

## Dritte Internationale Chittagong Hill Tracts Konferenz in Hamburg

*In Südasien 6-7/91 berichteten wir über die Lage der Menschenrechte in den Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladeshs. Im vergangenen Jahr fand die Dritte Internationale Chittagong Hill Tracts Konferenz im Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg statt, an der 43 Delegierte aus Bangladesh, Großbritannien, Kanada, Indien, den Niederlanden, Schweden, der Schweiz und aus Deutschland teilnahmen. Im folgenden veröffentlichen wir die Ergebnisse der Konferenz im Wortlaut:*

1. Parliamentary democracy has been re-established in Bangladesh but not in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The new government has declared that it will continue former President Ershad's District Council Policy for the CHT, although there is substantial evidence that the District Council elections in June 1989 were rigged and that the people cast their votes under coercion. Besides, the District Council laws have been designed so that the CHT peoples will not have actual control over the CHT; effective power in the CHT still lies with the military.

2. In spite of repeated assurances by both civil and military authorities in Bangladesh human rights violations still continue in the CHT. Evictions of indigenous peoples and land grabbing by Bengali settlers take place as before; rape, arbitrary arrest, torture and killing in custody still takes place, and the forcible relocation of hill peoples into cluster villages and grouping centres, guarded by the army, are still one of the most salient features of the "development policy" carried out by the army.

These facts were confirmed by recent reports from refugees in Tripura (India) as well as by reports received from the CHT about recent atrocities committed by the Bangladesh army in the CHT upto August 1991.

The Conference was, for example, informed that since the beginning of August the army has adopted a new strategy with regard to the cluster villages in the Hill Tracts: repression on these settlements has been stepped up by the army withholding food rations for the inhabitants.

The Conference acknowledges that western development aid contributes to human rights violations in the CHT by funding a.o. the budget of the military of Bangladesh either directly or indirectly.

Taking these developments into consideration, the Conference supports the CHT-peoples demands for: - autonomy for the CHT, guaranteed by constitutional rights, - an immediate demilitarisation of the Tracts, - an end on transmigration of Bengalis into the hills, - measures towards a solution of the land question by relocation and rehabilitation of those Bengali settlers who want to leave the hills voluntarily as a first step and - a return of stolen lands to its rightful owners and for a continuous monitoring of human rights in the CHT by a United Nations Special Rapporteur.

Representatives of the indigenous peoples of the CHT pointed out that the outlawed Jana Samhati Samiti, the United Peoples Party of the CHT, is ready for unconditional negotiations for a peaceful and political solution to the current crisis and asked the Conference to communicate this to the authorities in Bangladesh.

The Conference is aware of the fact that a change in the CHT-policy of both the government of Bangladesh, the armed forces and the Shanti Bahini, the armed resistance movement of the CHT-peoples would take time and suggests appropriate measures to build up mutual confidence. A first step towards a peaceful and political settlement of the issue could be the relocation and rehabilitation of those Bengali settlers who wish to return to the plains. International development funds would be required for such an integrated project. The CHT Commission and the Conference would be glad to come up with specific proposals.

In accordance with long standing demands of representatives of the CHT-peoples the Conference recommends that: - western donor countries terminate development and other programmes that contribute directly or indirectly to human rights violations in the CHT, - western governments support an enforcement of human rights laws and regulations which have been signed by the Bangladesh government.

The Conference realises that indigenous notions of development and socio-cultural survival have, so far, never been considered by civil and military authorities of Bangladesh and emphasises in the context of an impartial reassessment of development strategies that these notions should be given appropriate attention.

Above all the Conference urges western donor countries to facilitate political and economic developments that would lead to a peaceful, political and just solution of the current crisis.

The participants of the Conference, in particular the Bengali representatives from Bangladesh and from the CHT peoples have been in accord about the necessity of a cooperation between democratic organisations and individuals from both the Bengali and the CHT peoples' side. There is a growing awareness of the fact that the public in Bangladesh is constantly misled by censored and/or biased media reports about human rights violations and other undemocratic policies in the CHT.

One important conclusion of the representatives of the CHT peoples and the Bengalis present at the Conference is that the struggle of the CHT peoples is a struggle for human rights and democracy in the CHT as well as in the whole country. The Conference states that one cannot speak of democracy in Bangladesh with credibility if one tenth of the country is still under factual military rule and does not enjoy full democratic rights enjoyed by the rest of the country. Hamburg, October 31, 1991.

(Zur Lage in den CHT ist im Dezember 1991 ein amnesty international Report erschienen: "Bangladesh, Human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: An update". Der Report kann gegen Einsendung von 3 DM in Briefmarken über das Südasienbüro bezogen werden)