



**1. Do young Chakma professionals in Dhaka or other places outside the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) attract adverse attention for any political activism, awareness-raising, etc?**

Very little information was found regarding young Chakma professionals in Dhaka who are involved in political activism for indigenous and/or CHT-related causes, making it difficult to assess whether such persons would attract adverse attention from the authorities. However, some reports were found to indicate that indigenous Hill people (Jumma people) have engaged in CHT activism in Dhaka in recent times, and no subsequent reports were located to suggest that they encountered difficulties with the authorities as a result. A 2009 academic conference paper indicates that indigenous activism (including by Chakmas and other Jumma groups) is much more visible in Dhaka now than in the late 1990s. The paper did not comment on Chakma or Jumma activists based in Dhaka having problems with the authorities in recent times.

Nonetheless, please note the advice contained in question three of *Research Response BGD38071* of February 2011 regarding a high-level member of the Jumma political party the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), who was arrested at his wife's house in Dhaka in early 2009.<sup>1</sup> He was released approximately one month later. As noted in that response, it was not clear why he was arrested or whether he resided permanently in Dhaka or was only visiting.

**Reports on Jumma activism in Dhaka**

Several recent reports were located regarding Jumma activism in Dhaka, specifically protests and demonstrations, and none of these reports indicated that participants were subsequently arrested or mistreated by Bangladeshi authorities. For example, a February 2010 press release by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) recounted a protest meeting and procession in Dhaka as follows:

In Dhaka, [on 30 January 2010] at 11.00 am protest meeting organised jointly by Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF), Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), Jatiya Adivasi Parishad (JAP) and Bangladesh Adivasi Odhokar Andolon (BAOA) was started at the Central Shaheed Minar with information and publicity secretary of PCJSS Mr. Mangal Kumar Chakma in the chair.

Gono Forum presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya, convenor of Workers Party of Bangladesh (Reconstituted) Haider Akbar Khan Rano, general secretary of Workers Party of Bangladesh leader Anisur Rahman Mallik, leader of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal Bazlur Rashid Firoz, central member of Communist Party of Bangladesh and Dhaka University teachers M M Akash general and secretary

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<sup>1</sup> RRT Country Advice 2011, *Research Response BGD38071*, 4 February – Attachment 1.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, assistant general secretary of Bangladesh National Awami League Party (NAP) Ismail Hossain, Dhaka University teachers Muhammad Samad, Saurav Sikdar and Robayet Ferdous, women rights activists Khishi Kabir of Nejera Kori and Rokeya Kabir of Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, indigenous women rights activists Madhabi Lata Chakma of Parbatya Chattagram Women Association, Rakhi Mrong of BAOA, Chaitali Tripura of BIPF and Tandra Chakma, human rights activists Salam Azad, indigenous human rights activists Ajoy A Mree and Sanjeeb Drong, among others, spoke at the protest meeting.

Speakers condemned the recent attacks on the president of BIPF and PCJSS Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, Chakma circle chief Raja Barrister Devasish Roy and general secretary of BIPF Sanjeeb Drong. They urged the government to take stern steps to prevent recurrence of such attacks.

Demanding a proper investigation of the attacks and punishment of the culprits, a protest meeting also accused the government of doing little to protect the members of the ethnic minorities. They said the attack on top indigenous leaders during the Awami League-led government's regime indicated how vulnerable indigenous peoples are in the country. They appalled the government to find out the perpetrators of such attacks and ensure their punishment.

Speakers also urged the government for early implementation of the CHT Accord and to announce a roadmap towards the implementation of the Accord.

Later, the organisers brought out a procession. Starting from Shaheed Minar, the rally paraded different city streets around Dhaka University campus. Several hundreds representative from indigenous peoples from across the country also joined the protest rally.<sup>2</sup>

This report suggests that the protest and procession that followed were large-scale, highly visible events involving many activists. No sources were found to indicate that the participants encountered trouble with the authorities after the event.

Similarly, a February 2010 *CHTnews* story posted on a Jumma blog reported that the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), a Jumma activist group, organised a demonstration in downtown Dhaka that month "under the banner of 'Hill Students, Youths and people of Dhaka'".<sup>3</sup> Approximately 400 people participated in the demonstration, and "[a]fter the rally a procession was taken out which march[ed] to [the] Press Club through Gulistan and Baitul Mukkaram". Again, there was no indication in the report that authorities pursued or mistreated participants.

Another *CHTnews* report from February 2010 said that Jumma student activists from the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) had "staged a demonstration in Dhaka in protest at the assassination attempt on Choton Kanti Tanchangya", a member of the UPDF who was allegedly targeted by members of the PCJSS (according to the UPDF).<sup>4</sup> The report said that members of the PCP's Dhaka Branch "brought out a procession from Muktangon at

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<sup>2</sup> "Chittagong Hill Tracts: Protest Meetings against Attack" (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti press release) 2010, Website of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 1 February, <http://www.unpo.org/article/10655> – Accessed 4 February 2011 – Attachment 2.

