

# Cruel Games with Peoples’ Human Rights

**An Inquiry Report  
on recent human rights violations by an armed group against  
innocent villagers in Lakshmichari and Kawkhali areas of the  
Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh**

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[Slightly edited version of the original report in Bangla]

## Hill Watch Human Rights Forum

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## **1. Introduction:**

There have been consistent reports of violations of human rights of indigenous Jumma peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A three member team of Hill Watch Human Rights Forum, a Dhaka based human rights organisation of the hill people, visited the Bermachari, Dulupara, Gumuttyatoli, Shuknachari, Morachenge, Bottoli, Borpara, Labochari, Tekbaria, Kudukchari areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts from 24 – 29 September 2004 to investigate the alleged atrocities.

The HWHRF team reached Bermachari in the afternoon of 24 September 2004. The team set to work the following day, e.g., 25 September 2004 and visited Bermachari bazaar and the alleged hideouts of the armed groups at Dulupara and Gumuttyatoli. The team interviewed the villagers in general and the victims in particular. During the interviews the team members used video camera, stilled camera, micro recorder and personal notebooks.

On 26 September 2004, the team interviewed the victims from Shuknachari, Morachenge and some other villages at a certain location. The interviews began at 11 in the morning and lasted till 5 p.m.

On 27 September 2004, the team recorded the interviews of the victims from the villages of Bot-toli, Borpara, Labochari, Tekbaria, Kudukchari and the victims of a few other villages.

On 28 September 2004, the team members interviewed the victims at Bermachari bazaar. And finally, the victims from Boroitali, Phitti Para and Bakchari gave their interviews.

As the area is quite large, it was not possible for the team to visit all the villages. Although the so-called development activities have reportedly been undertaken, these areas remained backward. In addition, the villagers wished to give their interviews to the team members in this way. We are grateful to those who, putting aside their own household responsibilities, traversed long distances to testify openly to the inquiry team.

## **2. Findings:**

The HWHRF team learnt that in the month of May 2004, an armed group of 14-15 members of the Jana Samhati Samiti made an incursion into Lakshmichari area under Khagrachari district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They engaged in terrorizing the villagers. When the common people, completely fed up with them, put up resistance to their activities, the armed group fled from the area. However, a few days later, they came back with a bigger group of 35 members. For many months, the group unleashed a reign of terror in Lakshmichari, Dullyatoli and Bermachari of Khagrachari district and in some areas of Fatikchari and Kawkhali under Rangamati district. They killed four villagers including Mr. Suiching Marma, a member of the United people's Democratic Front (UPDF), kidnapped innocent villagers and exacted hundreds of thousands of Taka as

ransom, forced every village to pay them “tax”, carried out raids and rapine, ransacked houses, destroyed properties and tortured innocent villagers. They created an overwhelming sense of fear in the public psyche or in other words, the people were so terrified and gripped by fear that once an old woman fell on the ground in a faint when she saw the members of the group bypassing her home.

The testimonies of the person interviewed have been presented verbatim. The testimonies show that the armed cadres of the Jana Samhati Samiti have been perpetrating a series of atrocities like killing, kidnapping, hostage taking, extortion etc on the innocent Jumma civilians.

## **2.1. Kidnapping and Ransom**

### **Case 1: Testimony of Oithoi Marma, Mongshey Prue Chowdhury and the Headman of the village of Dabbo Headman Para**

Mr. Oithoi Marma said, “on 4 August 2004, we were kidnapped from Dabbo bazaar at around 8:30 in the morning. I was blind folded and taken to Bermachari. We were kept eleven days there. Before our release I could not know exactly how much money our family members had to pay as ransom for our release. However, after our release we came to know that it was Taka 230,000. We had been treated rudely and I don’t want to tell about that.”

The headman of Dabbo Headman Para village (name not recorded), who was among the three kidnapped persons, corroborated Oithoi Marma’s testimony and said they were taken into the deep forest.

Mongshey Prue Chowdhury narrated the same story as Oithoi Marma, adding that the Jana Samhati Samiti members set them free at Dalu Para village.

