

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 208/93 Extrajudicial Execution/Fear of Extrajudicial
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24

Execution

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned at the continued deliberate killings of unarmed civilians by the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and fears there is an immediate threat of further killings if such excessive use of force is not curbed.

Recently corroborated reports of an incident in late April 1993 indicate that ordinary cattle owners in remote villages of Bangladesh continue to be the targets of extrajudicial executions. The killings have followed a distinct pattern: the BDR personnel raid markets in remote villages under the pretext of recovering smuggled cattle. In reality, however, they confiscate the villagers' cows which they then sell either to the original owner or at a low price elsewhere. When the villagers resist these raids, the BDR opens fire.

Amnesty International has documented several incidents in which about a dozen people have died and scores of others injured. The latest report relates to an incident on 23 April 1993 involving the personnel of BDR's 6th Battalion who raided the village of Kolar Haat in the Naogaon area, and tried to take away the cows. The villagers resisted whereupon the BDR personnel opened fire at the unarmed crowds killing the four men named above and injuring at least eight others.

Amnesty International has raised its concern about the extrajudicial executions of villagers by the BDR with the Government of Bangladesh on several occasions, urging the government to identify without delay the BDR chain of command responsible for the killings, and to bring those responsible to justice. It is concerned that the government has not taken any effective measures to safeguard ordinary villagers against such killings. It is feared that more people may be at risk of further killings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 23 April 1993 between 30 and 40 BDR personnel of the 6th Battalion stationed in Naogaon, Bangladesh raided a cattle market at Kolar Haat village confiscating the cows. People who had proof of ownership issued to them by the local administration resisted the raid. The chairman of the local administration met the BDR Commander, Captain Rashid, to inform him that the BDR had no authority to conduct an operation in the village because no such authority had been issued by the civilian administration as is required by Bangladesh law. The captain ignored his objection and the BDR personnel began to beat cattle owners who

tried to stop them from taking away their cows. The captain then ordered all the BDR personnel to move away from the crowd. Moments later, BDR personnel began to fire at the unarmed crowd , resulting in the death of four civilians.

According to information available to Amnesty International, the captain who led the BDR operation is a medical doctor with the 6th Battalion and has no military brief to engage in a raid. Furthermore, the vehicles which were used by the BDR during this operation were reportedly privately owned.

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Following continued demonstrations attended by human rights activists and local politicians, the government ordered an inquiry into the incident, but to Amnesty International's knowledge, no one has been brought to justice and no action has been taken to prevent the deliberate killing of unarmed civilians by the BDR.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- urging the government to identify publicly and without delay the BDR personnel responsible for the killings in Kolar Haat village, and to bring them to justice without delay;

- urging the government to provide effective safeguards to ordinary villagers in remote areas who continue to be at risk of extrajudicial executions by the BDR;

APPEALS TO

1) President Abdur Rahman Biswas
Presidential Secretariat
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Telegrams: President Biswas, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Faxes: + 880 2 813 243

Salutation: Dear President

2) Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia
Office of the Prime Minister
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Telegrams: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Faxes : + 880 2 813 243

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

3) Abdul Matin Chowdhury
Minister of Home Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Telegrams: Minister Home Affairs, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Faxes : + 880 2 813 243

Salutation: Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 August 1993.