



Jumma Peoples Network UK



Amnesty International

The Right Honourable
Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer
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19 October 2024

Dear Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer,

Urgent Call to Action:

Stop Violent Attacks against Indigenous Jumma Peoples in Bangladesh

Update 14.10.2024: United Nations Permanent Forum On Indigenous Issues And The Special Rapporteur On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples express deep concern, calls on interim government of Bangladesh to invite the United Nations to investigate and report on allegations of human rights violations in the region. (1)

We are deeply concerned at the ongoing violence and attacks on the Indigenous Peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh on 18, 19 and 20 September and on 1 October 2024.

Following on from the worst communal attacks since 2015 on Indigenous Jumma Peoples in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, on 18, 19 and 20 September 2024, further violent attacks against the Indigenous Jumma Peoples have taken place on 1 October.

In the presence of Bangladesh state forces (military and police), unchecked attacks by violent crowds of Bengali settlers in Khagrachari and Dighinala, under



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Khagrachari district, on 18 and 19 September, and in Rangamati District, on 20 September, have resulted in the deaths of four indigenous persons (one in

Rangamati and three in Khagrachari), displacement of many Indigenous Jummas fleeing for their lives and widespread arson attacks on Indigenous Jumma Peoples' houses, businesses and Buddhist places of worship.

On 1 October, a young Indigenous Jumma school girl aged around 12 years old, who attends 7th grade at the Khagrachari Government Technical School and College was (allegedly) raped by Sohel Rana, a teacher at her own school.

Reports from the ground indicate that in the morning, the accused teacher took the child to the teacher's quarters, where he allegedly raped her. The girl's friends witnessed Rana leading her to his residence and quickly raised the alarm. The Officer-in-Charge of Khagrachari Police Station and five students rescued her, and she later testified to being raped by Rana. Following medical examination, evidence of rape was recorded and corroborated the young girl's testimony.

Protests erupted, and while Rana was confined to the principal's office, a mob broke in and assaulted him. Rana fled but was injured in a vehicle collision and died at the hospital.

Media reports indicate that the mob's anger toward Sohel Rana stemmed from his long history of sexual misconduct allegations at various institutions, including an attempted rape charge involving another Indigenous Jumma schoolgirl at Khagrachari Government Technical School and College. In September 2024, the CHTC Secretariat documented a gang rape and two attempted rapes of Indigenous Jumma women and girls, including an 8-year-old victim, by Bengali settlers, reflecting a troubling trend of violence in the region.

News of Rana's death seems to have been the cause of the outburst of violence against Indigenous Jumma Peoples in Khagrachari on 1 October for the second time since 19 September.

Once again, settlers instigated a reign of terror against Indigenous Jumma Peoples. Testimony from witnesses and live-streamed videos on social media show that the violence continued unchecked in the presence of security forces for well over four hours. The local administration imposed Section 144 at 3pm. This section of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, restricts unlawful assemblies of four or more persons. Nevertheless, members of the local Bengali settler communities continued their rampage of destruction until around 7:30 PM. This was in full sight and presence of security forces who again, as on 19 and 20 September, did nothing to stop the violence against Indigenous Jumma people.



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Bangladesh security forces appear to be complicit in the violence against Indigenous Jumma Peoples in these events. Khagrachari Cantonment (Garrison) is located less

than half a kilometre from Pankhayapara, the area that suffered the worst atrocities on 1 October, yet the security forces did nothing to intervene until hours after the

violence against Indigenous Jumma persons and properties had already been perpetrated.

In the CHT, settlers repeatedly use such incidents as a pretext to unleash violence against the Indigenous Jumma population. Often this appears to be perpetrated with the express or tacit support of the nearly 100% Bengali security personnel.

Recruitment of Indigenous Jumma personnel into local police force in Rangamati, Khagrachari and throughout CHT has been identified by Indigenous Jumma community leaders as a major factor in addressing law and order going forward. We call urgently on you, Prime Minister, to give every support to Dr Yunus in acting promptly to bring about this crucial step towards peaceful daily life in CHT.

It is grievously saddening that in the wake of the harrowing violence of recent weeks, the monastics of the CHT have felt compelled to cancel the celebration of Kathin Chibor Dan festival. Kathin Chibor Dan is the single most important festival of the year for the majority Buddhist Indigenous Jumma Peoples of CHT. The monastic community depend upon it for their continued subsistence as it centres upon the Buddhist principle of Dana (generosity) or donations, traditionally the cloth for monastics' robes which will last through the following season, donated by the lay community along with all resources for the coming year.

