



CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS COMMISSION

CHT Commission Condemns Arson Attack on Tripura Community in Notun Tongjhiri Para, Calls for Justice and Urgent Action Against Systemic Violence and Land Grabbing in the CHT

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The International CHT Commission is deeply alarmed and outraged by the recent arson attack on the Tripura community in Notun Tongjhiri Tripura Para of Sarai Union, Lama upazila, Bandarban district. According to media reports¹, on the night of 24 December 2024, 17 houses belonging to the Christian Tripura community were burnt to ashes. The attack occurred while the residents were away celebrating Christmas in a neighboring village due to the lack of a local church. Media reports allege that associates of former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed were involved in the arson attack. These individuals have reportedly made repeated attempts to evict the Tripura families, using threats, coercion, and violence to force them off their ancestral lands.

The CHT Commission expresses grave concern that this odious act appears to be part of a broader pattern of land grabbing, intimidation, and violence targeting Indigenous communities in CHT. As a close ally of the former Awami League government, former IGP Benazir Ahmed and his family manipulated state systems to illegally lease and occupy over 100 acres of traditional land belonging to Indigenous communities in Bandarban district during the Awami League's tenure². We are appalled that an associate of the former government, who already has numerous cases filed against him³, can still perpetrate such acts. This highlights not only the enduring influence of individuals empowered by the fallen government but also the current government's lack of control over law and order. It is not only Benazir's family, several other high-ranking former government officials, military officers, and influential corporate and business groups with ties to the previous government have also seized vast amounts of land from Indigenous Peoples in the CHT. This practice of leasing land to outsiders for commercial and non-commercial purposes began in the CHT in the mid-1980s and continued even after the signing of the Accord, leading to the displacement of many Indigenous communities. In Bandarban district alone, a staggering 46,775 acres of land are currently under the control of influential outsiders through this controversial land-leasing system⁴. The recent arson attack is not an isolated incident but part of

¹ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/17-houses-tripura-community-torched-3784371>, <https://www.bbc.com/bengali/articles/clyxv9nxx2po>

² <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangla/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%82%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B6/news-details-222526>, <https://www.itvbd.com/country/dhaka/151220>, and <https://www.banglatribune.com/country/chitagong/849489>

³ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/corruption/news/benazir-and-his-family-members-sued-4-corruption-cases-3776846>

⁴ পৃষ্ঠা ১১১, জুম্মামলিয়ান আমলাই, বুদ্ধজ্যোতি চাকমা, বাম্পরবান পার্বত্য জেলায় আদিবাসী পাহাড়িদের জমি বহিরাগত ও অনির্বাসীদের কাছে জমির ইজারা প্রদানে রাষ্ট্রের ভূমিকা, প্রফেসর মংসানু চৌধুরী সম্পাদিত, পার্বত্য ভূমি সহায়িকা পার্বত্য চট্টগ্রামের বন ও ভূমি অধিকার, ইজারা এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ উদ্বাস্তু সমস্যা, ২০২১.

a systemic attempt to displace Indigenous peoples from their rightful lands for personal and commercial gain⁵.

The CHTC strongly condemns the alleged involvement of influential figures and corporate entities in orchestrating and facilitating such heinous crimes. The Honourable Chief Advisor, in his address to the nation, promised that his government would implement reforms and ensure the protection of minorities and Indigenous groups under the law⁶. However, in the past few months, we have observed the current government's disappointing track record in safeguarding minority communities⁷, including Indigenous groups in the CHT⁸. These acts of aggression not only trample on the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples but also undermine the principles of justice, equality, and accountability that the current Interim Government has pledged to uphold in Bangladesh.

The CHTC demands the following immediate actions from the Interim Government:

1. The government must urgently initiate an impartial and transparent investigation into the arson attack to identify and prosecute all perpetrators. Accountability must extend to all individuals and entities involved in land-grabbing, intimidation, and violence against Indigenous communities.
2. The Interim Government must honor the spirit of the CHT Accord by immediately canceling the leases of lands illegally acquired by the former IGP, his family, and other beneficiaries of the previous governments. Part D.8 of the CHT Accord explicitly outlines the terms and conditions governing such leases. Any violations of these provisions must be addressed with decisive action to prevent further exploitation and injustice.
3. The government must take decisive steps to operationalize the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission and ensure it has the necessary resources and authority to address land disputes effectively. Implementing the provisions of the CHT Accord, especially those related to land disputes, must be prioritized to protect Indigenous peoples and prevent the recurrence of such incidents.
4. The government should urgently provide relief and rehabilitation for the affected families, including temporary shelter, food, and medical assistance. Long-term support should also include compensation for losses and restoration of their homes and livelihoods.

⁵ The CHTC has consistently raised concerns about this alarming issue. For instances: <https://www.scribd.com/document/617663187/CHTC-Press-Statement-30-April-2022>, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news/4780-international-cht-commission-calls-for-an-impartial-investigation-of-allegations-against-corporation-s-occupation-of-mro-land.html>, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news/4999-international-cht-commission-deeply-concerned-continued-violence-mro-community-ensure-justice-safety-human-rights.html>

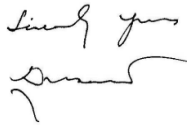
⁶ <https://protectyunus.wpcomstaging.com/2024/08/28/professor-yunus-address-to-the-nation/>

⁷ <https://netra.news/2024/bangladeshi-politics-is-failing-bangladeshs-hindus/>

⁸ <https://www.iwgia.org/en/bangladesh/5566>

5. Policies must be enacted or reinforced to safeguard Indigenous lands from illegal occupation and exploitation. The government should take a firm stance against land-grabbing and ensure that perpetrators, regardless of their influence or status, face the full extent of the law.

On behalf of the CHT Commission,



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