

**United Nations Human Rights Council**

**Forum on Minority Issues**

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Item 3  
Agenda - 3. Respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises

**Statement by:**

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Honourable Chairperson, distinguished delegates, indigenous and minority representatives,

One of the main causes of conflicts affecting indigenous peoples that leads to humanitarian crisis is the lack of recognition of indigenous peoples rights, including land and resource rights. Like many countries in the World, the indigenous peoples in Bangladesh are being driven away from their traditional lands. The conflict situation in Bangladesh is causing the extinction of indigenous peoples and other minority communities or otherwise threatening their existence as distinct peoples.

Most of the cases relating to human rights violation involving the indigenous peoples in Bangladesh were centered on land. The land grabbers used the heinous ploy to sexually and physically violate indigenous women and girls in order to terrorize the community to unsettle them, and thus create opportunities for them to occupy the lands belonged to indigenous peoples. For example, on 19 June 2015, land-greedy ruffians invaded a victim's land in Chittagong district, where 10 women and children were injured. On 24 July 2015, some Bengali settlers stabbed and wounded a Marma woman in Khagrachari district with the motive to oust her from her land.

The alarming figures of violence against indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh in the recent past included not a single case of instance to prove that the victim availed justice. Rather in most cases, the perpetrator got out of bail and skipped punishment due to corruption in the justice system which often tended to be bias towards the perpetrators. For example, in the case of attack on women leader Bichitra Tirki by land grabbers in August 2014 in Chapainawabganj district, the perpetrators succeeded in obtaining bail by bribing the investigating officer and other concerned officials. Soon after obtaining the bail, the accused continued issuing threats to the victim to withdraw the case or face severe consequences including the abduction of her daughter.

Malpractice in the prosecution and justice system often deprived the victims from getting redress. Failure to close the gap between acts of crime and dispensation of justice encouraged perpetrators to threaten victims' family and to commit such crime further. In recent decades, thousands of indigenous families were ousted from their own hearth and home and ultimately their livelihood and economic backbone were completely broken down. They became landless and more poorer.

Sexual violence against indigenous women and girls is also a tool universally used to seize lands of indigenous peoples. In order to prevent or mitigate violence against indigenous women and girls that leads to conflicts and humanitarian crisis, the state-governments including Bangladesh need to take special measures to recognize traditional land rights of indigenous peoples that would respect the practices of collective rights of the community. This arrangement would help to reduce the gross human rights violations including violence against indigenous women and girls as most of the violations occur due to land grabbing and eviction.

Thank you Honourable Chair.