

URGENT ACTION

FEARS OF ACTIVIST'S ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Indigenous rights activist Michael Chakma has been missing since 9 April 2019, when he was on his way to Dhaka from Kanchpur in Naryanganj. An organiser of a Chittagong Hill Tracts based political party, his family and fellow activists fear that he has been forcibly disappeared. Bangladesh government must urgently determine the whereabouts of Michael Chakma and, if he is under the government's custody, release him immediately unless he is promptly charged with a recognisable criminal offence.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan
Ministry of Home Affairs
Bangladesh Secretariat
Abdul Gani Road
Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh
minister@mha.gov.bd

Dear Minister Khan,

Indigenous activist **Michael Chakma**, 38, was last seen on 9 April 2019 when he was on his way from Narayanganj to Dhaka. Michael Chakma was visiting industrial workers from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to discuss plans for the upcoming Indigenous festival and events to mark the six-year anniversary of the fatal collapse of Rana Plaza, where more than 1,000 people died.

His family and friends went to the Sonargaon police station in Narayanganj to ask if he was being detained and filed a complaint. It was only on 16 April 2019, one week after Michael Chakma went missing, that the police registered a formal report about his disappearance. The last known location of Michael Chakma was at Cantonment in Dhaka on 15 April 2019, which the police identified by tracking his mobile phone, said a statement by the United Workers' Democratic Front. Since then, and despite frequent visits to the police station by Michael's family, the authorities have not provided to them any further information regarding the investigation.

Michael Chakma is an Indigenous rights activist and an organizer of the Chittagong Hill Tracts based political party United People's Democratic Front. He has been vocal against abuses committed by the military in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and has campaigned for an end to military rule in the region.

Therefore, we call on you to ensure that the Bangladesh authorities:

- **Immediately reveal the fate and whereabouts of Michael Chakma and release him if he is in the custody of Bangladeshi authorities, unless he is promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence;**
- **Ensure prompt, independent and effective investigations into all allegations of enforced disappearance, and if there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute them in fair trials;**
- **Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Michael Chakma is Indigenous rights activist and an organiser and spokesperson for the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), as well as the central general secretary of the United Workers' Democratic Front, the workers' wing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts based political party.

On 27 March 2019, Michael Chakma went to Kanchpur in Narayanganj, a city in central Bangladesh, to discuss the upcoming Indigenous festivals and organizational programs ahead of the six-year anniversary of the fatal Rana Plaza building collapse that killed more than 1,000 garment workers in Savar, Dhaka. Travelling to Dhaka from Narayanganj on 9 April 2019 to attend further meetings, UPDF activists told Amnesty International that he was last available that day on phone at 1700 hours. No one has heard from him since.

Michael Chakma is accused in at least eight cases and was arrested by the paramilitary force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in 2011. The RAB has arrested many leaders and activists of his party in the past. Officials at the Sonargaon police station in Narayanganj have also said that he could be detained by other State agencies.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts of the south-eastern edge of Bangladesh, home to over 25 Indigenous peoples, has for decades been the site of ethnic conflict. The conflict followed calls by Pahari for recognition and protection of their rights to traditional lands and autonomy, and their resistance to government attempts to assimilate them within the mainland Bengali majority culture.

At least 22 members of regional political parties of the Chittagong Hill Tracts have allegedly been killed in 2018 due to internal conflict. On 3 January 2018, another UPDF activist Mithun Chakma was fatally shot in Sadar Upazila, Khagrachhari when he was returning home from a court appearance.

Two members of the Hill Women's Federation, Doyashona Chakma and Monty Chakma, accused the law enforcement agencies of their complicity when they were abducted by a group of men in March 2018. They were released on condition that they would give up politics.

Kalpona Chakma, a leading Indigenous rights campaigner in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, was abducted from her home on 12 June 1996, allegedly by the military. Her fate and whereabouts remain unknown until today.

According to local human rights organisation Odhikar, between January and March 2019, at least 12 people have been allegedly subjected to enforced disappearance. Bodies of two persons who were forcibly disappeared were later found, five people were shown arrested, one person returned home. The fate and whereabouts of four others remain unknown.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 19 June 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Michael Chakma (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Please copy in the following target in your emails:

Minister of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs
Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing
Email: minister@mochta.gov.bd

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HER EXCELLENCY MS SAIDA MUNA TASNEEM , High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 28 Queen's Gate London SW7 5JA, 020 7584 0081, Fax 020 7581 7477, info@bhclondon.org.uk, www.bhclondon.org.uk **Please check with your section before sending appeals after the above date.**