

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

Ref.: AL OTH 115/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

24 September 2025

Dear Mr. Sikder,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 58/10 , 53/3, 55/5, 55/2, 59/4, 51/21, 52/4, 51/16 and 54/9.

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 wish to draw your company's attention to information received concerning alleged violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. The allegations concern

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land grabbing and violations of the Mro Peoples's rights to food, water, health, a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and cultural rights and affecting disproportionately women and children. The violations are linked to the construction of a hotel by Sikder Group conglomerate company R&R Holdings Limited, together with the 24th Division and 69th Brigade of the Bangladesh Army and the Army Welfare Trust. The project is taking place on Mro ancestral land in Chimbuk, Bandarban district.

The Special Procedures mandate holders have previously addressed to your Company a communication raising concerns regarding land grabbing, forced evictions, and the displacement of Indigenous Peoples in the CHT (UA OTH 84/2020). We regret that your company has not replied to that letter, and we remain concerned that similar allegations continue to be raised and appear not to have been adequately addressed or resolved by your company. This letter therefore serves as a follow-up to our previous communication.

According to the information received:

On 12 September 2020, a joint venture was announced between the 24th Division and 69th Brigade of the Bangladesh Army, the Army Welfare Trust, and R&R Holdings Limited, a subsidiary of the Bangladesh-based Sikder Group for the construction of a large-scale tourism complex in Chimbuk, Bandarban district, located in the CHT. The proposed project covers an estimated 800–1,000 acres of land and includes a hotel, an amusement park, an artificial lake, residential quarters for army personnel, as well as extensive infrastructure such as roads, drainage and sewage systems, energy facilities, and cable cars connecting twelve hills. These developments are expected to cause the displacement of Indigenous Peoples, as well as significant disruption to biodiversity and the ecological balance of the area.

The CHT is home to between eleven and thirteen Indigenous groups, collectively known as the Jumma people, numbering around 700,000 and representing nearly half of the region's total population. These groups including the Chakma, Marma, Tripuri, Tanchangya, Chak, Pankho, Mro, Bawm, Lushai, Khyang, Khumi, Assamese and Gurkha, maintain distinct languages, customs, and spiritual practices. Their economic and cultural survival is heavily dependent on traditional swidden (shifting) cultivation, known locally as jhum. A jumia farmer typically grows rice, corn, cotton, fruits, and vegetables, with the practice sustaining not only subsistence needs but also social relations, cultural practices, and political organization.

The Hill District Councils do not have any administrative competences in matters of land administration, it is possible for private companies to obtain leases directly from the central Government on traditional indigenous lands, often without consultation or the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples, sometimes resulting in their forceful eviction from ancestral lands, perpetuating a cycle of dispossession and impunity.

The Chimbuk project is situated directly on the traditional lands of the Mro people, which are integral to their subsistence, identity, and spirituality. These

lands provide for their economic survival through jhum cultivation, and also encompass orchards, temples, sacred cremation grounds, and holy stones. For the Mro, the land is inseparable from their cultural heritage, social life, and spiritual practices.

Despite widespread objections and protests from the local Mro Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous student organizations, construction activities began in September 2020 and have continued without interruption. Reports indicate that the project already occupies approximately 500 acres of land. It is expected to directly displace at least 150 Mro families, with an additional 250 families affected across a broader area of around 1,000 acres (405 hectares).

Several ancestral villages are immediately threatened with forced eviction, including Kapru Para, Dolapara, and Erapara, which together comprise around 155 families. In addition, the surrounding villages of Markinpara, Longbaitanpara, Riamanairpara, and Menringpara are also at risk. More broadly, up to 116 additional villages have been indirectly impacted since the beginning of the project in 2020. Altogether, it was reported in 2020 that approximately 10,000 Indigenous persons faced the risk of eviction. Since then, these threats have begun to materialize: some families have already been displaced or forced to leave without any compensation or rehabilitation, while many others live in constant fear of sudden eviction, recalling previous experiences. In 2006, Mro communities in the Tonkaboti area of Bandarban district were evicted overnight, to enlarge the area of an army firing range by the army without prior notice or compensation, which has still not been provided. Women and children are particularly affected, as displacement heightens risks of hunger, malnutrition, disease, and lack of access to clean water and healthcare, especially when families are forced into increasingly remote and precarious living conditions.

