



FIAN INTERNATIONAL
FOR THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND NUTRITION



Urgent Statement: Call for Urgent Action on Deadly Violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

We express our unequivocal condemnation of the recent surge in deadly violence targeting Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), perpetrated by military forces of the Government of Bangladesh and Bengali settlers. These acts constitute the peak of an escalating violence targeting Indigenous Peoples reflecting a pattern of systemic oppression, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon of terror and control.

The surge of violence is emblematic of the entrenched impunity and institutional neglect that has persisted across successive governments, including the current interim administration. Since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government on 5 August 2024, up to the present, the CHT Commission secretariat has documented 8 incidents of rape (of which 5 cases of gang rape), 1 incident of murder following alleged rape, 7 cases of attempted rape, and 4 cases of sexual harassmentⁱ.

In the latest incident of this nature, on 23 September 2025, a 12-year-old Jumma schoolgirl was reportedly gang-raped by three Bengali men, allegedly settlers in the CHT. In response, local Jumma students and youth networks organized a peaceful protest rally on 25 September and called for a demonstration march on the following day. However, on the night of 25 September, instead of taking actions to prosecute the alleged perpetrators, military personnel detained Ukyanu Marma, one of the Jumma student leaders organizing the protestⁱⁱ, at gunpoint. Following this, on the 26th, when Jumma youth started observing their planned protest demonstration peacefully, military personnel reportedly intervened and obstructed the gatheringⁱⁱⁱ. On the 26th in the afternoon, Bengali settlers announced without justification that they would also hold a protest rally in Khagrachari against the so-called 'attack on the army by Jumma youth occurred on the 26th'^{iv}. And on the 27th, the settlers, without any provocation and in the presence of the army and the Border Guards (BGB), carried out coordinated attacks on the Jumma people in the Mahjon Para and Naran Khaiya areas of Khagrachari, severely injuring many Jumma individuals (at least two Jumma are in critical condition), destroyed and looted their property.

Consequently, the road blockade by the Jumma students and youth network was extended to the next day, 28 September 2025. On that day, at Ramsu Bazar of Guimara, a sub-district adjacent to the district headquarters of Khagrachari, in the presence of the military, Bengali settlers launched unprovoked attacks against the Jumma people. As members of the indigenous Jumma people attempted to protect their businesses and houses, the military opened fire on them, causing at least three reported Jumma deaths. Several more have been injured, and some may have subsequently succumbed to their injuries^v. In the wake of the military gunfire and settlers' attack, several Jumma-owned businesses and houses were burnt to ashes. Most concerning, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) released a press statement and blamed the Indigenous youth and wider Indigenous community for the unrest. The statement reportedly labelled the Jumma members as 'terrorists' and attributed responsibility for the violence, including the military shootings, to them^{vi}.

It is evident that under de facto military rule and government-supported settler occupation, the Indigenous Peoples in the CHT continue to live under conditions that systematically deny their democratic and fundamental human rights, facing severe restrictions on their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expressions. For decades, in a context of entrenched judicial impunity, sexual violence against Indigenous women continues to be systematically used as a tool of intimidation and repression. These violations are not isolated. They are part of a broader campaign to dispossess Indigenous communities of their ancestral lands, dismantle their cultural integrity, and silence their voices. We stand in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the CHT and demand and urge the interim Government to implement the following measures to end the ongoing pattern of systemic human rights violations and to ensure justice, accountability, and the protection of the rights of Indigenous communities:

- Ensure the immediate identification, arrest and judicial prosecution without delay of all individuals allegedly responsible for the rape that occurred on 23 September 2025.

