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Bangladesh: Human rights crucial to peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts

Following the peace accord, the government of Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts authorities must see peace through by ensuring that all past and present human rights violations are investigated and perpetrators are brought to justice, Amnesty International said in a new report today.

“After two decades of massacres, arbitrary detention, torture and killings, the 1997 peace accord gives the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts a real chance to experience daily life free from human rights abuses,” Amnesty International said.

Sadly the peace accord has been caught in confrontational party politics in Bangladesh. However, all parties to the former conflict have a responsibility to set up and support mechanisms that promote and protect the rights of the people. This includes the opposition who have protested the peace accord from the beginning.

The authorities should establish a special commission to investigate past human rights violations and bring to justice all perpetrators - army, police or former armed opposition.

The National Human Rights Commission should also be set up as a matter of priority to ensure accountability, end impunity and instil trust.

Further efforts in peace-building need to include the development of a fair and impartial judicial system, human rights education programs, human rights training for police and the judiciary.

Some of the main provisions of the peace accord, including the rehabilitation of all returned refugees, settlement of land confiscated from the tribal people and withdrawal of non-permanent army camps, have not been fully implemented.

“The early years after a conflict has ended is a crucial period. The government has a responsibility to coordinate all sections of Bangladeshi society to be guarantors for human rights, prevent further abuses and make the peace accord a lasting reality,” Amnesty International said.

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For more information or a copy of the report “Bangladesh; Human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”, please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>