

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 54/92 Death in custody / Disappearances

17 February 1992

BANGLADESH: (Chittagong Hill Tracts)

Abiran Chakma

Kanti Charan Chakma, aged 19

Bandi Charan Chakma, aged 17

Tungo Chakma, aged 35

On 14 January 1992, during the campaign for local elections, some 15 tribal people were reportedly arrested and taken to Baraitali Army Camp by members of the Bangladesh military stationed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts under the command of Camp Commander Nazrul Kabir. On the following day Kina Chandra Chamka, the father of Abiran Chakma, was called to the camp. He was not permitted to take the body home for burial. Instead it was buried in the camp compound and was repeatedly shot at before being lowered into the grave. On 18 January 1992, Kina Chandra Chakma sent a statement to the District Commissioner, the Prime Minister and other government authorities stating his belief that his son had died as a result of excessive beating. The two tribal MPs from Khagrachari and Baghaichari also made statements about this event to the government, but there has been no response to any of the protests and appeals to set up a commission of enquiry. Amnesty International is concerned that Abiran Chakma may have died in military custody as a result of torture.

While most of the tribal people arrested on 14 January were released subsequently, three of them, Kanti Charan Chakma, Bandi Charan Chakma and Tungo Chakma, are still missing. Their relatives have not been able to ascertain their whereabouts. Amnesty International fears that they may have been tortured and that their lives may be in danger.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Amnesty International continues to receive reports about violations of human rights of tribal people committed by the security forces stationed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For instance, on 23 January some military personnel were said to have entered the Balukaram Boudha Bihar, a Buddhist temple in Baghaichari District without showing proper respect for the sanctity of the place. When the monk Bashu Mitra Bhikku requested them, as is the custom, to remove their shoes, he was beaten unconscious. He was taken by the military personnel to the local hospital, but a recommended transfer to the district hospital was refused. Bashu Mitra Bikkhu has been discharged from hospital but he is reported to continue to suffer from his injuries.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging the Government of Bangladesh to initiate a full, independent and impartial enquiry into the death of Abiran Chakma. The terms of reference and findings of such an enquiry should be made public at the earliest opportunity and any member of the security forces alleged to have committed human rights

violations should be brought to justice;

- calling on the government to immediately and unconditionally release the three tribal people still under arrest as they appear to have been arrested solely for exercising their civil rights when they participated in the election campaign;

- urging the government to ensure that these people are not subjected to any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment while in custody.

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APPEALS TO:

1) President:

Abdur Rahman Biswas
Presidential Secretariat
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon
Dhaka

Salutation: Dear President

2) Prime Minister:

Begum Khaleda Zia
Office of the Prime Minister
Gona Bhaban
Sher-e Bangla Nagar
Dhaka

Telegrams: Prime Minister Zia, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Telexes: 642200 PAMA BJ or 64222 PAMA BJ
(via Foreign Minsitry)**

Faxes: + 880 2811 111

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

3) Minister for Home Affairs:

Abdul Matin Chowdhury
Home Ministry
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka

Salutation: Dear Minister

4) Minister of Law and Justice:

Mirza Gholam Hafiz
Ministry of Law and Justice
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after March 30 1992.