

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-Corpus

Press Statement

The International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission condemns killing of indigenous woman; calls upon the Government to ensure justice and effectively challenge continued impunity by providing exemplary punishment to the perpetrators

Dhaka: February 18, 2014. The International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) condemned killing of an indigenous woman in Khagrachari on February 15. The Commission called upon the Government to afford justice to the victim and her family by ensuring exemplary punishment to those guilty. Expressing grave concern over continued impunity in cases of violence against indigenous women in CHT, the Commission called upon the Government to undertake immediate and effective measures to stop such violation of basic rights of the indigenous people including right to life.

On February 15, 2014, a 30-year-old indigenous woman Sabita Chakma was allegedly raped and murdered by a group of settlers at Chengi Char area of Kamalchari Union under Khagrachari Sadar Upazila of Khagrachari district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Sabita was attacked when she went to the nearby Chengi River to collect fodder for cattle in the morning. When she had not returned by lunch time her husband along with some villagers went to look for her and found her disrobed dead body at 17:30 in a field near Chengi Char. It is suspected that day-labourers who were collecting sand onto a truck near the field where her body was found may have killed Sabita Chakma. Sabita's husband, Debaratan Chakma, filed a case at the Khagrachari Police Station against truck driver Mohammad Nizam and four others and police took the dead body to Khagrachari Sadar Hospital that evening for autopsy.

The CHTC condemns this attack and asserts that this is not an isolated attack on an indigenous woman in post-Accord CHT. Violence against indigenous women, including sexual harassment, intimidation, rape and murder sexual assault against indigenous women occur with frightening regularity in the CHT, marred by impunity to settlers and security forces. It has been learned that in this case, Debaratan Chakma was threatened into not filing a case. This is also not unheard of in case of other indigenous victims of violence in the area.

Bangladesh Secretariat:
House # 1/3, Block-F, Lalmatia, Dhaka- 1207, Bangladesh
Phone: +88-02-9146048, Fax: +88-02-9146048
E-mail: chtcomm@gmail.com

International Secretariat:
C/O IWGIA, Classensgade 11E, 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
Phone: +45 35 27 05 00, Fax: +45 35 27 05 06
Email: cn@iwgia.org

www.chtcommission.org

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission

Co-Chairpersons:

Sultana Kamal, Lord Eric Avebury, Elsa Stamatopoulou

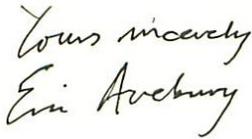
Members:

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

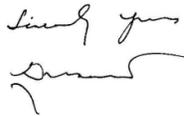
The state has failed to prevent the attacks against indigenous women even after the Accord and also failed to bring the perpetrators to justice. Despite having such heavy presence of security forces in the CHT they have failed to protect indigenous people from such attacks. In fact, the military, political parties and the bureaucracy have successfully created a state of complete impunity for such attacks and indigenous communities lost confidence in the formal justice mechanism in cases of attacks on indigenous people. The Government which signed the Accord in 1997 has been in power since January 2009 but has failed to implement the Accord and prevent violence against indigenous people and protect the rights of the minority communities all over the country. This attack is just another expression of the failure of this Government to stop this culture of impunity.

We hope that justice will be speedily served for the murder of Sabita Chakma and the perpetrators will be convicted for such a ghastly act.

On behalf of the CHT Commission



Eric Avebury
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission



Sultana Kamal
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission



Elsa Stamatopoulou
Co-chair of the
CHT Commission

Bangladesh Secretariat:

House # 1/3, Block-F, Lalmatia, Dhaka- 1207, Bangladesh
Phone: +88-02-9146048, Fax: +88-02-9146048
E-mail: chtcomm@gmail.com

International Secretariat:

C/O IWGIA, Classensgade 11E, 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
Phone: +45 35 27 05 00, Fax: +45 35 27 05 06
Email: cn@iwgia.org