

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association**

Ref.: AL OTH 56/2025  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

23 May 2025

Dear Mr. Syed Moazzam Hossain,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 51/8, 53/3, 52/9 and 50/17.

We are independent human rights experts appointed and mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to report and advise on human rights issues from a thematic or country-specific perspective. We are part of the special procedures system of the United Nations, which has 60 thematic and country mandates on a broad range of human rights issues. We are sending this letter under the communications procedure of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council to seek clarification on information we have received. Special Procedures mechanisms can intervene directly with Governments and other stakeholders (including companies) on allegations of abuses of human rights that come within their mandates by means of letters, which include urgent appeals, allegation letters, and other communications. The intervention may relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process involves sending a letter to the concerned actors identifying the facts of the allegation, applicable international human rights norms and standards, the concerns and questions of the mandate-holder(s), and a request for follow-up action. Communications may deal with individual cases, general patterns and trends of human rights violations, cases affecting a particular group or community, or the content of draft or existing legislation, policy or practice considered not to be fully compatible with international human rights standards.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your attention information we have received concerning the reported **criminalisation of Mr. Ringrong Mro in Bandarban District Jail on the basis of a complaint filed by your corporation, Lama Rubber Industries Limited in 2022.**

Mr. **Ringrong Mro** is an environmental human rights defender and indigenous community leader of the Mro community in Lama Upazila located in the Bandarban district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As a leader of the Indigenous Jhum Land Protection Committee, he advocates at a grassroot level for the protection of the local

Lama Rubber Industries Ltd.

environment and indigenous lands in the region, particularly against illegal encroachment and land grabbing by corporations, and raises awareness of environmental degradation and land dispossession of local indigenous peoples.

According to the information received:

In 1992, your corporation Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. was granted a lease for 1,600 acres of land in 64 plots of 25 acres per slot by the Bandarban Hill District Council for rubber cultivation. It is reported that since then, Lama Rubber Company Industries Ltd. has, with the alleged support of security forces and local administration, encroached up to 3,500 acres of land in total. This includes Jhum farming land, Mouza land and common forest belonging to local indigenous peoples. Additionally, between March and September 2022, agents of your corporation are reported to have threatened indigenous community members with forced eviction, hired outside labourers to forcibly occupy the lands of indigenous villagers, set fire to 350 acres of farming land and forests, and contaminated the water in the Kalaia Jhiri area using poisonous substances. As a result, there have been reports of food and drinking water shortages for Mr. Ringrong's local community which cannot be adequately met by relief efforts. In response to these reported encroachments and attacks, Mr. Mro has been vocal in protesting the presence of Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. on his community's ancestral land, raising awareness about the corporation's environmental and human rights impact in the region.

On 14 August 2022, a case was filed against Mr. Ringrong Mro in connection with a complaint filed by Lama Rubber Industries Ltd against him and other Mro indigenous community members also protesting the illegal encroachment. The complaint accused the community members of unlawful assembly and mischief by fire or explosive substance under section 435 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, which carries a penalty of up to seven years imprisonment and a monetary fine.

On 22 February 2025, Mr. Mro was arrested in Langkam Para, Sarai Union in Lama Upazila, Bandarban District without an arrest warrant by plainclothes Lama Police. This arrest was made on the basis of the complaint made in 2022 by your corporation, on the same charges. Following his arrest, on 23 February 2025, the environmental human rights defender was allegedly arbitrarily detained and held in Bandarban District Jail until he was released on 28 March 2025. The criminal case against Mr. Ringrong Mro is ongoing.

As well as judicial persecution, Mr. Mro has also reportedly been subject to threats and harassment in connection with his human rights and environmental work in defence of his community's ancestral land and environment.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the allegations, we are deeply concerned about the continued criminalisation of indigenous community leader and land defender Mr. Ringrong Mro. We are particularly concerned about the apparent lack of due process employed in the arrest of Mr. Mro and the fact that he was held in pre-trial detention for over one month before his release. If confirmed, the alleged facts would appear to contravene, among other norms, with articles 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Bangladesh on

6 September 2000, which guarantee the rights not to be arbitrarily deprived of liberty and the right to a fair trial, as well as article 19 guaranteeing the right to freedom of opinion and expression. We express our concern at what appears to be an emerging pattern of criminalization and judicial harassment of indigenous community leaders and environmental human rights defenders in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which we fear may have a deterring effect on their work in defence of human rights and their local environment.

