

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission

Co-Chairpersons:
Sultana Kamal, Lord Eric Avebury, Elsa Stamatopoulou
Members:
Shapan Adnan, Sara Hossain, Iftekharuzzaman
Khushi Kabir, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Tone Bleie
Lars-Anders Baer, Michael C. van Walt van Praag
Hurst Hannum, Yasmeen Haque
Myrna Cunningham Kain, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

Press Statement

CHTC condemns attack on its Coordinator in Bandarban allegedly by Somo Odhikar Andolon members; calls for investigation and prosecution and punishment of culprits

Dhaka, 27 August, 2014. The International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) strongly condemns the brutal and cowardly attack upon Hana Shams Ahmed, Coordinator of the Commission, and her friend, a woman academic, during a private visit by them to Shoiloopropat in Bandarban in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, by 8-10 members of the so-called Somo Odhikar Andolon.

The CHTC is deeply disturbed to learn that the attack took place when Hana and her friend were being followed by four members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police who were supposedly providing security to them.

We believe that this attack and the failure of the police to take immediate action to record and investigate the attack, are in breach of their duties to ensure the rights of citizens of free movement and personal security. In our opinion, the attack was not only designed to intimidate Hana but also to send out a message to the Commission to prevent it from continuing its work to demand that the CHT Peace Accord is fully implemented.

The CHTC calls upon the Government to investigate this incident promptly and impartially and to arrest and bring the perpetrators to justice (one of whom, named Shomrat, has already been identified by an eyewitness). In particular, the Government must investigate the role of the four Detective Branch policemen who followed the victims, to learn why they followed them, and then failed to protect them when attacked, and to identify whether they acted in league with the attackers.

The Facts

In the morning of August 25, 2014, Hana Shams Ahmed, Coordinator of the CHTC, arrived in Bandarban with a friend on a private visit. At about noon, when they returned to their hotel, they found two Detective Branch officers waiting there who told Hana of a rumour that the CHT Commission was in Bandarban. Hana explained that she was on a completely private visit with no connection to the Commission.

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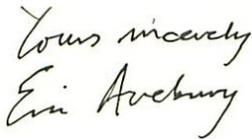
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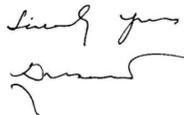
The DB officers then stated that they were “under orders” to provide security for Hana because the situation in Bandarban was unpredictable, and all four DB officers in plainclothes followed Hana and her friend wherever they went. The two women reached Shoilopropatat around 5pm, where they met another friend, Lelung Khumi, planning officer of a joint project of the Bandarban Hill District Council and the UNDP-CHTDF. At about 6 pm they set out to return to the hotel travelling in a public Mohendra taxi. The taxi stopped for a few minutes to take on two more passengers. At around 6:25 pm, on the road between Milonchori Guest House and the Shakura Resort, the vehicle was stopped by 8-10 men aged between 25 and 35. These men pulled out the two other passengers and started hitting and slapping Hana and her friend on their faces, cheeks, ears, head and the back. They were also shouting at them asking, “Why have you come here?” Lelung Khumi, who was also following on his motorcycle, shouted at the attackers and asked them to stop. He recognized one of the attackers, Shomrat, a member of the Somo Odhikar Andolon. When Shomrat saw Lelung, he asked his cohorts to stop attacking the women, and they left. The men who had identified themselves as being from the Detective Branch, who had earlier been following Hana and her friend all day, were no longer to be seen at this point.

The local police provided security outside the hotel during the night and also accompanied Hana and her friend in the bus till they reached Shatkaniya on their way back to Dhaka via Chittagong.

On behalf of the CHT Commission



Eric Avebury
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission



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Co-chair of the
CHT Commission



Elsa Stamatopoulou
Co-chair of the
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