

£BANGLADESH

@Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, 1989-1990

Introduction

Amnesty International has expressed concern for over a decade about reports of extrajudicial executions and torture perpetrated on the tribal inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the security forces of Bangladesh. The organization has called upon successive governments of Bangladesh - under both President Ziaur Rahman and President Hossain Mohammad Ershad - to take effective steps to halt such human rights violations. It now hopes that the new government authorities in Bangladesh, elected in February 1991, will ensure that effective remedies and human rights safeguards are implemented in the area.

Human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been committed in the context of conflict between the government and an armed tribal organization, the *Shanti Bahini* (Peace Force), which seeks regional autonomy. In 1986, when armed conflict escalated between the two sides, extrajudicial executions and torture were reported on a large scale. More recent reports collected by Amnesty International indicate that such violations have continued to be committed since, but on a lesser scale, and that effective remedies and preventative measures still need to be implemented by the authorities.

Amnesty International has regularly stressed the importance of full, independent investigations being conducted into allegations of human rights violations. In order that investigation can serve a preventive purpose, Amnesty International believes that in every case the results of such investigations should be made public, that those responsible should be brought to justice, and that victims or their relatives should receive adequate compensation. The previous Government of Bangladesh told the International Labour Organization in June 1989 that since August 1988 investigation committees consisting of both tribal and non-tribal members, together with a magistrate, had been formed to investigate and report on incidents of alleged human rights violations. Persons believed responsible were then charged under the criminal law, according to the government statement. The government has also informed Amnesty International of two instances of reported human rights violations which had been investigated and said that criminal charges had been brought against persons believed responsible. However, the government did not provide Amnesty International with the information it requested on the investigation procedures employed, on the precise charges brought and the progress of the cases, and did not provide Amnesty International with the full findings of the investigation. The

organization could therefore not assess whether the procedures used satisfied internationally accepted standards of investigation. It also does not know whether any alleged perpetrators have in fact been brought to trial.

The reports of extrajudicial executions and torture contained in this report took place during 1989 and 1990, while the government of President Hossain Mohammad Ershad was still in power. Following the resignation of President Ershad on 6 December 1990, an interim government under Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed was appointed. Parliamentary elections held on 27 February 1991 were won by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by Begum Khalida Zia, who was sworn in as Prime Minister on 20 March 1991. Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed remained in office pending presidential elections or constitutional reform.

When a new government comes to power, Amnesty International believes it is important for the new authorities to take serious note of, and act to remedy, past abuses. By taking such action, the government can demonstrate its determination to uphold and safeguard human rights in the future. It is in this spirit that Amnesty International is now drawing the attention of the Government of Bangladesh to reports of human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts during 1989 and 1990, and submitting its recommendations for remedial action¹. It hopes that the new government will reiterate in the strongest possible terms its condemnation of human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and that it will implement preventative measures against future abuse. The government should pursue investigations into past abuses, make public the findings, and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. Amnesty International also hopes that the government will take swift action to investigate and remedy any reports of human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which may be made in the future.

Background

The *Shanti Bahini*, which is the armed wing of the *Jana Sanghati Samiti* (JSS, the People's Solidarity Association), has been active since the mid-1970s. In pressing its demand for autonomy for the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, it has attacked and killed military and paramilitary personnel stationed in the area as well as non-tribal, Bengali settlers. Hundreds of deaths have resulted. In turn, the security forces have periodically been reported to have launched reprisal raids on non-combatant tribal villagers, many of whom they have killed. Non-tribal, civilian settlers in the area, as well as members of civilian defence units, have also

¹ In March 1991, Amnesty International submitted to the new Government of Bangladesh a memorandum on human rights safeguards, containing recommendations on ratification of international human rights instruments, review of legal provisions for administrative detention, the prevention of torture and extrajudicial executions and abolition of the death penalty. See *Bangladesh: Human Rights Safeguards*, (AI Index ASA 13/02/91) March 1991.

regularly been reported to have attacked and killed tribal villagers with the complicity or acquiescence of the security forces.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is the most sparsely inhabited region of Bangladesh, one of the world's most densely populated countries. With land shortages elsewhere, successive governments of Bangladesh have encouraged large numbers of non-tribal people from the plains to settle in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The indigenous tribal people in turn have felt threatened by this migration, arguing that they have become a minority population within their own area, that their traditional lands have been lost to settlers and to development projects - most notably, much land was lost to the Kaptai Dam, which was completed in 1964 - and that they risk loss of their distinctive cultural identity. The tribal people, though mostly Buddhists, Christians and Hindus, see themselves as closely connected with the land they live on.