On Sunday 6 October Venerable Sraddhalankar Mahathera, President of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Combined Bhikkhu Sangha, announced that because of the communal violence and prevailing atmosphere of danger and threat to life, no celebration would take place in any of the three districts of CHT: Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. He spoke at a press conference called by monastics and held at Moitri Bihar Buddhist temple in the heart of Rangamati town. The temple was itself a target of violence by the crowds of Bengali settlers on 20 September. The grounds were broke into and sacred space and items vandalised or destroyed, and items robbed, while the bhikkus (monastics) were present in the accommodation block behind the temple.

Venerable Sraddhalankar Mahathera told the conference, "According to the victims' allegations, in most of the cases these violent incidents were taking place with the direct and indirect assistance of the law enforcement and security agencies' "So far, no fair investigation has been conducted, and the trials of these communal attacks remain elusive. The government's public inquiry committees often fail to deliver



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justice, and the incidents are repeatedly covered up through these ineffective investigation panels," Venerable Sraddhalankar Mahathera said.

When a deeply venerated monastic, one who represents a whole community of those who have dedicated their lives to the Five precepts of Buddhist teachings, including Right speech or the avoidance of all untrue words, speaks out so clearly about the complicity of law enforcement agencies in the recent anti-Indigenous violence, it is impossible to ignore or deny.

We wish to bring your attention to further information that has received little to no attention outside of the CHT. It has placed an entire community within our Indigenous Jumma Peoples under intense insecurity.

In recent years, with the support of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, an armed group from the Bawm community was formed to counter a specific group in the CHT. However, the plan did not achieve the desired results. In response, the Bangladesh armed forces began arresting approximately 180 innocent Bawm individuals, including breastfeeding mothers, infants, pregnant woman, the elderly, and both men and women, detaining them without proper legal procedures or investigations. Furthermore, many innocent Bawm people were killed by the Bangladesh Armed Forces, including a fifth-grade student, a 13-year-old boy, a well-known football player, and a graduate student. During this period, more than 3,000 Bawm people fled to neighbouring India to escape the violence. Despite the interim government releasing many known terrorists from jail, none of the imprisoned Bawm individuals have been freed. Additionally, it remains uncertain whether those who fled to India will be able to return to their villages. The current government has remained silent about the ongoing suffering of the Bawm people, one of Bangladesh's numerically smallest communities. Please see the attached Amnesty International report April 2024 for further details.

We are disheartened that only a low-level committee headed by mid-ranking bureaucrat was formed to inquire into the violence in the CHT, rather than a high-level Commission of Inquiry with the full authority of a civil court, among others.

We are also outraged that not a single representative of the indigenous peoples has been inducted into any of the six reform commissions, particularly on the national constitution, as well as the judiciary and public administration.

Prime Minister Starmer, we call upon you with the greatest urgency to take all steps possible to support Dr Mohammed Yunus, the Honourable Chief Adviser of the Interim Government of Bangladesh, to stop the current violence against Indigenous Jumma Peoples and to ensure long term peace in the CHT.



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As members of the Indigenous Jumma Peoples' diaspora in the UK, we amplify the calls for justice from the Indigenous Jumma Peoples living in our ancestral lands in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh.

In solidarity with the demands of the families of victims and survivors of the anti-Indigenous Jumma attacks in CHT on 18,19,20 September and 1 October 2024, and with the demands of Indigenous Jumma human rights campaigners within Bangladesh, we urgently call for:

1. Prompt and timely legal process to be taken to bring to justice the perpetrators of the anti-Indigenous Jumma attacks of 18,19,20 September and 1 October. Including and prioritising the Indigenous Jumma women and girls subjected to rape and sexual assault by men of the Bengali settler communities in Khagrachari and Rangamati leading top to and on these dates. In particular, we call for judicial, medical and holistic social support for the Grade 7 schoolgirl at Khagrachari High School assaulted on 1 October. The current impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence against Indigenous Jumma women and girls must stop. The current impunity for mob violence against the indigenous Jumma Peoples of CHT must stop. Perpetrators must be brought to justice.
2. Restitution and financial support to be given by the Government of Bangladesh to the families of those killed by mob violence on those dates. Medical and holistic support to be given to the many dozens of Indigenous Jumma families injured in the mob violence on those dates. The names of those killed include:

