



Jumma Peoples Network UK

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PRESS STATEMENT

Jumma Peoples Network UK, Amnesty International, Survival International and Friends of CHT call for action to stop anti-Indigenous violence in CHT, Bangladesh

Saturday 19th October 2024

Jumma Peoples Network UK, in association with Amnesty International, Survival International, and Friends of CHT organized a peaceful demonstration at parliament square in London on Saturday, 19th October against the recent violent communal attacks on the Indigenous Jumma peoples by Bengali settlers in presence of state forces in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.



Speakers at the protest shared details of the harrowing effects of the violence on 1st October in Khagrachari which followed on from earlier violent attacks on 18, 19 and 20 September in Dhinghinala, Khagrachari and Rangamati.

Among the speakers were Ujjaini Roy, Jeremy Allen, Ombaashi Grech Cato, Rumana Hashim and Noel Hume. Sophie Grig, Senior Research officer at Survival International could not attend the demonstration, her statement was read out by Ujjaini Roy.

Ujjaini Roy, from JPNUK condemned the recent barbaric attacks and expressed concern at the government's failure to protect indigenous Jumma community. In her statement Ms Grig said, "This is a failure of the Bangladesh government to abide by its promises to demilitarize the CHT and return the lands stolen from the Jumma peoples. But it is also a failure of the international community that it hasn't done more to push the government of Bangladesh to implement its commitments and to bring those responsible for the violence to justice". She further added, "We call on the British government to use its influence with



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the interim government of Bangladesh, to put an end to this cycle of violence, remove the military camps from the CHT and bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice.”

Jeremy Allen, country coordinator for Bangladesh at Amnesty International, UK shared his experience of living and working in Bandarban. and said he witnessed land grabbing and attacks on women. He further said, “Amnesty International calls on government of Bangladesh to immediately end mob violence and work to prevent further escalation of violence in the area”

Mr Allen further mentioned, “On Thursday 24th October, in the House of Commons, an All-Party Parliamentary Group will be discussing the latest issues in Bangladesh. But the issues to be discussed do not include indigenous people and only mentions engaging the “Bengali Diaspora”. I have sent them our petition.

Ombaashi Grech Cato from Friends of CHT said “On Sunday 6 October Venerable Sraddhalankar Mahathera, President of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Combined Bhikkhu Sangha, announced that due to the threat to life of the ongoing conflict, it is too dangerous to hold Kathin Chibor Dan festivities this year. The most important festival for the majority Buddhist Indigenous Jumma Peoples has been cancelled in all three Hill Districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari”.

“Most recently, the Interim administration in Dhaka announced the formation of six reform commissions, including on the National Constitution, the Electoral System, Public Administration and Judiciary. Not one single Indigenous Jumma representative has been invited to join any of these commissions”.

Noel Hume from Friends of CHT read out Kumar Sivasish Roy’s statement, in which Mr Roy gave a brief history of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and condemned the recent violence. He said, “Despite being 97% non-Muslim, during the viceroyalty of Lord Mountbatten, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) was awarded to Pakistan. It was widely believed that this was done because Gurdaspur (in the Punjab) was given to India. The Bengal Boundary Commission, headed by Cyril Radcliffe, declared the district to be part of Pakistan thus violating the principles of partition based on religious identity. No plebiscite was held to ascertain the wishes of the people”.

Dr Rumana Hashem, a Bangladeshi born sociologist, who conducted her PhD on gender violence in pre and post conflict in the CHT stated that she was shocked to learn about the recent rapes against indigenous Jumma women in Khagrachari and Bardarban on 1st October and 18th October respectively. She mentioned that her research findings showed gender violence has increased in Chittagong Hill Tracts because of militarization and ethnocised conflict. She also added that she finds it outrageous that the indigenous Jummo peoples have been re-constructed as small minority ethnic tribes in a country where they have lived since time immemorial.



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At the end of the demonstration, Ujjaini Roy, Jeremy Allen, Dharmapriya Sraman, Ombashi Grech Cato and Valentine Harding handed in the petition addressed to PM Keir Starmer at 10 Downing St.

Full copy of the letter is available at JPNUK website: <https://jpnuk.org.uk>

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