SPACE FOR MAP

Under British colonial rule the area was accorded separate administrative status under the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900, and kept largely isolated from the plains. With the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the Chittagong Hill Tracts became part of the east wing of

Pakistan, a Muslim majority area. Thereafter its separate status began to be eroded. Following the creation of Bangladesh as an independent state in December 1971, tribal leaders from the Chittagong Hill Tracts put forward to Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman their demands for autonomy. These were rejected, and in March 1972 the JSS, together with the *Shanti Bahini*, was formed.

During the 1980s the government of General, and then President, Hossain Mohammad Ershad announced various initiatives to reach a settlement regarding the disputed area, including amnesties for *Shanti Bahini* members who surrendered, amendments to the Regulation of 1900, and negotiations with the JSS. Talks apparently broke down in late 1985, and tension in the Chittagong Hill Tracts escalated in 1986. A rise in attacks by the *Shanti Bahini* was met with an increase in reprisal attacks on non-combatant tribal villagers by the security forces and non-tribal settlers. In addition in this period, torture of tribal villagers was reported as law enforcement personnel sought to force tribal villagers to move from their more dispersed villages into "protected villages", close to security forces camps. Villages of this type have been known by different names at different times: "protected villages", "collective farms" and, more recently, "cluster villages". The relocation of the population in these villages, often presented by the authorities as being in the interests of the socio-economic development of the area, has also been an element in the government's counter-insurgency policy. In these villages, the tribal population can be subject to closer surveillance, and the *Shanti Bahini* cut off from a supply line within the local community. Bengali settlers have also been relocated into their own cluster villages.

To avoid being resettled in protected villages as also to escape from reprisal attacks by security forces and non-tribal villagers, a large number of tribal people have fled to India. Their number is estimated as between 40,000 and 60,000.

In February 1988 the government proposed a nine-point peace plan to tribal leaders, which included the creation of district councils. The JSS argued that the councils would have control over less than 10 per cent of the land area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and rejected the plan.

In February 1989 the Bangladesh parliament repealed the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900, and passed legislation providing for limited local autonomy in the Chittagong Hill Tracts through the creation of elected Hill District Councils in the districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Elections to the district councils were held in June 1989. The JSS opposed the legislation, boycotted the elections and continued its violent opposition to the government.

The legislation provides for each district council to have a majority of tribal members and a tribal chairperson. Each council must have a specified number of members from specific tribal groups, and a specified number of non-tribal members. The legislation gives responsibility to the councils for several areas of local civil administration, including approval of land sales and the appointment of police up to the rank of assistant sub-inspector. Of over 20 areas of civil

administration which are to be transferred to council control under the act, Amnesty International understands that by the end of 1990 only 3 had actually been handed over. However, on 10 June 1991 the government announced that it would transfer to the district councils the local government powers granted under the legislation, though no mention was made in the press announcement of the date by which power would be transferred.

Amnesty International's Position on Violence by Opposition Groups

Since 1988 the Government of Bangladesh has drawn to Amnesty International's attention various abuses which it says were committed by the *Shanti Bahini*. These have included killings, arson, abductions and the placing of explosive devices in markets and on passenger boats. The government believe the *Shanti Bahini* to be responsible for at least 133 deaths in 1989 and 63 in 1990.

Amnesty International condemns as a matter of principle the killing and torture of prisoners by anyone, including by opposition groups such as the *Shanti Bahini*. Amnesty International's work is based on international human rights standards, which are binding on governments. Governments bear the responsibility for bringing those who have committed criminal acts to justice, but in doing so they must ensure that basic human rights are always protected. Violence by opposition groups can never absolve governments of their responsibility under international law to uphold fundamental human rights. In particular, the right to life and the right to be free from torture must be upheld at all times. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) makes clear in Article 4 that derogations from these rights can never be permitted, even at times of national emergency. Bangladesh has not so far acceded to the ICCPR or other international human rights standards.

Amnesty International's Work on the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Government's Response

Amnesty International has repeatedly requested the authorities in Bangladesh to establish independent inquiries into reports of human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and to take specific steps to prevent their recurrence. In November 1980, the organization urged the government of President Ziaur Rahman to establish an investigation into the reported shooting in March 1980 of unarmed tribal people by soldiers. It received no reply. In December 1980, Amnesty International expressed concern to the government about the proposed enactment of the Disturbed Areas Bill, which would have granted sweeping powers to the security forces, including the power to kill people on mere suspicion. In the event, the bill had not been passed before the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman in May 1981 and did not come into effect.