Another villager said, “the member of JSS group kidnapped some of our fellow villagers. They also kidnapped me. I was released after payment of Taka 37 thousand as ransom.”

### **Case 2: Testimony of Usha Mong, Karbari (village head) of Laubuchari village**

On 15 July 2004, there was exchange of fire between the No. one (meaning the UPDF) and No. two (meaning the JSS). At around 4 p.m.on 16 September 2004, I was kidnapped. There were two others besides me. My fellow villagers begged for my life to the kidnappers. The kidnappers demanded Taka 300,000 for my release. Later the deal was struck at Taka 40,000 and on payment of the first installment of Taka 37,000 I was released.

### **Case 3: Testimony of Jyoti Kumar Chakma, Shuknachari**

My name is Jyoti Kumar Chakma. Father’s name- Rabi Chakma. My village is Shuknachari. Once I was a member of Union Parishad. On the night of 20 August 2004, an armed group of 10-15 JSS members came and encircled my house. They pointed their

guns at me at the front door of the house. One of them said, “Mr. Member, don’t move, or else we’ll shoot you”.

After a while I went out of the house to talk to one of them, whom I thought to be commander of the group. In fact he was not. Then they began rebuking me. Although I was not physically tortured, I was misbehaved. They took me to the small spring nearby the house while calling me “son of a bitch, son of a pig, stupid” etc.

While taking me away from home, they asked my wife to look for me the next day, i.e., 21 August 2004 at the house of Lalit member in the village of Bermachari Mukh. Then they took me to the house of Mr. Sukriti, the incumbent member of UP and Headman. There I saw them beating the son of Sukriti’s brother. Terrified on seeing them beating some mercilessly, I ran away.

From some distance I saw them going berserk at my house. Later I came to know that they took away five cows and 9 chickens, destroyed the beds, chairs and tables and broke the doors and windows of the house. Even the cooking pots were not spared. As I ran away, they took away my son-in-law in my stead. His name is Jyoti Bikash Dewan. After they had taken him, they sent me a message saying, “if you come we will not harm you”. But I did not turn in. My relatives and friends did all to secure his release. They had to pay Taka 80 thousand as ransom. After taking the money they said they would return the cows if I turned in to them. They set a date for my appearance before them. However, I did not go on that day. I went to them on another day. I went and met them after they had released Mr. Basanto, whom they kidnapped on 27 August 2004. They took Taka 50 or 60 thousand in return for his release. I left home and stayed at Lakshnichari. They (JSS) encircled my house and the house of my father. But they did not find my father and my brother and left. The day they set Basanto free I got the news and went to meet them. I can’t remember the date, but it was Tuesday. I went to the market place and paid my respect to Purnango (JSS member) by touching his feet with my hands. He said, “your cows will not be returned, because they have been sold out.” I tried to explain the reason for my escape.

#### **Case 4: Testimony of Shukra Moni Chakma, 40, Village Shuknachari**

My name is Shukra Moni Chakma. The name of my village is Shuknachari. My father’s name is Guajjya Chakma. I can’t remember the date. I woke up early in the morning. I was sweeping the courtyard when five men appeared all of a sudden and pointed guns at me. They asked whether I was keeping well. I said I was well. Then they asked whether I saw their people around. I said no. They said, “you are not showing them to us, are you?” Then they wanted to know who were inside the house. I said, my wife, my son and my wife’s brother. They went inside, came out and told me that I must go with them. I said all right. They asked me to take my shirt and I took it, and then set off with them. Two of them walked behind me while four in my front; they were six of them.

They took me to the house of Mr. Lendu. They asked him whether he was working for UPDF. When he replied in the negative, they took him downhill to the river. They said they got someone who works for UPDF. He was beaten up severely with a wood stick.

As I saw this I was terrified. After that he was taken uphill to the house. Then they shouted about and asked the villagers to gather near them threatening to kill him if they did not come. But the people started to run away. Those who failed to run away were compelled to go with them.

Then they took me to the house of Mr. Sukriti Dewan, the incumbent Headman. There they began to beat me without saying anything. As the ex-Member ran away, they ransacked his house. Later another 4 -5 of their men joined them there. Mr. Kiron Chandra, Commander from Dewan Para village and Mr. Abhijan from Bermachari were among them. They destroyed the house of the ex-Member.

