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Bangladesh: Request for UN involvement in ending impunity for 1971 violations welcomed

Amnesty International welcomed Foreign Adviser Iftekhkar Ahmed Chowdhury's request for United Nations involvement.

"Action to end impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed in 1971 is long overdue. The failure to tackle this has encouraged the persistent nature of impunity in Bangladesh," said Amnesty International.

During a mission led by Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan, the organization called on the Caretaker Government to initiate the process to end impunity for events in 1971 with the technical assistance and support of the United Nations to ensure that the process of seeking truth, justice and reparations are in line with international human rights standards.

The organization reiterated the call made for the Caretaker Government to seek UN assistance to establish a Commission of Enquiry as a first step to establishing truth, justice and full and effective reparations for victims.

Background:

In more than 30 countries, truth commissions have been established as official, temporary, non-judicial fact-finding bodies to investigate a pattern of abuses of human rights, including the crimes, and to establish the truth. Most conclude their work with a final report containing findings of fact and recommendations.

Truth commissions are a worldwide phenomenon: from 1974 to 2007, at least 32 truth commissions were established in 28 countries. More than half of these commissions have been established in the past ten years.

These include:

- * Chile (National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 1990; National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, 2003),
- * Democratic Republic of Congo (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003)
- * Germany (Commission of Inquiry for the Assessment of History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in Germany, 1992)
- * Grenada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2001)
- * Nepal (Commission of Inquiry to Locate the Persons Disappeared during the Panchayat Period, 1990)
- * South Africa (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1995)
- * Sri Lanka (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal and Disappearances of Persons in Western, Southern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces, Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary

Removal and Disappearances of Persons in the Central, North Western, North Central and Uva Provinces and Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal and Disappearances of Persons in the Northern & Eastern Provinces, 1994)

* Timor-Leste (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, 2002)

* Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2001)

Amnesty International campaigns for the effective establishment and functioning of truth commissions when crimes have been committed. In particular, the organization campaigns for truth commissions to take a victim-centred approach and to uphold the right of victims to obtain truth, justice and full reparation.

For more information please see:

Press release - One year on: human rights in Bangladesh under the State of Emergency

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/one-year-human-rights-bangladesh-under-state-emergency-20080110>

Memorandum to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh and the Political Parties from Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA13/001/2008/en>