



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice Bangladesh

Bangladesh – BGD38091 – Chittagong Hill
Tracts (CHT) – Passport checks – Jumma
activists – Treatment by authorities in
Dhaka and CHT

11 February 2011

- 1. Do Bangladeshi immigration/passport officers conduct security checks that would reveal if a person was wanted by the Bangladeshi Army and/or Director Forces of General Intelligence (DFGI)? If so, is it known whether such checks were conducted for passports issued in 1999 and/or for passports renewed in 2005 and 2009?**

A request for information was sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for this case on 18 January 2011.¹ DFAT responded on 9 February 2011. Its advice on this matter is as follows:

On 25 January 2010, Post contacted the Department of Immigration and Passports who advised that no security checks are conducted by immigration/passport officers that would reveal if a person is wanted by the Bangladesh Army and/or Director General Forces Intelligence. Passport officers check a list authorised by the Ministry of Home Affairs entitled “Black Listed Persons” and do not issue passports to individuals included on this list. This “black list” is prepared by the Immigration and Passport Department after getting the necessary instructions from the Home Ministry and usually contains the names of convicted criminals, persons wanted by the police, security forces or intelligence agencies. This has been the process in place since (at least) 1999.²

- 2. Are passport security checks more stringent in Rangamati and elsewhere in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) than in other parts of the country?**

DFAT advised:

The Department of Immigration and Passports advised that Rangamati and other areas of CHT have the same security check procedures observed elsewhere in Bangladesh in relation to issuance of Bangladesh passports.³

¹ RRT Country Advice Service 2011, Email to DFAT “RRT Country Information Request BGD38091”, 18 January – Attachment 1.

² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1240 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request BGD38091*, 9 February – Attachment 2.

³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1240 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request BGD38091*, 9 February – Attachment 2.

3. In a related question, are Chakma (or other Hills people) passport applicants subject to additional security checks, for example to ascertain whether they or family members are associated with the Shanti Bahini or other such groups?

DFAT stated that:

The Department of Immigration and Passports advised that Chakma (or other Hills People) are not subject to additional security checks and the normal security check procedure for passports apply in this region as well. No additional checks are conducted to ascertain whether they or family members are associated with the Shanti Bahini or other such groups.⁴

4. Do Chakma CHT rights activists or supporters based in Dhaka or the CHT receive adverse treatment from the authorities?

DFAT advised:

On 31 January and 1 February 2011 Post spoke over the telephone with a contact from the Pahari Chatro Porishad (Hilltracts Student Association). The contact advised that indigenous political and human rights activists commonly face ill treatment by the police and army as a way for the army to maintain 'order' in the CHT region. The contact provided the following two incidents as examples:

- 1) On 15th August 2010 a college student and a high school girl were arrested from the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) office in Naniyashar Upazilla of Rangamati district on charges of possessing arms. They were freed on bail after eight days.
- 2) During a Pahari Chatro Porishad council meeting on 15th December 2010, an altercation arose with the council members when police tried to stop the meeting. That same night police raided houses in the village and arrested 40 people including men, women and children. Thirty were released the next day but 10 people were only released on bail after one week.

The contact also noted that these cases of harassment mostly occur within the CHT. In urban centres like Dhaka, indigenous people do not commonly face adverse treatment from authorities.

On 5 February, Post spoke to a political contact about harassment of activists in CHT. The contact noted that harassment certainly occurs and was often perpetrated by civil servants based in CHT. The contact agreed with the assessment above that harassment was mainly a problem in the CHT and was not widespread in major urban centres.

Post also refers to the 2010 annual report of Odhikar, a national human rights organisation. The report notes under its sub-heading 'Ethnic minorities' '...numerous violent attacks and discriminatory practices against ethnic minorities...' and cites one example where the army was the perpetrator. Similarly, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a national legal aid and human rights organisation, states in its annual human rights report 2009 that the administration in the CHT remains indifferent with respect to the human rights of the indigenous people and cites similar examples as noted above.⁵

⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1240 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request BGD38091*, 9 February – Attachment 2.

⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1240 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request BGD38091*, 9 February – Attachment 2.

5. Any other comments by Post on this issue would be most welcome

DFAT did not provide any other comments.

Attachments

1. RRT Country Advice Service 2011, Email to DFAT “RRT Country Information Request BGD38091”, 18 January.
2. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1240 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request BGD38091*, 9 February.