Further reports indicate that since 2006 Mro People members attempting to access their traditional lands have been obstructed, threatened, and intimidated by armed military guards and patrols. Restrictions on freedom of movement in the Chimbuk hills have cut communities off from their forests, grazing grounds, and water sources. These measures severely undermine food security, depriving Indigenous families of the means to maintain their ways of life: farming opportunities, forest produce, and access to essential water supplies for daily survival.

As reported in both 2020 and again in 2025, no good-faith consultations have been undertaken with the affected Indigenous Peoples. The Chimbuk project proceeded without obtaining the FPIC of the Mro people, and without adhering to established legal procedures. No Strategic Environmental Study or Environmental Feasibility Approval has been carried out either. In addition, the requirements of the Constitution of the Republic of Bangladesh, the CHT Regulations of 1900, the CHT Regional Council Act of 1998, the Bandarban Hill Council Act of 1989, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Commission Act of 2001 have not been respected.

Access for national and international human rights organizations to the CHT communities remains severely restricted. Within the CHT, Indigenous civil society organizations face mounting restrictions on their rights to freedom of assembly, expression, and association. Indigenous human rights defenders are targeted both offline and online, including with systematic surveillance, harassment and digital repression, which result in the obstruction of independent human rights monitoring in the CHT.

Reports from 2020 also pointed to irregularities in land leasing practices. Information indicates that construction commenced following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Army Welfare Trust and the Bandarban District Hill Council for the lease of 20 acres of land over a 40-year period. Further, it is reported that the Army Welfare Trust and the Sikder Group conglomerate company R&R Holdings Limited entered into an agreement for a 35-year lease on a profit-sharing basis. However, approval of the lease transfer by the central government remains pending to this day. This implies that construction activities are being carried out without the necessary legal authority.

The violations extend beyond the loss of land and livelihoods. The establishment of hotels and resorts on Indigenous territories carries grave consequences for biodiversity, fragile forest ecosystems, and sacred sites, threatening the cultural and spiritual survival of the Mro people.

The Chimbuk project threatens the livelihood systems of the Jumma communities, directly undermining their food security. More broadly, ongoing land grabbing and environmental degradation across the CHT intensify these risks and further weaken Indigenous food systems. Encroachments and land grabbing by corporate and private actors have already forced many Indigenous families to relocate to increasingly remote areas, where they face worsening food insecurity.

Although Bangladesh is a minor contributor to global emissions, it ranks among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, and the three hill districts of Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari have been identified as climate change hotspots. Environmental destruction driven by corporate interests, militarization, and state-led infrastructure projects have disproportionately affected Indigenous Peoples. Deforestation, pollution of water bodies, and loss of biodiversity caused by commercial rubber plantations, military encampments, and tourism ventures, have severely undermined the sustainability of traditional Indigenous livelihoods.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of the above allegations, the information provided raises serious concerns regarding the potential impacts of the Chimbuk project on the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples. These concerns include the threat of severe food scarcity, loss of water resources and biodiversity, and the erosion of indigenous identities, ways of life and cultural practices related to these natural resources. Moreover, we have learnt that an human rights impact assessment, a Strategic Environmental Study or an Environmental Feasibility Assessment have not taken place, effectively excluding Indigenous Peoples from meaningful

participation and decision making processes that have an impact on their cultural life as well as violating their right to FPIC.

This environmental destruction represents a profound loss, not just of food, water, and wildlife, but also of the resources needed to maintain, express, develop and transmit their cultural identity and spiritual heritage, and of their ability to sustain their chosen ways of life. The construction of the hotel and resort risks displacing a way of life that has harmonized with nature for generations, replacing it with a model that neither sustains the environment nor respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In addition, we would like to express our serious concern about the allegations of land grabbing of Indigenous Peoples ancestral lands and indigenous' lands, ecosystem degradation and destruction, without FPIC and good faith consultation of affected Indigenous Peoples, and without proper and comprehensive environmental impact assessment processes.

Therefore, it is with regret that we note that your company may be failing to implement adequate human rights due diligence measures to guarantee that its actions do not lead to human rights abuses, as set out by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

We are deeply concerned that the Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestral lands have allegedly been taken without any prior consultation, face increasing risks because of the loss of their territories. Such loss undermines their cultural rights, as well as their rights to participate in economic, political, social and cultural development, including self-determination over their natural wealth and resources. We are equally troubled by the serious impact that these developments would have on their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

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 information on what human rights due diligence policies and processes have been implemented by your company to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy adverse human rights impacts of the activities of your company, in particular, with respect to the human rights of the Indigenous Peoples and of other rights holders affected by the land conflicts and evictions, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
3. Please provide information on the measures taken by your company to ensure meaningful and good faith consultations with the affected

communities and defenders of their rights to assess the impacts of the land acquisition by your company, with due consideration for their rights. Furthermore, where the land acquisition affects Indigenous Peoples, please inform on the measures taken by your company to ensure the respect of their right to THE FPIC.