From there they took us to Dulupara. We were tied up. From there we were taken to the village of Pekkua Para, blindfolded, and from there, to some other place. One addressed by all as O.C. Saheb misbehaved and threatened to kill us. We were kept in chains. In the evening, Purnago came. He said, "If you pull the ears the head will come. We don't need the real people. We only need these people. The real people will ultimately come."

What happened next? We were taken away on Friday. On Saturday many came to inquire about us. They brought us cloths. On Sunday we said we needed baths and water for using it when we were relieved. Hearing this, Purnango said, "So, how big officer have you all been that you will have to take baths!" Therefore we had to go without bathing. On Monday, they demanded Taka 300 thousand for setting three of us free. But, finally they freed the other two on payment of Taka Taka 280 thousand and I had to pay Taka 15 thousand to buy my freedom.

They picked me up for no reason. However, they might have thought that as I was once a businessman they would get large amount of money from me.

We were blindfolded and kept in chains until we were released from Bermachari.

#### **Case 5: Testimony of Mongal Kumar Chakma**

My name is Mongol Kumar Chakma and he is a construction worker (showing someone near him). His old home is at Shuknachari Mukh village.

I rose from bed and was about to set out for work in my paddy field when the JSS men came to pick them up. As I saw Mr. Subal being caught, I immediately ran away and escaped to Gurgujyachari village. They took away Jyoto Member, Subal and Shukra Moni, demanded money for their release and threatened to burry them alive if money were not paid on the fixed date. Later I came to know that people had to sell off chicken, cow and goat and to borrow from others to buy back their freedom.

After securing their release, Mr. Basanto was kidnapped. Many went to meet the JSS people to inquire about him. The JSS members told them that they would agree to release him for Taka 15 thousand provided his (Basanto) son was handed over to them (JSS). Accordingly, his son was handed over to them, but they reneged on their promise and demanded Taka 65 thousand. They however refused to say why so much money was

asked for. They want only money, money and money. They don't understand anything else except money. They don't say anything else except money.

**Case 6: Testimony of Niran Kanti Chakma, 30, village Dochalla**

My name is Niran Kanti and my nickname Bandi Charan. I can't remember the date. At around 8:30 p.m. the JSS men called me out of the house and took me to the sandy riverbank nearby our house. As we were heading towards that direction, I argued with them as to why they were taking me. However, they could not say what my fault was. Then they said, "if you are given a few beatings, then you will be able to say where the UPDF members live." They were 18 in all. They took me to the stairs of the *ghat* of the bazaar. From there I was taken to Dulupara. There I could not sleep a wink the whole night because of the mosquitoes. At about seven in the morning, Purnanga came. Some of his members accompanied him. I got into an argument with them. One of them asked why I did not turn up to them after writing so many letters. I said, "what is the need for that? We saw you and supported you for the last 24 years; now what are you up to?"

In the meantime they kept a cane ready, which I did not notice. Beside me was Rabi Chandra. Seeing the cane, he alerted me by giving a pinch on my knee. I was still arguing with them. Then the commander said, "now, what will you do? I sent three letters to you, but you paid no heed to them. Even you have failed to write back. You give every support and shelter to the UPDF. We have fought for 24 years. We have gone through many hardships. Yet, we are useless to you. On the contrary, they (UPDF) get every support from you. We have not heard anything from you. That is why we have caught you."

I said, "well done! Now, what can we do for you? Could you tell us what is our fault? Why did you ask for money in the letter?"

They said if we failed to pay money, they would kill us. "Send for your elders", they advised. The elders came, paid Taka 5 thousand and got us released. We gave the remaining amount a week later. I was released on the condition that I would meet them whenever they wished for. After my release, I met with our UPDF activists at Bortoli. After this meeting was over, I came to know that the JSS members were making a frantic search for me. They asked my wife where I had gone. She told them that I went to the market.

They also demanded Taka 100,000 from my elder brother, and threatened to shoot him if he failed to pay the money. After the threats, he no longer stayed at home. He escaped from the village.

I had to pay Taka 7 thousand to Purnanga.

