

Council for Human Rights - Forum on Minority Issues - Seventh session; 25-26 November 14 2014.

**Item 6: Avoiding Renewed Conflict - the building of peace and diversity management.**

**LA VOIX DES JUMMAS (LVJ), FRANCE**, 7, square Paul Lafargue, 91000 Evry, France

Madam Chairlady, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The French Association La Voix des Jummas is honored to participate in the 7th Forum on Minority Issues and thanks all the organizers.

- The Jummas live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region of South-Eastern Bangladesh and consider themselves as Aboriginal people according to the UN Declaration of 2007.
- The settling of the Bengali settlers in this region that was encouraged by the Government of Bangladesh since the late 1970s, subjected the Jummas to violence and mass killing. Acts of violence continued despite the Chittagong Hill Tracts Agreement of 1997, as evidenced by the burning down of Jummas villages, as well as cases of rape and murder. In some cases, state authorities either supported the settlers, or played a passive role.
- 95% of perpetrators of sexual violence on girls and indigenous women are Bengali settlers who are administrative staff members of both the forestry service and the armed forces.
- Perpetrators enjoy complete impunity for their acts due to the lack of access to justice of the Jummas victims. Help from the police is slow or non-existent. The victims cannot file complaints because of their ignorance of their rights and of their lack of knowledge of the official language. The authorities impede investigations.

**1. Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh:**

- Implement UPR recommendations – elimination of violence against women and end of the culture of impunity – which was promised by the government of Bangladesh in the second UPR session in 2013.
- Recognize in the national constitution ethnic, cultural and religious minorities of Bangladesh as Indigenous Peoples.
- Demilitarize the Chittagong Hill Tracts and control the region through effective, multi-ethnic, multi-gender and non-discriminatory police force.

Bangladesh can follow the example of neighboring states in Northern India where police officers, mostly tribal or ethnically mixed forces, are responsible for law and order.

- Make more visible the role of regional authorities in the governmental decision-making bodies, from the beginning of the processes.
- Conduct impartial, independent and transparent investigations against all human rights violations and to ensure that those found guilty are brought to justice, and this way bring to an end the "culture of impunity".
- Invite international independent observers to travel to Bangladesh to investigate serious violations of human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and to prevent violence.

## **2. Recommendations to the civil society:**

- Coordinated measures are necessary from all major sections of the national citizenry to understand how the CHT Agreement aims to uphold the inalienable rights of indigenous peoples, maintain the stability of the region as an integral part of Bangladesh while showing respect to political unity and territorial integrity of the country.
- Create legal councils to help victims prepare and file complaints and to follow up on the case files.

I thank you for your attention.