

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS JUMMA REFUGEES' WELFARE ASSOCIATION

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Date:-----

The 17th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
The UN Headquarters, New York, 16-27 April 2018

Agenda Item-8: Discussion on the theme "Indigenous peoples' collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources"

Statement by:

Santoshita Chakma

Chittagong Hill Tracts Juamm Refugees' Welfare Association

Thank you Madam/Mr. Chair.

My name is Santoshita Chakma and I am representing Chittagong Hill Tracts Juamm Refugees' Welfare Association. I wish to express my gratitude to Voluntary Fund for allowing me to participate in this session of the Forum.

As you know that in 1980s and 90s when the suppression and torture had raised up to the climax, the Jumma people had no way to survive in CHT and hence, around 120,000 Jumma people were compelled to become refugee in India. Moreover, the conflicts evicted thousands of indigenous Jumma peoples from their ancestral homes who did not cross the international border but remained within CHT, who are regarded as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

As per the 20-Point Package Agreement between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and Jumma refugee leaders signed on 9 March 1997 and the historic CHT Accord signed on 2 December 1997 between the government and the Parbatya Chattagra Jana Samhati Samiti, a total number of around 65,000 refugees (of 12,222 families) were repatriated to Bangladesh from Indian State of Tripura. However, another 54,000 jumma refugees repatriated voluntarily before the CHT Accord.

With an exception to lands and homesteads, most of the economic facilities as stated in the 20-Point Package Agreement were provided to most of the refugees through the Task Force. But still 9,780 Jumma families are yet to get back their lands and 40 ancestral Jumma villages are under the occupation of the settlers and security forces.

The another big issue regarding rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who are more than 90,000 families, remains unaddressed till last 20 years after signing of the CHT Accord. Despite reconstitution of Task Force four times with four consecutive chairmen, no internally displaced Jumma people have been rehabilitated so far.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Jumma Refugees' Welfare Association appeals to the Permanent Forum to influence Government of Bangladesh for-

- Effective and speedy implementation of 20-point Package Agreement and provisions of the CHT Accord;
- Rehabilitation of Bengali settlers outside CHT with due honour and dignity for the sake of returning land of Jumma refugees and IDPs back and
- Withdrawal of more than 400 temporary camps, including de facto military rule 'Operation Uttoron' (Operation Upliftment) from the CHT.

During the post-Accord period, at least 20 communal attacks including recent Longadu attack in June 2017 have been made upon indigenous Jumma peoples which leads to insecurity of lives and properties of Jumma refugees.

Thanks you Madam/Mr. Chair.