

15 December 2010

Human Rights Council
Forum on Minority Issues
Room XX Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

Agenda Item: VIII (Meaningful and effective participation in economic and development policy-making)

Madam Chair,

I am Sanchay Chakma speaking, on behalf of, the World Jummo Voice which has been defending the rights of Indigenous Jummo People in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The Indigenous Jummo People have been suffering from ethnic cleansing by the Bangladesh Armed Forces for decades. We have no rights to participate in the policy-making process of economic development our own. The Armed Forces are all in all in the region to the affairs of economy and development as well as in all aspects. The military rule is still continuing in the name of 'Operation Uttoron'. It is one the biggest militarized zone in the world with an amount of more than 500 military, para-military and anser camps in the region. Why has the Government of Bangladesh deployed the Armed Forces there? The purpose is nothing but to settle Bengali Muslim populations to capture the land of Indigenous Jummo People. There was an agreement signed between the Jummo People's representatives and Bangladesh Government to bring peace and stability in the region in 2nd December 1997.

The agreement clearly stated that all temporary military camps should be withdrawn and local economic and developmental activities should be conducted by local authorities. But no Government of Bangladesh still has implemented the agreement. Rather all successive Governments have been continuing previous settlement policy by ignoring the agreement and Indigenous traditional rights to land and self economy. As a result, the Indigenous Jummo People are being victimized forceful eviction from their ancestral lands systematically.

The Indigenous Jummo People are compelled to relocate in the remote areas by the Bengali Muslim settlement policy so that their earning sources are going to be marginalised day by day. And education of their children is going to decrease gradually. As a result, they are unable to compete in the job markets. Without proper education how will they develop their economic conditions? The participation of policy-making process is out of question if there is no proper education.

The World Jummo Voice thinks that without proper implementation of agreement and other Indigenous customary laws no economic development will properly be exercised and no participation in the policy-making process will be fruitful. The question of economic development and participation in the policy-making process will remain only in the Government offices. It is notable to mention that without recognizing civil and political rights of ethnic minorities around the world, particularly in Chittagong Hill Tracts there is no actual economic development and participation of policy-making process.

The World Jummo Voice is strongly urging to the Forum on Minority Issues as well as Human Rights Council of the UN to take effective measure to defend the rights of Minorities around the world and to create pressure on the Government of Bangladesh to recognize the collective rights of Indigenous Jummo People in Chittagong Hill Tracts to ensure economic development and participation to the process of policy-making in all affairs.

I thank you for the opportunity to allow expressing my concern here.