**Case 7: Testimony of Leppya Karbari, age 55, Boidyo Para**

At 10 a.m. on 16 August 2004, the JSS people came to my house and called me out. No sooner I came out they demanded Taka 200,000 from me and when I expressed my inability they beat me up severely. They said, “We came here to play the game of ‘Buruji’ (a kind of card game)”. Later, they asked for Taka 10 thousand as tax from me. I told them that it won’t be possible for me to pay Taka 10 thousand, and that I could collect Taka 8 thousand for them from the villagers.

#### **Case 8: Nirmal Chakma, age 32, Boidyo Para**

On 14 July 2004, the armed group belonging to the JSS picked me up. They kept me hostage 3-4 days in their den. They set me free only when Taka 200,000 was paid. Until the ransom money was paid, they beat me like anything. They stuck sands and tobacco into my mouth. I was tethered at an isolated house like a cow and I can not exactly describe the ill treatment they meted out to me. They harassed me by asking a variety of questions. Three or four of them would put questions at a time. The man, whose question was answered first, kept silence, but those who received answers a bit late, began beating me. On 17 July I was released. Even after payment of money, they attached some conditions for my release. Such as, I was allowed to travel up to Bermachari bazaar only, the rest of the time I would have to stay at home and if I wanted to do business, I would have to do it within their controlled areas.

#### **Case 9: Testimony of Jyotish Kumar Chakma**

I and Mona Dhan Chakma were picked up when we were going to a meeting regarding our temple. On the way some one told us that the Dui Numberis (JSS is disparagingly called by this name – ed.) were heading upstream of Bermachari. Hearing this news, we decided not to go to the meeting at Bermachari and came back home. My family members were taken aback when they saw us coming back. They asked to know why we were back. I said the Dui Numberis were going in the same direction and added, “We may face trouble if we come across them. That is why we have come back”. I had barely finished saying this, when the Dui Numberis appeared, shouting. One of them came to us, pointing his gun at us said, “where did you feed the UPDF members. Tell us or else, we’ll finish you this very moment”. Another was brandishing his stick over our heads. I was calling to the Buddha in my mind. We were not beaten. One of them wanted to bind us, but did not bind in the end. We were taken away without being bound up. One of them said, “you must show the UPDF members. Go hurry!” But whether you walk quickly or slowly, that does not matter, they would shout at you. They would say straight, “We will finish you off.”

As we reached near the house of Mona Dhan Chakma, I was thinking I should not hurt an already half-dead man like him. I know two of them were there (at home), because we decided not to go to the temple and came back together. So I decided not to take the JSS men to their house. But all of a sudden Nironjoy the stupid (JSS) saw them and gave a shout: “There they are! We must take them, sir”. I saw they were sitting. They were called out of the house. From there we led the JSS men to the village of Muktachari.

There we had exchange of words. They demanded Taka 20 thousand from us. When we promised to pay the money, they set us free.

## **2.2. Looting and Torture**

### **Case 1: Testimony of Ching Kyu Marma, Bortoli Para**

The JSS men wrote me three to four times in red ink. Because of that I had to run away from the house. Once they raided our village. I was lucky that I was not at home at that time. They were 16-18 of them. They also went to the village of Tekbari, raided the house of my sister's husband and fired two or three round of gunshots. After that they tried to come to our village again. But the UPDF had repelled them before they got the opportunity to come. The day was Saturday. Actually, before their withdrawal, the JSS men had also come again in search of me. That was by night. They went back as they did not find me.

### **Case 2: Ushini Karbari, Tekbaria**

I was yet to get up from bed in the morning. They hit me with their gun and said, "get up, get up." Then they awoke me and took me a little distance. There they beat me. The villagers present begged them not to beat me. The people said I was an old man so they should not beat me. They asked if I knew them. I said no. Then they said, "we are ex-Shanti Bahini, we are bandits. We came here for money. We have already set the amount to be paid to us. Have not you heard this?" I said I did not know. Then they asked to reach the demand money to them in a day or two. Saying this, they set me free. They asked for Taka 15 thousand from me. They said, "you must reach the money in a day or two, or else we will chop you off."

