hurried evacuation of thousands of recently settled peoples, other sources have provided detailed information of several thousand tribal refugees who have fled the area and who are seeking refuge in India.

Of particular concern to Survival International are the repeated reports received by us of serious violations of human rights committed by the armed forces of Bangladesh against the tribal villagers of the region. These reports detail such gross violations of human rights as torture, rape, the burning of communities and pillage. Many of these alleged offences have apparently been associated with army sweeps through tribal villages, which intensified in the Khagrachari area last month.

We urge that you take immediate steps to have these excesses investigated and that those responsible are brought to trial.

Survival International has welcomed the attempts made by the Bangladesh Government to enter into negotiations with the Shanti Bahini in order to end the conflict in the region. We urge, however, that the Bangladesh Government simultaneously takes concrete steps to address the grievances of the tribal peoples of the region. In particular, we believe that a full and just settlement of the problems in the Chittagong Hill tracts cannot be achieved until the Government makes full recognition of the tribal peoples' customary land rights in accordance with International Law.

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 21144  
UNRECORDED-NONO REGD-NONO  
CINDO BANK No. 868444

As a signatory of the International Labour Organisation's Convention 107 Tribal and Indigenous Populations, Bangladesh has undertaken to recognise the right of tribal peoples to the collective and individual ownership of the lands they traditionally occupy (Article 11). Reports received by Survival International indicate that this principle has been persistently violated in recent years, notably through the Government promoted annexation of tribal lands and their settlement with lowlander Bengalis.

Survival International urges the suspension of this resettlement programme and the promotion of comprehensive legislation that gives full acknowledgement to the rights of the tribal peoples of Bangladesh to their traditional lands.

We look forward to hearing how you plan to deal with this matter, yours sincerely

Stephen Corry  
Director

cc. International Labour Office



# SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

FOR THE RIGHTS OF THREATENED TRIBAL PEOPLES

The Rt Hon Rajiv Gandhi MP  
The Prime Minister  
The PM Secretariat  
South Block  
New Delhi 110011  
INDIA

28 CRAVEN STREET  
LONDON WC1N 3BT  
ENGLAND  
TELEPHONE: 01-839 3887  
TELEX: 86892 GARDEN-G

4 June 1986

TRIBAL REFUGEES IN TRIPURA AND MIZORAM

Dear Prime Minister,

PRESIDENT:  
KORUN HANSON-TENISON OBE  
DIRECTOR:  
STEPHEN CORY

Survival International is a human rights organisation, with consultative status as an NGO at the UN and EEC human rights commissions and special listing with the ILO, which defends the rights of threatened tribal peoples to survival, self-determination and the use and ownership of their traditional lands.

We have been very concerned by recent reports which allege that the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) have been forcibly preventing refugees, fleeing from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in eastern Bangladesh, from entering the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram. Some reports have even alleged the torture of tribal peoples at the hands of the BSF to persuade them to return to Bangladesh.

We respectfully urge that you have this matter looked into and seek to ensure that the authorities in Tripura and Mizoram provide a just and humane treatment to the refugees in accordance with the stipulations of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

In particular we would draw your attention to Article 33.1 of the Convention, which reads:

'No Contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'

While we are aware that India is not actually a signatory of this Convention, we urge that its humane terms are nonetheless observed and hope that you will take steps to involve the competent authorities at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in administering aid to these unfortunate refugees

who, according to recent estimates, now number between seven and twelve thousand people.  
We look forward to learning how you plan to deal with this matter,  
yours sincerely

Stephen Corry  
Director

## Nipen's plea to Centre: refugee influx

The Times of India News Service  
AGARTALA, June 21.

THE influx of refugees from the Chittagong hill tracts continues unabated with the total now exceeding 16,000.

The chief minister, Mr. Nipen Chakraborty, has written a letter to the minister for external affairs to initiate high-level talks with the Bangladesh government regarding the return of the refugees. Mr. Chakraborty is likely to discuss this issue during his forthcoming visit to Delhi. A token relief of Rs. 23 lakhs has been sanctioned by the Union government to provide the minimum needs to the tribal refugees.

Three camps with an estimated capacity of 4,500 people each, have already been set up at Slachari, Vakumbari and Karbil.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the Tripura Uprajati Juba Samity MLAs that includes Mr. Nagendra Jamatia and Mr. R. Rabindra Debnarma, has left Agartala for Delhi to discuss in the refugee issue with the Prime Minister and the Union home minister.