Anik Kumar Chakma (18 years old)
Junan Chakma, (22 years old)
Rubel Tripura, (24 years old)
Dhana Ranjan Chakma (60 years old)
3. Financial support to be given by the Government of Bangladesh to the Indigenous Jumma Peoples whose homes and businesses were burnt, destroyed or damaged in the violent attacks of 19,20 September and 1 October by crowds of Bengali settlers who were left unchecked by security forces.
4. Financial support to be given by the Government of Bangladesh to the monastics and bhikku sangha to enable those Buddhist places of worship vandalised, robbed, damaged and destroyed in the mob violence of 19,20 September and 1 October to be rebuilt in a prompt and timely manner.
5. Repeated calls for the formation by the Government of Bangladesh of an independent and adequately mandated Commission of Inquiry into the violent attacks of 18, 19, 20 September have still not resulted in action. We amplify the



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continued and repeated calls by the Indigenous Jumma Peoples, national and international Human Rights and Civil organisations for this to be brought into effect as a matter of extreme urgency.

6. Inclusion of representatives of indigenous peoples into one or more of the six reform commissions of the government declared recently, including on the National Constitution, the Electoral System, Public Administration and Judiciary.

7. Recruitment of Indigenous Jumma personnel at all ranks into the Police Force within the CHT. Current make-up of Police is almost 100% ethnically Bengali. The Three Hill District Councils Act (Acts 19, 20 and 21 of 1989). calls for recruitment of police personnel in proportion to the population of the different ethnic groups of the Districts concerned. This has still not been implemented three decades later, with fatal consequences for the Indigenous Jumma Peoples of the CHT.

8. All temporary military and security camps to be dismantled, with the exception of the six permanent military bases designated in the 1997 CHT Accord.

9. Request to United Nations to send Special Rapporteurs with a range of diverse mandates to visit Chittagong Hill Tracts to investigate and make recommendations on the resolution of the recent and historical severe human rights violations of Indigenous Jumma Peoples in the CHT. **A direct call to this effect has been made by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights in their statement 14.10. 2024. We respectfully call on you, PM Starmer, to support this call to invitation and to give every support to Honourable Chief Adviser Dr Mohammed Yunus to implement the invitation to visit in a prompt and timely manner.**

10. Request to the United Nations to send UN Peacekeeping Forces to CHT to maintain peace for all within the region, given the allegations and eye witness reports that Bangladesh security forces were implicated in the escalation of mob violence on 19,20 September and 1 October 2024.

We trust that you will take all steps necessary to investigate and act on the news and calls to action we have outlined above.

Yours Sincerely,

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1. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/news/statement-by-the-united-nations-permanent-forum-on-indigenous-issues>

<https://aippnet.org/aipp-condemns-violent-attack-jumma-indigenous-peoples-chittagong-hill-tracts-bangladesh-urges-immediate-action-protect-indigenous-peoples/> (dated 23.09.2024)

<https://iwgia.org/en/news/5561> (19 September 2024)

<https://iwgia.org/en/news/5562> (20 September 2024)

Raja Devashish Roy, Facebook posts 23 September 2024 (statement following meeting in Rangamati with Advisers of Interim Government of Bangladesh) and 13 October 2024 (Whiter(sic) Independent Commission of Inquiry for Hill Tracts Violence of 18-20 September 2024?)

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/bangladeshi-hill-tribes-blame-army-for-abetting-violence/106560>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/360995/kathin-chibor-dan-called-off-in-rangamati>

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/indigenous-buddhists-in-bangladeshs-chittagong-hill-tracts-cancel-kathina-robe-offering-festival-in-the-wake-of-communal-violence/>

<https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/247084/monks-declare-not-to-observe-kathin-chibordan-in-cht-for-insecurity>

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/indigenous-buddhists-in-bangladeshs-chittagong-hill-tracts-cancel-kathina-robe-offering-festival-in-the-wake-of-communal-violence/>

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/bawmprisoners> (April 2024, Persecution Of Bawm Indigenous Jumma People, CHT)

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/khagrachhari-tension-runs-high-after-mob-kills-teacher-3717121>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/khagrachhari-girl-medical-test-finds-evidence-rape-3719071>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/mob-attacks-least-28-beaten-death-sept-3719031>



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<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/savagery-du-they-beat-him-fed-him-then-killed-him-3707351>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/358936>