

0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 28 April 1993

EBANGLADESH: @SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE

Serious human rights violations continue in Bangladesh and much remains to be done to provide effective human rights safeguards, Amnesty International said in a report published today.

"Appalling human rights violations are continuing in Bangladesh," said the human rights organization. "Despite some positive measures taken by the government during the past two years there has been no consistent and sustained improvement in the human rights situation, improvement which is badly needed."

In today's report, Amnesty International describes a catalogue of human rights violations, including:

- detention without charge or trial of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners;
- torture, including rape, in police and military custody - resulting in at least 17 deaths in 1992;
- the extension of the application of the death penalty and a resumption of judicial executions, with at least four people being executed in 1992;
- several reports of possible extrajudicial executions - on some occasions the victims are government opponents apparently targeted by the security forces, in others there is evidence of police connivance in "politically-motivated killings".

One of the cases described in the report is that of a boy arrested in 1980, when he was just 12 years old. He was then illegally detained for 12 years - held in leg-irons for 11 of his years behind bars. As well as such cruel treatment, Amnesty International documents various torture methods recorded recently in Bangladesh, including kicking, beating and piercing the fingers with hot needles.

The report also describes the torture and killing of tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, in the context of an ongoing conflict between the government and an armed tribal organization seeking local autonomy. In 1992, Abiran Chakma, a tribal man, reportedly died in army custody as a result of torture and was buried inside an army compound. His father was refused permission to carry out a private burial.

Amnesty International said today that the government of Bangladesh, in commenting on its current report, has stated that "the various cases (of torture and death in custody) cited.. will be investigated by the appropriate authorities and necessary preventive and corrective actions are expected to follow."

The organization welcomes this commitment by the Bangladeshi authorities and added that prompt and effective government action is essential if the human rights violations in this report are to be redressed and their continuing occurrence prevented.

Said the organization: "Unless existing safeguards are adhered to and strengthened and the perpetrators of human rights violations brought to justice, then human rights violations will continue." Amnesty International is concerned that legislation providing impunity to law enforcement personnel was extended in 1992 and despite the holding of several official investigations the government has failed to ensure that all perpetrators of human rights violations are brought to justice.

"The government of Bangladesh has shown a willingness to tackle these problems. Now let's see those good intentions translated into action - and an end to the torture, killings and illegal imprisonment we have documented for too long."

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