### FLAG MEETING

Meanwhile, a flag meeting between the BSF and Bangladesh Rifles at the local commander level is on at Raisyabari in south Tripura to sort out the problem stemming from heavy exchange of fire twice between the BSF and Bangladesh security forces since June 9 reports PTL

The BDR posts while the BSF has also reinforced its deployment in sensitive south Tripura's border line. Over 20,000 refugees are moving near the border in a desperate bid to slip into Tripura. Several groups of such refugees, trying to enter south Tripura have been pushed back by BSF patrols operating under instructions to resist any large scale infiltration at the point of entry.

The BDF has also stepped up surveillance on the 122-km Cachar-Karimganj border with Bangladesh to curb both infiltration from Bangladesh into Assam and trans-border smuggling, according to the deputy inspector general, BSF, Tripura-Cachar-Mizoram sector, Mr. B. N. Bhattacharjee.

Mr. Bhattacharjee told newsmen at the BSF battalion headquarters in Slichar today, that the average distance of border outposts from each other in these districts had been further reduced to four km for effective vigilance and mobile patrolling.

He said, a total 517 Bangladeshis, who sneaked across the border of the two districts during January to May this year, had promptly been pushed back.

Mr. Bhattacharjee said the BDR posts while the BSF has also reinforced its deployment in sensitive south Tripura's border line. Over 20,000 refugees are moving near the border in a desperate bid to slip into Tripura. Several groups of such refugees, trying to enter south Tripura have been pushed back by BSF patrols operating under instructions to resist any large scale infiltration at the point of entry.

The Times of India News Service  
HYDERABAD, June 21: The neglected telegraph service would receive top priority in the next 12 months so that 90 per cent of telegrams to the farthest destinations would be delivered within 12 hours, the Union communications minister,

## BSF outposts in Tripura alerted

Agartala, June 21 (PTI): All BSF outposts along South Tripura's 100-km-long border stretch with Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts have been put on maximum alert following heavy exchange of fire between the BSF and Bangladesh security personnel yesterday.

Border intelligence sources said Bangladesh had deployed its Army in all the border positions while the BSF has also reinforced its deployment along the sensitive south Tripura border.

Nearly 16,000 tribal refugees from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts have entered South Tripura since April 30 to escape reprisals from Bangladesh security forces and plains resettlers. Over 20,000 refugees are moving near the border in a desperate bid to slip into Tripura.

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Mr Bhattacharjee told newsmen at the BSF battalion headquarters today that the average distance between border outposts in these districts had been further reduced to four km for effective vigilance and mobile patrolling.

He said a total of 517 Bangladeshis, who had sneaked across the border of the two districts during January to May, had promptly been pushed back. The number of refugees pushed back last year from these districts stood at 1,099, as against 583 in 1984. Mr Bhattacharjee said the BSF had seized smuggled goods worth Rs 22.65 lakhs last year. The amount of contraband seized during the first five months of the year was Rs 14.81 lakhs.

Mr Bhattacharjee, who is now on a visit to forward positions in the two districts, said a proposal for deploying speedboats along the border rivers of the Kushiara and Barak for river patrolling was under consideration.

Flag meeting: A flag meeting between the BSF and Bangladesh Rifles at the local commander's level is on at Raisyabari in south Tripura.

The commander of Raisyabari had already lodged a protest against "unprovoked firing" by the BDR and the Bangladesh Army jointly on BSF firewalls.

ON INDIA'S PLATE

It is not very surprising that the settlement in Mizoram seems to have coincided with a fresh spurt of official persecution of the Chakma. Bohomong and Maung tribes in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts. About 20,444 Chakma refugees have fled to Tripura in the last month and a half, and reports suggest that more victims of ethnic and religious intolerance are expected in the near future. The connexion between their plight and the activities of Mizo rebels is not so far-fetched. The Mizo National Front was seen as the reverse of the Shanti Bahini: if, as a result of the New Delhi agreements, the Mizo rebels voluntarily wind up their guerrilla camps in Bangladesh, the authorities in Dhaka might arguably seek to compensate for the loss of leverage through renewed reprisals against the Buddhist minority which is thought to enjoy Indian support. Evidence of this already happening, as well

as the likelihood that traditional animosity might prompt Mr Laldenga to revive the demand for abolition of the Chakma district councils, suggest that New Delhi might have to review its thinking on this particular refugee problem. There can be no question of not sympathizing with the sufferings of Bangladesh's microscopic Buddhist community, but the impact on the north-east's already complex demographic problems may also have to be taken into account.