- Ensure protection, psychological counseling and timely medical support for the victim.
- End the culture of impunity and the use of sexual violence as a tool of oppression against the Indigenous Peoples in CHT, by ensuring the prompt, impartial, and effective criminal investigation, prosecution, and sentencing of all perpetrators of rape, sexual violence, and unlawful killings in the CHT— including those affiliated with state security forces and Bengali settlers.
- Form an independent, impartial, and adequately mandated Commission of Inquiry in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1956 to investigate the attack and killing of the Jumma, as well as the destruction of their businesses and properties. Such a commission would have all the powers of a civil court, including the authority to summon all concerned civil and military officials, enter all concerned premises, and examine necessary documents, and facilitate criminal proceedings in appropriate courts of law.
- Invite and fully cooperate with the United Nations and its relevant special procedure mandate holders to investigate this longstanding and continued pattern of human rights violations in the CHT, as was done in the context of the July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh. All restrictions on the entry of diplomats, international observers and other foreigners to the CHT should be lifted immediately and unconditionally, in line with principles of transparency, accountability, and international scrutiny.
- Immediately revoke the executive order known as 'Operation Uttoron'^{vii}, and take concrete steps to restore full civilian governance and a democratic environment in the CHT. All temporary military and security camps should be dismantled, with the exception of the six permanent military bases designated in the 1997 CHT Accord.
- Establish and deploy an ethnically representative police force in the region, incorporating both Indigenous Peoples and ethnic Bengalis, as expressly provided for in the Hill District Councils Acts of 1989 (Acts 19, 20 and 21 of 1989). Commensurately, clear directives must be issued to Bangladesh Army, BGB and other non-Police security forces instructing them to refrain from Interference in civil law and order functions.
- Promote the voluntary, safe, and dignified return or relocation of Bengali settlers from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) to their places of origin or other suitable locations, in consultation with all affected communities and in accordance with human rights and humanitarian principles. Any state policies or practices^{viii} that hinder such processes should be reviewed and withdrawn to prevent the continuation of structural discrimination, deepen trust among communities, and reduce the risk of future violence or escalation of tensions.

Moreover, we:

- Strongly urge the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations to put a temporary hold on recruitment of Bangladeshi security forces until they cease their occupation and human rights violations in CHT.
- Ask the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to establish a mechanism to independently investigate and monitor the human rights violations committed by the security forces in the CHT.

ⁱ In the case of murder of an Indigenous Khyang woman following alleged rape, which occurred in Thanchi, Bandarban on 5 May 2025, to date, no arrests have been made. On 27 June 2025, when an Indigenous schoolgirl from the 8th grade was gang-raped by 6 Bengali settlers in Khagrachari, the Jumma protest rally was attacked by the military, resulting in numerous injuries, including to journalists. The Commission secretariat has collected photos and videos documenting the attack, including photos showing the injuries sustained by a journalist who was beaten by the military.

ⁱⁱ He was later released on the same night due to widespread protest. We have continuously observed that when alleged perpetrators are Bengali settlers, security forces often side with them, and even when perpetrators are arrested, they try to cover up the incidents, obstruct justice, harass, intimidate, and attack Jumma community members demanding justice. His arrest again showcases this persistent pattern in the CHT of security forces siding with the perpetrators rather than protecting the victims and those demanding justice.

ⁱⁱⁱ This further intensified the anger and grief of Jumma youth, and reportedly they hurled stones at an army vehicle, and extended the road blockade for the next day.

^{iv} The fact that ethnic Bengali settlers are demonstrating for the protection of the armed forces clearly indicates that such stage-managed activities were planned and implemented at the direction of military and other security forces.

^v Thwai Ching Marma (25), Akhraw Marma (24), and Athuirue Marma (26) lost their lives on the spot. More than 30 others were seriously injured, including at least 10 who sustained bullet wounds from the military and are now admitted to Khagrachari Hospital in critical condition. Additionally, 16 Jumma houses, over 40 businesses, one vehicle, and 16 motorcycles were burned down by Bengali settlers in collaboration with the military.

^{vi} On the contrary, verified video footage that we have obtained shows Bengali settlers, in the presence of the military, attacking Jumma individuals at Ramsu Bazar while the military opened fire at the same time.

^{vii} Executive directive, launched in 2001 that has institutionalized military control over the region, undermining civil administration, and curtailed civil liberties by granting military authorities sweeping powers to detain individuals and restrict movement.

^{viii} Such as those contained in the Memo of the Ministry of CHT Affairs dated 1st November 2018, and those allegedly contained in instructions commensurate to Operation Uttoron.