In 1985, Amnesty International raised with the government of President Hossain Mohammad Ershad several reports of the extrajudicial execution of tribal villagers during 1984, requesting that an independent inquiry be held. Following a massive rise in reports of extrajudicial executions and torture in the first half of 1986, Amnesty International submitted material on these concerns to the government in August 1986. In September 1986, Amnesty International published a major report on human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts², concentrating on reports of extrajudicial executions and torture. A further report published in March 1987 highlighted further reports of torture³.

In January 1988 an Amnesty International delegation visited Bangladesh to discuss with the authorities the steps taken to prevent further extrajudicial executions and torture of tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and to inquire about official investigations into reported human rights violations which may have taken place⁴. The delegation was told that the security forces now had strict instructions prohibiting future reprisal attacks on tribal villagers.

Amnesty International then submitted to the government six clearly documented reports of reprisal killings for the government to investigate, and requested information on the findings. The

² *Bangladesh: Unlawful Killings and Torture in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*, (AI Index: ASA 13/12/86), September 1986.

³ *Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts. Recent Reports of Torture and Other Human Rights Violations, June 1986 - January 1987*, (AI Index: ASA 13/01/87), March 1987.

⁴ *Bangladesh: Report of a Mission Concerning Reported Human Rights Violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, 24 - 30 January 1988*, (AI Index: ASA 13/04/88), March 1988.

government informed Amnesty International that three of the incidents had not occurred and that the others were a result of communal conflict, not security force action. No details were provided of the methods of investigation into these events.

Despite the instructions prohibiting reprisal killings, there have been subsequent reports of such killings by the regular security forces and by civilian defence forces apparently acting with their acquiescence. For example, in August 1988 soldiers were reported to have extrajudicially executed tribal villagers in Baghai Chari following a *Shanti Bahini* attack on an army patrol. In May 1989 members of the Village Defence Party (VDP), a civilian force with official status, were reported to have killed and tortured non-combatant tribal residents of Langadu. Amnesty International reported on these events in March 1990⁵.

The government informed Amnesty International that the August 1988 killings had occurred as a result of "civil commotion" following an exchange between insurgents and the security forces in which some insurgents had been killed, and that the killings in May 1989 were committed in a spontaneous outburst by non-tribal people, which the security forces tried to contain, in retaliation for the murder by the *Shanti Bahini* of Abdur Rashid Sarkar, Chairperson of the sub-district council. The government said that an Inquiry Committee had investigated the incident. The committee was headed by the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati and included representatives from the security forces and two tribal and non-tribal representatives of the local population. The government said the committee had interviewed 57 witnesses, and that criminal charges had been brought against 39 people for rioting, ten of whom could not be arrested. Two further cases were said to be pending in connection with the murder of Abdur Rashid Sarkar. The government said that members of the VDP had participated in the rioting, but that they had done so "as individuals ... and not as a group or in an organized manner". Ten cases were said to be pending against VDP personnel.

The government did not make public, nor provide to Amnesty International, the full results of the inquiry into the Langadu killings. It also did not provide details of the specific charges brought against the suspected perpetrators. In August 1990 Amnesty International requested this information from the government, and asked to be kept informed of the progress of the trials. No reply has yet been received.

Human Rights Violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1989 and 1990

⁵ *Bangladesh: Reprisal Killings of Tribal People in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in May 1989*, (AI Index: ASA 13/02/90), March 1990 and *Bangladesh: Reprisal Killings of Tribal People in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in May 1989 - An Update*, (AI Index: ASA 13/05/90), August 1990.

Amnesty International interviewed refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in late 1990. Their first-hand accounts, together with reports from other sources, indicate that torture and other forms of ill-treatment of the tribal population continued during 1989 and 1990. During 1989, as the government pressed forward with new political arrangements in the area in the face of JSS and *Shanti Bahini* opposition, there appears to have been a marked increase in the incidence of these violations, as well as of extrajudicial executions. Reports of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners during 1989 were consistent with a long-standing pattern of these abuses. This indicates that any orders prohibiting retaliation against the tribal population by the security forces were inadequate to prevent such abuses recurring during a period of political pressure.

