

UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
27-31 July, 1998  
Geneva, Switzerland

Agenda Item 4: Review of Developments

By  
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Honourable Chairperson, distinguished government and non-governmental delegations and indigenous brothers and sisters. It is my pleasure to be here to state the latest situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh.

The CHT Hill Students' Council like many Jumma organizations in Bangladesh warmly welcome the CHT Peace Accord signed by the government of Bangladesh and the indigenous Jumma people's political party, the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS) on 2 December 1997. We see this as a step forward in achieving the rights of the Jumma people, and look forward to its implementation.

Since the signing of the Peace Accord, there has been some improvement in the situation of the CHT. Entry requirements to the area, which was closed to foreigners, have been lifted recently. The repatriation of refugees from camps in neighbouring countries has been completed and the JSS members have returned to the area. A ministry of CHT affairs has been established and an indigenous person, Mr. Kalpa Ranjan Chakma has been appointed its Minister. Indigenous Jummas have also been appointed to the Development Board, under the chairmanship of the chief military officer in the CHT, a post which has been reserved for the armed forces since its inception.

However, the indigenous people continue to face problems. The presence of the military in the CHT has not decreased in number or in influence. The armed forces remain in the Hill Tracts. As do the settlers. Neither of these two crucial issues has been resolved and the situation in the CHT remains quite tense. Some incidents:

- (1) 43 Jummas were arrested by the authorities out of whom 30 are still in detention;
- (2) A number of Jumma people have disappeared and their whereabouts are unknown;
- (3) The rape of Jumma women by military and settlers continues and there was a

recent report of six women who were raped. The authorities did not take any action against the perpetrators.

- (4) On 2 July, a Buddhist temple was destroyed by the settlers at Rangamati and a monk of that temple was seriously beaten. On 27 February 1998 a Hindu temple was broken by the settlers.
- (5) On 9 April 1998 many Jummas and non-indigenous persons were injured in an incident of ethnic violence in Dighinala.

Although the Peace Agreement has been signed as a result of its non-implementation the situation in the CHT is still in turmoil. There have been a number of ethnic conflicts in different parts of the region and peace has not been restored fully to the CHT. For this we appeal to the Working Group and the international community to make concerted effort for a durable peace in the Hill Tracts.