<sup>3</sup> "Massacre in Sajek: protests continue, Borkha Party attacks demonstrators in Laxmichar" 2010, *CHTnews* report posted on Indigenous Jumma People's Movement in North America (blog), 21 February, <http://jummacht.blogspot.com/2010/02/news-no-392010-massacre-in-sajek.html> – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 3.

<sup>4</sup> "PCP protests assassination bid on Choton Tanchangya" 2010, *CHTnews* report posted on on Indigenous Jumma People's Movement in North America (blog), 19 February, <http://jummacht.blogspot.com/2010/02/pcp-protests-assassination-bid-on.html> – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 4.

4pm and held a rally in front of the National Press Club in down town Dhaka”, demanding that the government mete out “exemplary punishment” to the culprits.

An academic paper presented by a German sociologist at the “Critical Studies Conference” on “Empires, States and Migration” in Calcutta in September 2009 provides some comment on the indigenous activism scene in Dhaka in recent years.<sup>5</sup> The author, Dr Eva Gerharz, had conducted research on the peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1999, returned to Dhaka for a visit in 2008. Dr Gerharz said she was “amazed” by the “strong and visible presence of indigenous activism in Bangladesh’s capitol”, which made a striking contrast to 1999, when “it was hard to find any hints of the existence of ethnic minorities in Dhaka”.<sup>6</sup> Dr Gerharz’s paper discussed a World Indigenous People’s Day parade in Dhaka in some detail, describing the event as a “peaceful gathering” attended by members of indigenous communities, “many of them [holding] posters and signboards carrying political messages”, as well as Bengali civil society members and at least one government representative.<sup>7</sup> The paper went on to note the relative success of CHT activists in gaining national and global recognition, compared to other Bangladeshi indigenous groups.<sup>8</sup> Overall, the paper presented a positive picture of Jumma activism in Dhaka. While this is not to say that Chakma and other Jumma activists have never encountered difficulties or opposition from Bangladeshi authorities, it does suggest that such persons have participated openly in pro-Jumma activities in Dhaka in recent years.

## 2. Deleted.

### Attachments

1. RRT Country Advice 2011, *Research Response BGD38071*, 4 February.
2. “Chittagong Hill Tracts: Protest Meetings against Attack” (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti press release) 2010, Website of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 1 February, <http://www.unpo.org/article/10655> – Accessed 4 February 2011.
3. “Massacre in Sajek: protests continue, Borkha Party attacks demonstrators in Laxmichar” 2010, *CHTnews* report posted on Indigenous Jumma People’s Movement in North America (blog), 21 February, <http://jummacht.blogspot.com/2010/02/news-no-392010-massacre-in-sajek.html> – Accessed 7 February 2011.

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<sup>5</sup> Gerharz, E 2009, “Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People’s Activism between Marginalisation and Self-Assertion” (Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference ‘Empires, States and Migration’ on 11-12 September in Calcutta, India), Website of the Calcutta Migration Research Group, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T\\_C\\_Conference/Eva.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T_C_Conference/Eva.pdf) – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 5.

<sup>6</sup> Gerharz, E 2009, “Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People’s Activism between Marginalisation and Self-Assertion” (Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference ‘Empires, States and Migration’ on 11-12 September in Calcutta, India), Website of the Calcutta Migration Research Group, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T\\_C\\_Conference/Eva.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T_C_Conference/Eva.pdf) – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 5.

<sup>7</sup> Gerharz, E 2009, “Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People’s Activism between Marginalisation and Self-Assertion” (Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference ‘Empires, States and Migration’ on 11-12 September in Calcutta, India), Website of the Calcutta Migration Research Group, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T\\_C\\_Conference/Eva.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T_C_Conference/Eva.pdf) – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 5.

<sup>8</sup> Gerharz, E 2009, “Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People’s Activism between Marginalisation and Self-Assertion” (Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference ‘Empires, States and Migration’ on 11-12 September in Calcutta, India), Website of the Calcutta Migration Research Group, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T\\_C\\_Conference/Eva.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T_C_Conference/Eva.pdf) – Accessed 7 February 2011 – Attachment 5.

4. "PCP protests assassination bid on Choton Tanchangya" 2010, *CHTnews* report posted on on Indigenous Jumma People's Movement in North America (blog), 19 February, <http://jummacht.blogspot.com/2010/02/pcp-protests-assassination-bid-on.html> – Accessed 7 February 2011.
5. Gerharz, E 2009, "Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People's Activism between Marginalisation and Self-Assertion" (Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference 'Empires, States and Migration' on 11-12 September in Calcutta, India), Website of the Calcutta Migration Research Group, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T\\_C\\_Conference/Eva.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/T_C_Conference/Eva.pdf) – Accessed 7 February 2011.
6. Deleted.