The situation is most acute in Tripura where, as Mr Nripen Chakraborty has already pointed out, the social and economic burden of refugees can only exacerbate existing political tension. It is argued that the Tripura Upajati Juva Samity and Tripura National Volunteers would never have been able to muster so much support if forced Bengal Hindu migration from the

Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong districts had not brought down the tribal share of the population from 70 per cent before Independence to the present 26 per cent. A further dilution might lead to the recrudescence of communal violence; in any case, with an astonishingly high number of registered unemployed people, Tripura is in no position to accommodate more people. This is not to suggest that New Delhi should forget that the Chakma and other tribes had opted for India in 1947, or refuse the sanctuary that has been offered until now on humanitarian grounds. But strenuous diplomatic efforts should be made at the same time to ensure that they can live in peace and with dignity in their own homeland instead of being harassed and uprooted.

Unfortunately, the hopes aroused at the SAARC summit when Mr Rajiv Gandhi and General Ershad promised to find a solution proved as futile as the more specific agreement of 1981 providing for the return of 17,000 refugees. Dhaka's more recent undertaking to take back 2,500 Chakmas was also not kept. It must be admitted, however, that the main reason for fail-

ure is that the tribal refugees have no wish to go back to a country where they are made to feel unwanted and are repeatedly the target of attack by both the army and officially sponsored Muslim settlers in their traditional villages. Successive Governments of Bangladesh have tried to destroy their culture and identity under the guise of development projects, through colonization schemes and by setting up a series of "adarsh grams" which are reportedly little better than concentration camps. In addition, General Ershad seems to have revived the plan of periodic military expeditions. Admittedly, events in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are of domestic concern for Bangladesh: but New Delhi can point to the spillover effect and also, now that the Mizo problem has been formally resolved, try to convince Dhaka that whatever might have occurred in the past, the Shanti Bahini will not receive any kind of help in the future. There seems no other way of ensuring that Bangladesh's Buddhists are saved from persecution and that Tripura, Mizoram and other north-eastern regions are spared a continuing influx of displaced and dispossessed humanity.—July 14.

(EDITORIAL)

Tribes flee torture in hills

by ROBERT del QUIARO

THOUSANDS of tribal people are fleeing torture, rape and concentration camps in the hills of southern Bangladesh.

Troops have stepped up a drive to make them give up much of their land to colonists from elsewhere in the country, pressing them to abandon their ancient religious beliefs and convert to Islam.

The most recent exodus from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, during the last four months, has taken at least 7,000 people—and possibly as many as 12,000—over the border into India, according to Survival International, a London-based organisation working to protect tribal peoples.

The refugees are reported to be in a wretched condition. It is also alleged that the Indian Government has failed to inform the UN High Commission for Refugees.

Survival International is appealing to Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, to let the refugees stay and to put the United Nations refugee body on to their case. The organisation believes that local Indian officials are trying to send back refugees while allowing out no information.

The Bangladeshi Government is trying to reduce demand on agricultural land in the more populous lowlands by moving thousands of families to the south-eastern hills.

The hill people are resisting the influx of settlers and a guerrilla war is under way as the Shanti Bahini, a hand-to-mouth force of tribespeople who have seized weapons from Bangladeshi troops, attack settler farms and ambush army patrols.

Bitterness is especially intense because the Bengali-speaking lowlanders have little in common with the 13 hill tribes, who speak their own languages and are ethnically akin to people farther east, in India and Burma.

The most explosive division is religious. Islam is the official religion of Bangladesh but the hill people are mainly Buddhist.

Survival International has many reports of tribal girls being raped—either by troops during sweeps through villages or in forced marriages to

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# BANGLADESH

## CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: MORE REFUGEES

Escalating conflict between the Bangladesh Armed Forces and tribal guerrillas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts has led to widespread killings. Several thousand refugees have fled to India, where their future is far from secure.

Survival International is calling on the Indian Government to involve the United Nations in administering assistance to the refugees needs.



