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MR. BIR BAHADUR USHWE SING MP

Minister

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs

Bangladesh Secretariat

Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

SUBJECT: PROTECT THE INDIGENOUS MRO PEOPLE FROM FORCED EVICTION

Honorable Minister Sing,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to share Amnesty International's concern about the construction of a five-star hotel in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which could lead to the forced eviction of the Mro Indigenous people from their ancestral lands.

The construction of the luxury hotel on the route between Chimbuk and Thanchi¹ will eventually wipe out villages, forcibly evict a large number of the Mro people and destroy the social, economic, traditional and cultural fabric of the Mro Indigenous community. Members of the Mro and other Indigenous communities are also afraid that the construction of the hotel will damage sacred sites, forests, water resources and biodiversity in the region.

The construction of a five-star hotel under these circumstances would violate the Bangladeshi authorities' responsibility and commitment to protect and promote the rights of the Indigenous peoples, rather than providing the Indigenous community with the necessary support to realize their own development plans, for example by improving access to education and electricity.

Community members said that the hotel and associated projects may ultimately lead to the direct and indirect taking away of at least 800 acres of land of the Indigenous people in violation of the customary laws of the community. The action also contravenes Bangladesh's commitment to protect the "institutions, persons, property and labour of these populations" under the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957. Article 11 of the Convention further states that the "right of ownership, collective or individual, of the members of the populations concerned over the lands which these populations traditionally occupy shall be recognized", and Art. 13(2) provides that "Arrangements shall be made to prevent persons who are not members of the populations concerned from taking advantage of these customs or of lack of understanding of the laws on the part of the members of these populations to secure the ownership or use of the lands belonging to such members."

¹ UNB; Work on 5-star hotel, amusement park at Nilgiri begins; 12 September 2020; <https://unb.com.bd/category/bangladesh/work-on-5-star-hotel-amusement-park-at-nilgiri-begins/57298>; Accessed on 20 November 2020

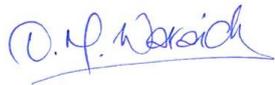
Furthermore, the hotel's construction, on the land belonging to Indigenous peoples, would violate Bangladesh's constitutional obligation to "protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities."

I urge your government to:

Immediately abandon the construction of the luxury hotel on the Chimbuk-Thanchi route, and ensure that any further construction or establishment in the Indigenous land respects the free prior and informed consent of the community;

Protect and develop the lives and livelihood of the Indigenous peoples in line with Bangladesh's commitment in its Constitution and international human rights law.

Yours sincerely,



Omar Waraich
Head of South Asia