All of the methods of torture and ill-treatment inflicted by security forces during 1989, as described to Amnesty International by victims themselves, have been used before in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The beating of non-combatant tribals, including children, with clubs and rifle butts, the administration of electric shocks and the rape of tribal women by security forces personnel were all reportedly committed in 1989, as they had been in earlier years. In addition, refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts recently interviewed by Amnesty International described how soldiers urinated on them and poured hot water on them while they were held in pits in the ground. These forms of degradation and ill-treatment have also been described by several victims in 1986. Similarly, victims described how, while they were held in captivity by the Bangladesh security forces, they had been hung upside down and had chili water poured into their nostrils, a method of torture also known to Amnesty International from the earlier period.

Unlike in 1986, reprisal attacks on tribal villages during 1989 and 1990 have in many cases not involved direct participation by the military. According to the accounts of witnesses, they have more recently been committed by settlers and civilian defence forces apparently acting with the acquiescence or co-operation of the military. In a number of incidents during 1989, witnesses described groups of Bengali settlers accompanied by small groups of soldiers descending on tribal villages. Such attacks were often directed against the homes and property of tribal people, and have not necessarily included physical attacks on the tribal people themselves. In several cases the soldiers were said to have fired in the air to frighten villagers away, while the settlers looted the huts and burned them down as the army stood by. However, in some instances, such as at Langadu in May 1989, tribal villagers reportedly were deliberately killed (see above p.7).

The contexts and purposes for which the security forces were said to have committed human rights violations during 1989 and 1990 were similar to those cited between 1986 and 1988. Extrajudicial killing and torture in that period were reportedly committed in reprisal for attacks on security forces personnel by the *Shanti Bahini*, to punish tribal villagers believed to have harboured or supported members of the *Shanti Bahini*, to extract information from tribal villagers about the whereabouts of *Shanti Bahini* members, and to force tribal villagers to resettle.

In 1989, however, beating and the threat of bodily harm were also repeatedly said to have been employed by the security forces to force tribal people into acceptance of the government's political proposals for the area, and to force them to vote in the district council elections on 25 June 1989. Some villagers found themselves caught between the two sides: the *Shanti Bahini* had demanded that they boycott the election, but the security forces forced them to vote. One woman from the Khagrachari area described the situation as follows:

"Ours is a cluster village. The problem began with the district council elections. The *Shanti Bahini* was telling us not to vote. But the Bangladesh army had visited our village several times to ask us to vote. A polling booth was set up in our village. But on the day of the polling no one went out to vote. The army came in the afternoon. An officer abused the villagers and asked us to go out to vote. When we showed reluctance we were marched to the booth at gunpoint. Whoever questioned the soldiers was beaten up. I myself was beaten with rifle butts on my back and forehead. I fell unconscious. Later I saw that more than two dozen villagers were severely beaten."

Another victim, a village leader, told Amnesty International that after he had refused to support the government's nine-point programme for the area he had been detained in an army camp for over a month, where he was tortured and made to do forced labour:

"A group of soldiers came to my village. They were accompanied by [name withheld], my village headman. They tried to convince me of the 9-point formula for the Chittagong Hill tribes proposed by the government. When I said no they asked me to accompany them. First they took me to the nearby jungle and beat me up. The officer asked me if I was now convinced of the formula. When I said no, the soldiers took me to Lakhichari army camp.... For more than a month I was kept in the camp and tortured every day. I was beaten, spat upon and on three occasions the soldiers tied me to a chair and poured water mixed with chilies down my nostrils."

Rape of Tribal Women by Security Forces

The rape of tribal women by army personnel was repeatedly described by victims interviewed by Amnesty International, and has been reported to the organization from other sources also. Amnesty International considers rape by security forces personnel or other public officers to constitute a form of torture.

Tribal women in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been raped by members of the security forces in the course of reprisal attacks, as punishment for the activities of their male relatives. The most recent such case that Amnesty International has received details of took place on 19 October 1990. In this case, Amnesty International has learned from unofficial sources that the incident was investigated and that at least two soldiers have been disciplined. If this is so, it is the first time to Amnesty International's knowledge that such action has been taken by the authorities in a case of rape committed by a member of the security forces. However, Amnesty International does not know whether the presumed perpetrators have in fact been charged with rape under criminal law, nor whether they have yet faced trial.

space for photo

According to reports, on 19 October 1990 a group of tribal people who were returning from a Buddhist religious ceremony were stopped at Bilai Chari Para in Rangamati district at about 4.30pm by soldiers belonging to the 21st East Bengal Regiment of the 65th Infantry Brigade. The group consisted of fourteen young women said to be below the age of 18, all of whose names have been reported to Amnesty International, two older women and ten young men. The men in the group were reportedly kicked, punched and hit with rifle butts by the soldiers, and humiliated by being made to undress and dance in front of religious pictures. The girls were reportedly taken at gunpoint to nearby huts, where they were stripped, beaten and repeatedly raped by the soldiers. They were released at about 10pm. On the following day they lodged a complaint with the chairman of the local committee.

