

To Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
c/o Honorable Ashraf-ud-Doula, Ambassador, Embassy of Bangladesh, Japan

**Appeal for Independent Investigation into Arson and Killings in Baghahat, Sajek Union,
Rangamati Hill District and Relief to Victims**


The Jumma Peoples Network in Japan, World Jumma Voice and Jumma Net are deeply concerned about the arson attack carried out by Bengali settlers in Baghahat area of Sajek Union in Rangamati on 19-20 February, and subsequent violence that has spread to Khagrachari town and other areas. Over 200 homes of indigenous people as well as several shops, a church, a Buddhist temple and a UNDP-run village center have been burned down in Gangaram Mukh, Guchchagram, Hazachhara, Jaralchhari, Dane Gulakmachhara, Bame Gulakmachhara, Simanachhara, Chhurung Nala and Gulakmachhara villages. At least two indigenous people have been shot dead by army personnel, and dozens have been injured in the incident. Local sources claim that many more indigenous people were killed in indiscriminate firing by the military, but a curfew under section 144 has prevented independent investigation. Some of the injured are reported to have been put under arrest while hospitalized.

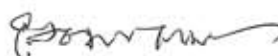
This incident occurred in the context of continuous attempts of Bengali settlers to build houses on land used by the indigenous people in the region. A similar attack on 20 April 2008 burned down more than seventy houses of indigenous people, most of whom were unable to rebuild their homes and have lived in extreme deprivation and uncertainty ever since. Both incidents took place in an area immediately adjacent to the Baghahat garrison. The indigenous villagers claim that the military not only turned a blind eye to the present attack but actively supported and engaged in it.

In light of the extremely serious nature of the incident, we call upon your government to immediately take the following actions:

1. To conduct an independent, high-level investigation into the incident, and give exemplary punishment to those responsible.
2. To immediately provide medical treatment, food, water and shelter, compensation, and rehabilitation to the victims.
3. To stop expansion of Bengali settlements, withdraw settlers from the region, and return occupied lands to the indigenous people.
4. To withdraw all temporary military camp according to the CHT Peace Accord, and terminate Operation Uttaran.
5. To start a dialogue with Jumma political parties for a permanent political solution the problems in the CHT region.

Sincerely,


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