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CCA condemns violence against indigenous ethnic minorities in Khagrachhari, Bangladesh

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) condemns the recent violence in Khagrachhari District in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Southern Bangladesh, which has claimed several lives, left many injured, and destroyed homes, businesses, and places of worship belonging to indigenous ethnic minority communities.

The unrest, triggered by the alleged gang rape of an indigenous schoolgirl, has escalated into vandalism, arson, and violent clashes. Reports confirm at least three deaths from minority indigenous communities, along with numerous injuries, including security personnel.

CCA urges the Bangladeshi authorities to take immediate and impartial action to restore peace, ensure justice for victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. While maintaining law and order, security forces must refrain from disproportionate use of violence against civilians.

As the Constitution of Bangladesh does not explicitly recognise indigenous peoples, instead referring to them as "tribes," "minor races," and "ethnic communities", this lack of recognition poses a major barrier to the legal protection of their rights. Discriminatory practices continue to threaten their security and their rights to land and natural resources in their ancestral lands. Indigenous peoples face significant legal and practical challenges, particularly regarding land rights, cultural preservation, and protection from discrimination. Indigenous women, in particular, are vulnerable to multiple forms of prejudice and human rights violations. Bangladesh has not adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the government has actively discouraged the use of the term "Indigenous" in official contexts.

CCA further calls on the government to guarantee the safety and protection of ethnic and religious minorities, whose rights and dignity are under severe threat. Safeguarding the rights and dignity of ethnic minority communities is vital for building peace, reconciliation, and social harmony in Bangladesh.

The Christian Conference of Asia stands in solidarity with the victims and their families and appeals to the government of Bangladesh to take urgent steps to end the violence and uphold justice and human dignity.

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General Secretary, CCA