A military officer who was questioned on this incident by members of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, an international group which visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts in November 1990, said that a group of tribal people, including women, had indeed been "maltreated" and "possibly manhandled"⁶. He said that three of the five soldiers involved had been dismissed from service, while the other two were in Chittagong jail. However, it was not clear whether the latter two had yet been charged or tried for the offence. Amnesty International is seeking this information from the government.

Several rapes of tribal women by soldiers which took place in 1989 were described to Amnesty International by the victims themselves. These rapes took place in army camps as well as in tribal villages. A 40-year-old woman from Baghaichari described her experience as follows:

"On 12 February 1989 soldiers raided my village in the evening. There was great confusion as everyone started running away. But some of us could not escape. Soldiers caught me along with four other women. We were taken inside a house, beaten, spat upon and stripped. The soldiers said they were going to teach us a lesson. While some pinned us down, the others raped us. We had already heard the sounds of bullets and the screams of our men being beaten up. So we did not have any courage to protest and had to meekly surrender to the torture."

A 17-year-old girl from the same village was apparently raped because her brother was under suspicion by the security forces. She said:

⁶ *"Life is Not Ours": Land and Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*, The Report of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, May 1991.

"When the soldiers came to my house looking for my brother [name withheld] I was outside but near the house. I saw my brother run outside the house and be shot by the army. I tried to run away, too, but Lt. [name withheld] saw me and caught me. I knew him personally as he used to sometimes come to our shop to buy things. He raped me, followed by another soldier. Each one raped me twice. Lt. [...] said to me that he was also going to rape my sister-in-law and that was the price we were to pay for my brother's activities. Later I went inside the house and found my sister-in-law bruised and unconscious."

Other forms of torture and ill-treatment

Members of the military are most usually cited by victims as having committed torture, but in one case reported to Amnesty International members of the VDP were named as having committed torture under the authority of an army officer.

Some victims described being hung upside down, beaten and having chili water poured into their nostrils. Others described being kicked and beaten with rifle butts by soldiers, both in their villages and while held in army camps. The authorities have at times instructed tribal people not to disclose the causes of their injuries. For example, a village teacher told Amnesty International that during a raid on Baghaichari village in 1989 he had been shot in the leg by the army. As the wound could not be treated in the local health centre, he was transferred to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. There he was instructed by an army officer to state to whoever might inquire about it that the injury had been inflicted by the *Shanti Bahini*.

Several tribal people held in detention by the military in 1989 told Amnesty International that they had been held in pits in the ground, sometimes for prolonged periods, and subjected to degradation and ill-treatment. Several of those held in pits said that soldiers had frequently urinated on them, and that hot water had been poured on them.

A 68-year-old man who had been forcibly resettled in a cluster village described being held in a pit for 22 days because he had refused to cooperate with the VDP. He said:

"In July 1989 my village was raided by a group of settlers and Village Defence Party. Many of the attackers were carrying rifles. They abused us and announced that if we did not follow their orders the army will come and teach us a lesson. Many from the village ran away. But many others, old people like me, or women and children, were caught. We were marched to a new cluster village three miles from Pujgang. In the village we were beaten and humiliated almost daily. The army guarded the village but the day to day administration was left to the Muslim settlers. Very often they beat us or spat on us for no reason. Finally one day, they asked me to assist the Village Defence Force in sentry duties. I said I am an old man and incapable of such a job. They thrashed me

and took me to their nearby camp. There I was confined to a hole along with eight other Chakmas [the name of the tribal group]. It was a small hole where the soldiers threw some food at us once a day. We were not allowed to go out and relieve ourselves. On top of it the soldiers repeatedly urinated on us. Finally when the daily torture and humiliations became too much I thought I could die very soon inside the hole. So after spending 22 days in it I promised to cooperate with the soldiers. I was put on the sentry post to help the sentries. I was mainly doing fetching and carrying jobs in the course of which I found an opportunity to escape."

