

Press Statement

CHTC demands justice re alleged rape of Tripura girl child

Dhaka, 27 August 2012: The International CHT Commission (CHTC) is alarmed at the recent reports of violence against indigenous women and girls in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and appeals to the Government of Bangladesh to provide effective protection and justice to the victims and survivors. The Commission has noted that the alleged rape of an eleven-year-old Tripura girl child on 21 August by a Police Constable in Dighinala Upazila of Khagrachhri district is even more alarming as it involves a member of the law enforcement agencies, whose duty it is to protect individuals from such an attack.

The CHTC strongly condemns this gross violation of basic human rights of the child, and demand that the perpetrator be awarded exemplary punishment to prevent recurrence of such crimes in the future. The Commission calls upon the Government to take specific measures to ensure that members of law-enforcement agencies refrain from such systematic and indiscriminate violation of rights of indigenous communities.

The CHTC is deeply concerned about the recent reports of sexual violence especially rape on very young indigenous girls in the CHT this year. According to credible reports the indigenous Tripura girl was raped allegedly by a Police Constable at Ataltila Noymile area of Merung union under Dighinala upazila in Khagrachari district while she was grazing cows near Ataltila police camp. When the child's mother went to the police camp to file a case against the alleged perpetrator, the on-duty police officer of the Dighinala Police Station allegedly refused to file the complaint and instead offered her Taka 1000 to settle the matter. It was only after the Head Karbari of Noymile village and Tripura Students' Forum leaders and locals protested, that a rape case (G.R.-237/012, sec-9[1]) was filed under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000.

It is most disturbing that serious allegations of sexual violence and complicity in a cover up are being brought against members of the law-enforcing agencies. If proved correct, these would amount to grave violations of fundamental rights to protection from violence enshrined in the Constitution and various international commitments made by Bangladesh. They are doubly disappointing as they contradict the electoral pledge of the Government. The CHTC recalls that the AL-led Government had stated in their Election Manifesto:

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Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission

Co-Chairpersons:

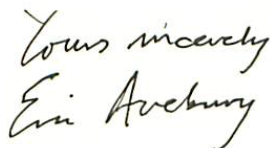
Sultana Kamal,
Lord Eric Avebury,
Elsa Stamatopoulou

“...discriminatory treatment and human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous people must come to an end permanently. Security of their life, wealth and honor will be guaranteed. Their entitlement to equal opportunity in all spheres of state and social life will be ensured”.

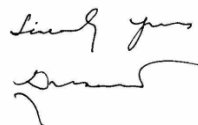
In the face of such commitments, the CHTC is shocked and concerned that indigenous women and girls are not only the victims of sexual violence in increasing numbers, but also denied justice, while perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, which is creating a culture of impunity. The CHTC is deeply worried about implications of such incidents on rule of law and justice system, as well as the democratic credentials of the Government.

The Commission urges that the Government take all possible measures to stop and prevent such violations and demonstrate that they are committed to basic human rights of the indigenous communities, justice and democratic practice. In this connection the CHTC reiterates the demands that in the CHT there should be a mixed police force drawn from different communities and systematic monitoring of rape incidents to remove barriers and discrimination at every level of the justice system.

On behalf of the CHT Commission



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