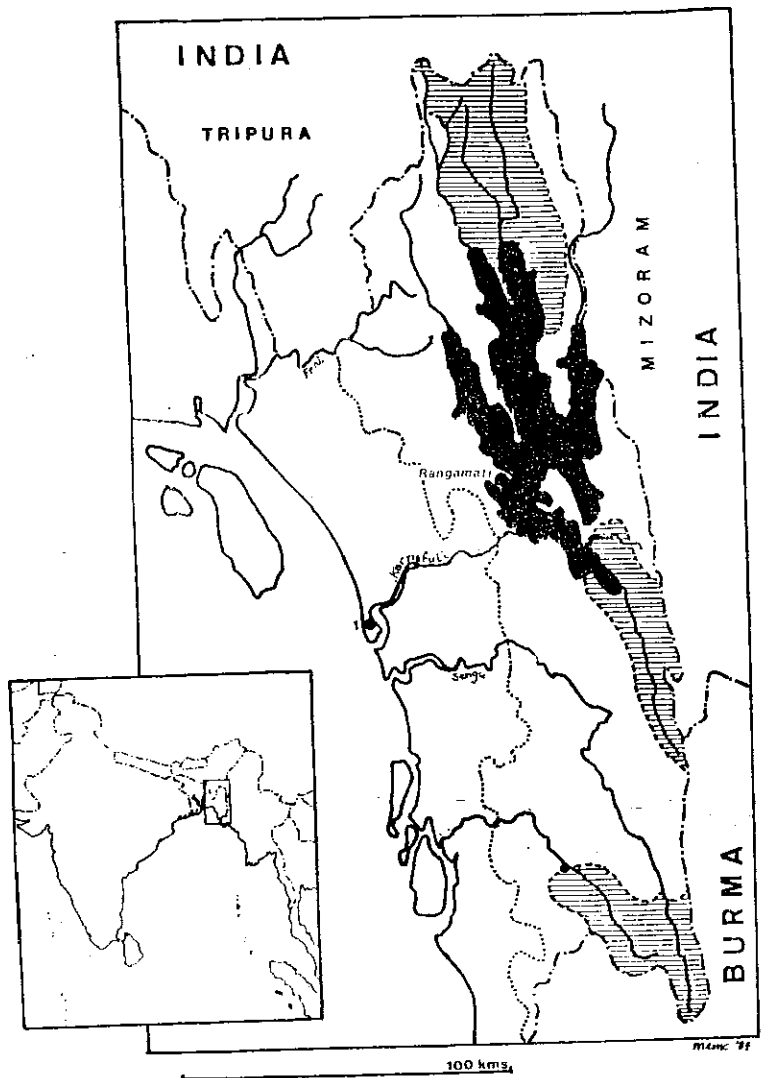
**SURVIVAL  
INTERNATIONAL**  
FOR THE RIGHTS OF THREATENED TRIBAL PEOPLES

URGENT ACTION BULLETIN UPDATE

UAB/BAN/1c/JUN/1986

29 CRAVEN STREET  
LONDON WC2N 5NT  
ENGLAND

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## BANGLADESH

### CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: MORE REFUGEES

UPDATE UAB/BAN/1c/JUN/1986

OVER FIVE THOUSAND TRIBAL REFUGEES HAVE FLED FROM THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS OF EASTERN BANGLADESH. CONFLICT BETWEEN TRIBAL PEOPLES FIGHTING FOR THEIR LANDS AND GOVERNMENT FORCES INTENT ON ENFORCING THEIR COLONISATION WITH NON-TRIBAL SETTLERS HAS LED TO BLOODSHED AND BITTERNESS. MANY OF THE TRIBALS, FLEEING THE VIOLENCE, HAVE SOUGHT SAFETY IN INDIA. BUT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IS RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE REFUGE AND PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE INDIAN BORDER FORCES ARE FORCING THE REFUGEES BACK INTO BANGLADESH.

SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL HAS CALLED ON THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO OBSERVE INTERNATIONALLY ESTABLISHED HUMANE PRINCIPLES AND TO INVOLVE THE UNITED NATIONS IN SERVING THE REFUGEES' NEEDS.

#### Colonisation and Genocide

The genocidal war being waged in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), between tribal peoples fighting for their rights to their lands and to self-determination and Government security forces intent on enforcing the colonisation of tribal lands with lowlander settlers, persists unabated.