The arrest of Mr. Ringrong Mro on the basis of a complaint made over two years before by a private corporation accused of encroaching on the land of the environmental human rights defender's community is especially concerning as such encroachments and developments directly undermine the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, a peace agreement signed in 1997 by the Bangladesh authorities and representatives of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS). The Accord was drafted to resolve conflict over land, autonomy, cultural rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples over their land and territory, acknowledging that previous land acquisitions and leases without the consent of the indigenous peoples was unjust and that the land should be returned to its rightful owners.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide additional information on the factual basis for the complaint made against environmental human rights defender and community leader Mr. Ringrong Mro.
3. Please provide information on what human rights due diligence policies and processes have been implemented by your company to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy the adverse human rights impact of your activities, in particular, with respect to the human rights of farming communities and Indigenous Peoples and of other rights holders affected by the land conflicts and land grabbing, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
4. Please provide specific information on the steps taken by Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. to respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to their ancestral land in accordance with the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which acknowledges that land acquisitions and leases agreed upon without the consent of the indigenous peoples should be returned to its rightful owners. Please describe any other measures that your company has taken, or plans to take, to prevent the recurrence of such situations in the

future.

5. Please provide information on the steps taken by your company to establish, implement and/or enforce an operational-level grievance mechanism, in line with the UN Guiding Principles, in order to address the adverse human rights impacts caused or contributed to by your company's operations

This communication and any response received from your company will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your company to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a letter on this subject matter has also been sent to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Please accept, Mr. Moazzam Hossain, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Matthew Gillett  
Vice-Chair on Communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Lyra Jakulevičienė  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises

Irene Khan  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Gina Romero  
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

## Annex

### Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your corporation to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (A/HRC/17/31), which were unanimously endorsed by the Human Rights Council in June 2011, are relevant to the impact of business activities on human rights. These Guiding Principles are grounded in recognition of:

- a) “States’ existing obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- b) The role of business enterprises as specialized organs or society performing specialized functions, required to comply with all applicable laws and to respect human rights.
- c) The need for rights and obligations to be matched to appropriate and effective remedies when breached.”

According to the Guiding Principles, States have a duty to protect against human rights abuses within their territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties, including business enterprises. States may be considered to have breached their international human law obligations where they fail to take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate and redress human rights violations committed by private actors. While States generally have discretion in deciding upon these steps, they should consider the full range of permissible preventative and remedial measures.

Furthermore we would like to note that as set forth in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, all business enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights, which requires them to avoid infringing on the human rights of others to address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved. The responsibility to respect human rights is a global standard of expected conduct for all business enterprises wherever they operate. It exists independently of States’ abilities and/or willingness to fulfil their own human rights obligations, and does not diminish those obligations. Furthermore, it exists over and above compliance with national laws and regulations protecting human rights.

The principles 11 to 24 and principles 29 to 31 provide guidance to business enterprises on how to meet their responsibility to respect human rights and to provide for remedies when they have cause or contributed to adverse impacts. Moreover, the commentary of the principle 11 states that “business enterprises should not undermine States’ abilities to meet their own human rights obligations, including by actions that might weaken the integrity of judicial processes”. The commentary of guiding principle 13 notes that business enterprises may be involved with adverse human rights impacts either through their own activities or as a result of their business relationships with other parties.(...) Business enterprise’s “activities” are understood to include both actions and omissions; and its “business relationships” are understood to include relationships with business partners, entities in its value chain, and any other non-State or State entity directly linked to its business operations, products or services”.

The Guiding Principles have identified two main components to the business responsibility to respect human rights, which require that “business enterprises: (a) Avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and address such impacts when they occur; [and] (b) Seek to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to those impacts” (guiding principle 13).

Principles 17-21 lays down the four-step human rights due diligence process that all business enterprises should take to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their adverse human rights impacts. Principle 22 further provides that when “business enterprises identify that they have caused or contributed to adverse impacts, they should provide for or cooperate in their remediation through legitimate processes”.

Furthermore, business enterprises should remedy any actual adverse impact that they cause or to which they contribute. Remedies can take a variety of forms and may include apologies, restitution, rehabilitation, financial or non-financial compensation and punitive sanctions (whether criminal or administrative, such as fines), as well as the prevention of harm through, for example, injunctions or guarantees of non-repetition. Procedures for the provision of remedy should be impartial, protected from corruption and free from political or other attempts to influence the outcome (commentary to guiding principle 25).

In addition, we would like to bring to your attention the following provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders:

- article 5, which provides that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, to meet or assemble peacefully;
- article 6, which states that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems;
- article 12, paragraphs 2 and 3, which provides that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration;
- article 18, paragraph 3, which states that individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations also have an important role and a responsibility in contributing, as appropriate, to the promotion of the right of everyone to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and

other human rights instruments can be fully realized.

Further, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its article 1 states that indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. This includes the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of the person (article 7). It further provides in article 2 that indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular based on their indigenous origin or identity. During her official visit to Bangladesh in August 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, stressed the importance of protecting minority groups such as indigenous peoples from violence or land encroachments, particularly in the context of the peace accord in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.