4. Please provide information on the measures taken so far by your company to ensure that adequate remedies have or will be provided to all affected rights-holders in accordance with international human rights standards.
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 on Business and Human Rights, in order to address actual and potential adverse human rights impacts. Please also inform on possible actions taken by your company to ensure that, if in place, such grievance mechanism is truly accessible to affected communities and Indigenous Peoples.
6. Please describe any other measures that your company has taken, or plans to take, to prevent the recurrence of such situations in the future.

This communication and any response received from you 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.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

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

Please accept, Mr. Sikder, the assurances of our highest consideration.

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Pichamon Yeophantong
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Annex

Reference to international human rights law

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Although not legally binding, the provisions under the UDHR enjoy undisputed international recognition as to be considered part of customary international law.

Bangladesh ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1998, demonstrating its commitment to upholding the right to adequate food as articulated in article 11(1) of the Covenant. This Article explicitly recognizes “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.” To ensure this right is realized, article 2(2) of the Covenant obliges states to guarantee that the rights enunciated are exercised without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of race, colour, sex, or socioeconomic status. Furthermore, article 12 of the ICESCR provides for the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which is defined as “an inclusive right extending not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation, an adequate supply of safe food, nutrition and housing, healthy occupational and environmental conditions, and access to health-related education and information” (general comment No. 14, CESCR, para. 11).

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to highlight the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which were unanimously endorsed in 2011 by the Human Rights Council in its resolution (A/HRC/RES/17/31) after years of consultation with governments, civil society, human rights defenders and the business community. The guiding principles have been established as the authoritative global standard for all States and businesses to prevent and address business-related adverse human rights impacts.

These guiding principles are based on the recognition of: a) "The existing obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms. b) The role of business enterprises as specialized bodies or corporations performing specialized functions, which must comply with all applicable laws and respect human rights. c) The need for rights and obligations to be matched by appropriate and effective remedies when they are violated".

The guiding principles also make clear that companies have an independent responsibility to respect human rights. Principles 11-24 and 29-31 provide guidance to companies on how to meet their responsibility to respect human rights and to provide remedies where they have caused or contributed to adverse impacts. The guiding principles have identified two main components of the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, which require “business enterprises to: a) Prevent their own activities from causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts and address

those impacts when they occur. b) Seek to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts directly related to operations, products or services provided through their business relationships, even where they have not contributed to those impacts”. (guiding principle No. 13)

The commentary to guiding principle 13 notes that companies can be affected by adverse human rights impacts, either through their own activities or as a result of their business relationships with other parties (...) The 'activities' of business enterprises are understood to include both actions and omissions; and their 'business relationships' include relationships with business partners, entities in their value chain and any other non-State or State entities directly linked to their business operations, products or services.

To meet their responsibility to respect human rights, companies should have in place policies and procedures appropriate to their size and circumstances: a) A political commitment to uphold their responsibility to respect human rights. b) A human rights due diligence process to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their human rights impact. c) Processes to redress any adverse human rights impacts they have caused or contributed to (guiding principle No. 15). According to guiding principles 16-21, human rights due diligence involves: a) Identifying and assessing actual or potential adverse human rights impacts that the enterprise has caused or contributed to through its activities, or that are directly related to the operations, products or services provided by its business relationships. b) Integrate the results of impact assessments into relevant business functions and processes, and take appropriate action in accordance with their involvement in the impact. c) Monitor the effectiveness of the measures and processes adopted to address these adverse human rights impacts in order to know whether they are working. d) Communicate how adverse effects are addressed and demonstrate to stakeholders - particularly those affected - that appropriate policies and processes are in place to implement respect for human rights in practice.

This process of identifying and assessing actual or potential adverse human rights impacts should include substantive consultation with potentially affected groups and other stakeholders (guiding principle No. 18).

Where an enterprise causes or is likely to cause an adverse human rights impact, it should take the necessary steps to end or prevent that impact. “The establishment of operational-level grievance mechanisms for those potentially affected by corporate activities can be an effective means of redress provided they meet certain requirements listed in principle 31 (guiding principle No. 22). 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 and other attempts to influence the outcome (commentary to guiding principle No. 25).

The full texts of the above human rights instruments and standards are available at www.ohchr.org or can be made available upon request.