Reports have leaked out of this remote part of eastern Bangladesh over the last fifteen years of gross violations of human rights being perpetrated against members of the thirteen tribal groups of the region. Religiously and culturally distinct from other Bangladeshis, the tribals have reportedly suffered from indiscriminate attacks on their villages, as army forces have attempted to quell resistance to the Government-promoted takeover of their lands (see UAB/BAN/1b/SEP/84 and SINews 6,7 & 10).

Survival International continues to receive detailed reports of the abuses allegedly being committed in the region. Between February and December 1985 some 534 separate incidents were reported, including torture, rape, the burning of communities and pillage, many of them apparently associated with army sweeps through the tribal villages.

#### Closed to Visitors

In November 1985, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a UN body, sent a representative to Bangladesh to investigate the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Despite Bangladeshi protestations that the CHT is not a closed region, claims which were reiterated in December at a meeting of aid-donor nations in Copenhagen, the ILO representative was prevented from journeying beyond the very edge of the CHT. There he was only able to meet with tribal delegates in the district capital, Rangamati, under close supervision.

Yet, notwithstanding the Government's reluctance to permit independent observers into the area, it persists in denying that there have been any attacks on tribal peoples in the CHT. The ILO, however, notes that it continues to receive reports of massacres and other abuses in the region.

#### **Tribal Resistance**

Denied political and legal means of opposing the army-backed colonisation of their ancestral lands, some of the the tribals from the Tracts have taken up arms in their defence. Since Bangladesh's independence, the Shanti Bahini ('peace force') has waged a guerrilla struggle against the Bangladesh Armed Forces. According to Government sources, the Shanti Bahini has also attacked Bengali settlers in the hills, the most recent such attacks being reported in May 1986.

The Government has also entered into talks with the various factions of the Shanti Bahini in an attempt to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Following the surrender of one Shanti Bahini faction in April 1985, in response to an offer of amnesty, the Government prematurely announced that talks had brought the problems in the CHT to an end. In fact, the political and land rights claims of the tribals remain substantially unresolved and the colonisation and ensuing violence in the region has continued.

As a result, the Government was obliged to enter into renewed talks with the remaining faction of the Shanti Bahini. At an initial meeting, in October 1985, the political nature of the conflict was finally admitted by the Government, according to the tribal representatives. But a second meeting, due in December, was not held and the Shanti Bahini has loudly denounced the continuing actions of the Bangladesh military.

#### **Refugees flee terror**

Latest reports from the region suggest that the Army engaged in further search and destroy missions in the Khagrachari District during the month of May 1986. Some reports suggest that these raids were carried out as reprisals for attacks made by the Shanti Bahini on communities of settlers established on tribal lands. These reports note that thousands of the settlers have abandoned their new homes and sought refuge outside the Hill Tracts. Deaths of tribals, settlers, members of the Shanti Bahini and Bangladeshi soldiers have all been reported.

The escalating conflict, which has reached a level of violence not seen since April 1984, has caused thousands of tribal inhabitants of the region to abandon their lands and seek refuge in the neighbouring Indian State of Tripura. The exact numbers of refugees involved cannot yet be determined as not all have managed to reach the borders. By May 6, some 5000 refugees had reported to four camps in south Tripura, according to one press account. Such reports suggest that as many as seven thousand more refugees are still in search of safety, trying to evade fresh sweeps of Bangladesh security forces who are attempting to prevent the escape of refugees. Curfew has been imposed in border villages within the CHT and a number of tribals detained, according to press reports.

## No refuge ?

The security of the refugees who are in India and those still trying to cross the border remains in doubt. Both news items and independent accounts received by Survival International are contradictory regarding the position of the refugees.

According to unconfirmed press accounts, the Indian Government planned earlier this year to repatriate tribal refugees in Mizoram who crossed into India in early 1984. Local observers expressed fears that the repatriation has not been carried out voluntarily and that the refugees will endure the same fate as previously deported refugees, who have suffered severely on their return.

Other reports have indicated that the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) is now refusing further refugees access to India. Reporters have noted that thousands of tribals have taken refuge in the forests in the border region, too afraid to return to their home communities yet reluctant to report to Indian refugee camps - since they fear being deported. More recent accounts suggest that many refugees have been forced back over the border by the BSF and allegations of the torture of fleeing tribals at the hands of BSF troops have been published in the Indian press.

