



HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Habitat International Coalition

06 February 2007

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Adviser
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Subject: Ongoing forced evictions violate human rights

Dear Mr. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed:

HIC-HLRN has received very disturbing information from our partners at the Asia Coalition for Human Rights and local organizations in Bangladesh about the ongoing massive forced evictions of slums begun 24 January 2007 that resulted in the demolition of 1,500 structures at Gandaria, Jurain and Shewrapara, Barolekha in Sylhet, Ashuganj in Brahmanbaria and Gafargaon in Mymensingh. The evictees did not receive prior information, were not consulted and did not receive rehabilitation. The evictees are now homeless, exposed to the heat during the day and winter cold during nights and suffering from hunger and disease, especially the children, women and elderly.

As you know there is international recognition of forced evictions as gross violations of the human right to adequate housing as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The Government of Bangladesh has ratified all of these treaties. The legally binding obligations arising from the treaties are clearly defined in UN instruments, namely, the General Comments on the right to adequate housing and on forced evictions issued by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the guidelines on displacements issued by the United Nations Council on Human Rights through its Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing Miloon Kothari.

It is difficult to understand why the government of Bangladesh would undertake such activities that clearly violate internationally recognized human rights standards when it is already beset by political crisis. The violations can only aggravate the precarious situation and will definitely not engender greater sympathy for the government from the international community.

Our organization strongly supports the demands of the affected families and civil society organizations in Bangladesh to:

1. Stop the ongoing eviction drive;

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2. Rehabilitate and compensate the evictees;
3. Provide shelter, water, food, medicines, electricity and other amenities to the evictees;
4. Investigate and punish those who planned and implemented the forced evictions.

A few months ago the world was filled with admiration for Bangladesh , when its famous son Mohammad Yunus won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for helping the poor to overcome poverty. The ongoing evictions in Bangladesh are moving in the opposite direction and will worsen the situation of the poor. It is our sincere and urgent wish that your government correct this.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

We look forward to hearing from you about your constructive response.

Please be assured of our highest consideration.



Joseph Schechla
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