One 50-year-old trader told Amnesty International,

"In 1989, when somebody blasted a culvert with a mine the army came and caught me. I was taken to the army camp at Bhaibanchari and confined to a pit. The pit was covered with tin sheets which had some holes in them. Through this the soldiers sometimes poured hot water. The pit was so small, you could not even stretch your legs. I was lucky to be let out after seven days."

Among those who described being subjected to torture in an army camp in 1989 was a 52-year-old man from Sinalcheri village, Dighinala sub-district. He told Amnesty International:

"In June 1989, a group of soldiers and Muslim settlers attacked my village. They came to my house and said that I was helping the *Shanti Bahini*. I pleaded innocence but they did not listen to me. They burned my house and took me to Dighinala Cantonment.... At the camp ... I was hung upside down from a tree. Then a soldier stood on a stool and beat me on the bare soles of my feet with a cane. I still could not tell them anything because I did not know anything. The soldiers then poured water mixed with chilies into my nostrils. Since I was hung upside down the water quickly went inside my system. All this while the soldiers kept on beating me. Later in the day I was taken off the tree and confined in a hole with several other Chakmas. I was kept like this for 45 days. Every day the soldiers used to come and take away all of us. While each day, at random, some were subjected to torture and beating, all of us were made to do forced labour."

Another person who also described this kind of treatment added that when chili water had been poured into his nostrils, his mouth had been covered so that he was forced to inhale it.

An account of torture given by an eye-witness to events at Langadu in May 1989 (see above, p.7) implicated members of the VDP as the perpetrators, acting under the authority of an army officer. The victim was a 70-year old tribal man, who described his capture and treatment as follows:

"I was running away but since I am old I could not run very fast. Some Muslims [ie settlers] caught me and brought me to the army officer. He told them to teach me a lesson. The Muslims of the VDP took a bench, put it on my chest and performed a see-saw with one person sitting on each side. They said they will kill me. I soon fell unconscious and they left perhaps thinking that I was dead."

In some cases torture by security forces reportedly resulted in the death of the victims. Amnesty International has, however, not been able to verify these reports.

Amnesty International's Recommendations

In March 1991, Amnesty International submitted to the new Government of Bangladesh a memorandum containing the organization's recommendations for preventive action to safeguard human rights⁷. As a first step, the government should make clear publicly that it will not tolerate human rights violations such as extrajudicial executions and torture being committed by its security forces, including by official civilian defence units. Amnesty International believes that governments should always ensure that full and impartial investigations are held into reported human rights violations, the results of which should be made public. In all cases, the perpetrators should be brought to justice and the victims or their relatives given adequate compensation.

A set of principles for the prevention and investigation of extrajudicial executions were adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on 24 May 1989 and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 1989. The text is included in the Appendix to this report. Amnesty International strongly recommends that these principles be implemented in full in Bangladesh, in order that extrajudicial executions can be prevented in future.

Regarding the prevention of torture and the ill-treatment of prisoners, Amnesty International calls on the government to ensure that the existing legal safeguards against torture in the Code of Criminal Procedure will be rigorously enforced, and the provisions of the UN Declaration against Torture are fully implemented. The government could also consider the adoption of additional safeguards in accordance with internationally-recognised human rights standards, notably the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

In two instances described in this report, the relevant authorities do appear to have taken initial action, at least, to investigate reported human rights violations: the extrajudicial killings at Langadu in May 1989 and the rape of tribal women in Rangamati district in October 1990.

⁷ See *Bangladesh: Human Rights Safeguards*, (AI Index: ASA 31/02/91), March 1991.

However, in neither case have full details of the methods of inquiry and the findings been made known. Although criminal charges are said to have been brought against the suspected perpetrators, at least in the Langadu case, it is not known what the precise charges are, nor whether those involved have in fact been tried. It is therefore not possible to assess how effective these investigations may have been.

Amnesty International has requested the Government of Bangladesh to provide further information on these two cases. The organization has learned from unofficial sources that a lengthy report on the Langadu killings may exist. It is seeking confirmation of this from the government, and asking to be provided with a copy. It is also requesting details on the precise charges brought against the suspected perpetrators, and the progress of any trials held so far. It is also requesting further information from the government on the investigation into the rape of tribal women in Rangamati district in October 1990, including whether criminal charges have been brought against the perpetrators and the progress of their trials.