Suspensions concerning the plight of the tribal refugees seeking refuge in India have been sharpened by the fact that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has not been informed of the situation by the Indian Government nor been able to visit the refugees in India to ascertain their condition.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ACTION

Survival International has again written to the Bangladeshi authorities protesting at the repeated killings of tribal peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and urging an end to the policy of settling lowlander Bengalis on tribal lands. The organisation has also called on the Bangladeshi authorities to open the area to independent observers. Survival International has also written to the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, urging a humane treatment of the refugees now in India.

Recipients of this Urgent Action Bulletin are urged to write letters, similar to that copied overleaf, in their own name to the Indian Prime Minister.

PLEASE SEND SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL COPIES OF ANY LETTERS SENT AS WELL AS ANY REPLIES RECEIVED, SO WE CAN MONITOR AND REPORT ON THE EFFECT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

If you wish to receive further Bulletins, please acknowledge on the form provided or send a separate note.

**MODEL LETTER**

The Rt Hon Rajiv Gandhi MP  
The Prime Minister  
The PM Secretariat  
South Block  
New Delhi 110011  
INDIA

June 1986

Dear Prime Minister,

I have been very concerned by recent reports which allege that the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) have been forcibly preventing refugees, who are fleeing from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in eastern Bangladesh, from entering the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram. Some reports have even alleged the torture of tribal peoples at the hands of the BSF to persuade them to return to Bangladesh.

I respectfully urge that you have this matter looked into and seek to ensure that the authorities in Tripura and Mizoram provide a just and humane treatment to the refugees in accordance with the stipulations of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

In particular I would draw your attention to Article 33.1 of the Convention, which reads:

'No Contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'

While I am aware that India is not actually a signatory of this Convention, I urge that its humane terms are nonetheless observed and hope that you will take steps to involve the competent authorities at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in administering aid to these unfortunate refugees who, according to recent estimates, now number between seven and twelve thousand people.

I look forward to learning how you plan to deal with this matter,

yours sincerely

IMPORTANT

Urgent Action Bulletins are sent free of charge to anyone who requests them (whether they are members of Survival International or not). Receipt of Bulletins must, however, be acknowledged by using this form or a separate sheet. Those who fail to acknowledge receipt will not be sent further Bulletins.

DETACH THIS FORM AND SEND IT TO:

PROJECTS DEPARTMENT  
SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL  
29 CRAVEN STREET  
LONDON WC2N 5NT  
ENGLAND

I/We acknowledge receipt of this Urgent Action Bulletin

Code No: BANGLADESH CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: more refugees

Title: UAB/BAN/1c/JUN/1986

I/We have taken the following action:

I/We intend to take the following action in the near future:

Other comments:

(if necessary continue on separate sheet)

NAME.....

ORGANISATION (if any).....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

.....

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY. PLEASE USE ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH OR PORTUGUESE IF POSSIBLE.

## WHAT IS SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL ?

Survival International is an international human rights organisation with consultative status as an NGO at the UN(ECOSOC) and the EEC human rights commissions that defends the rights of threatened tribal peoples.

Its stated objects are:

- to help tribal peoples to exercise their right to survival and self-determination.
- to ensure that the rights of tribal peoples are properly represented in all decisions affecting their future.
- to secure for tribal peoples the ownership and use of adequate land and other resources, and seek recognition of their rights to their traditional lands.

Survival International seeks to achieve these ends by:

- supporting projects with tribal peoples - in health, education and land rights.
- speaking out on tribal peoples' rights to governments, multinational companies and development agencies etc.
- publishing on the problems that tribal peoples face and the solutions that they themselves propose.
- representing tribal peoples at human rights fora when they are unable to present their own cases.
- education - by providing speakers, films, slide-shows, exhibitions and book stalls at public meetings, in schools and universities.

Survival International has its main office in London and also has national sections in France, Spain and the USA and is connected to an international network of local groups and supporters in over 50 different countries.

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## 1986 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Subscribing Members receive the News and the Annual Review.  
Members receive the quarterly Survival International News.

- Subscribing Member: £15 (or US\$30)
- Member: £8 (or US\$20)
- Donation: £100 ( ) £50 ( ) £20 ( ) £10 ( ) Other .....
- Please send me Urgent Action Bulletins regularly
- I would like more information about Local Groups of supporters

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

.....

Please make cheques etc. payable to SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

- 
- TURN YOUR £10 GIFT INTO OVER £14. If you pay tax in the UK, please use our Tax Recovery Scheme to increase the value of your donation or subscription at no extra cost to yourself. Please tick the box.