They also beat up many people at the shop as well as in the houses. Some one has got his finger broken.

### **Case 3: Testimony of Shuklabala, age 50, Boroitali**

The JSS men seriously wounded Ratan Sen, the son of the Carpenter. They shot him without any reason. He fell on the ground after being shot at. Then he got up, turned up to them and said, "Brother, I am on neither side. I even don't go to the bazaar. Why you have done this to me?" I felt sorry to see his condition. They found a mosquito net. They bound him with it and began to beat.

### **Case 4: Testimony of Kanak Baran Chakma, age 30, village Dulupara**

All of a sudden the Dui Numberi people appeared. They came, caught and beat up many of our village folks. I was one of the victims. Suddenly they came and alleged that I was the President of Village Committee. Charging me with this allegation, they beat me and demanded Taka 50 thousand.

As soon as they came to our village, some of our villagers collaborated with them. I can't say whether they had contacts earlier. The names of those who collaborated with the JSS men are Nironjoy Chakma, Satyo Kumar Chakma and Bano Kumar Chakma. After being beaten, I could not follow the events fully.

Now I am quite well. The present situation of the village is such that many of the villagers have fled because of torture. They fired blank shots to intimidate the villagers. That is why many ran away. They are now staying somewhere else away from the village. By "they" I mean JSS, who had camped at Gumuttyatoli village. They stayed there 3-4 days. They used to ask the people to meet them at Gumuttyatoli or under the shade of a mango tree at the mouth of Dolu (a small river). They sometimes took people to Gumuttyatoli, bound up. The villagers were not driven out. They fled in fear.

**Case 5: Testimony of Subal Chakma, age 35, Futtochari**

I came from Futtochari and my name is Subal Chakma. What happened is that 62-years old Mrs Pattom Bima (aka Redomukhi) saw the JSS men and got scared. The moment she saw them armed with weapons, she fell her *daba* (a smoking pipe made of bamboo) from her hand and fainted. She needed six packets of saline to regain her senses. She has not recovered fully. I was returning from somewhere else when I met them (JSS) near the Buddhist temple. They called me and asked, "Where are you going." I said I was going to pull logs. Then they wanted to know how many kgs of rice did I have in the house. "20 kg", I answered. Then they said, "We will have lunch". I said, "Ok, lets go." We went to my house but found my wife sick. I suggested that I should go and fetch some one to help cook the food. But they themselves moved to another house. They went to the house of Makyoy Chakma and had their lunch there. The JSS men stayed 2-3 hours in our area and then went towards Shuknachari. They were 15 in number.

**Case 6: Testimony of Purna Chakma, Navanga**

The Shanti Bahini members ate up two pigs and 8-10 chickens of mine. They also consumed 400 kg of food grain, took away two sacks of rice and cut off a coconut tree and a papaya plant. They destroyed five wooden beds, broke the doors and windows of the house and damaged the cooking pots and other household materials. They drove us from home, and we were on the run. I had to pay a total of Taka 7 thousand to them.

**Case 7: Testimony of Hemanta Chakma, age 35, Dulupara**

Following exchange of fire, a few families fled the village. It is difficult to say who went where at that time. I did not go out of the house. They have gone on their own will. Nobody forced them to leave. Why, we are staying back without any troubles. We are living in our village.

**Case 8: Testimony of Dillip Barua, age 45, a businessman of Bermachari, village Haludia, Rawzan**

The JSS members extorted tolls from every businessman of the market. They extorted money as well as rice from me. They took away 22 sacks of rice from me. This included 3 mounds of rice earmarked for Tongipara village. They also collected Taka 300 as tax from each of the businessmen of Bermachari. Like all other shopkeepers, I had to pay Taka 300 to them.

**Case 9: Testimony of Chandra Lata Chakma, age 50**

What should I say? Carrying their guns on shoulders, the Shanti Bahini members were asking whether I had any chicken, duck or pig. I told them that I had. How could I say that I had none? Then they asked for sacks and they were given. They said, “you must pay Taka 50 thousand if you fail to bring your son. And if you fail to pay the money, you will have to vacate the village.”

They caught 18 chickens and killed the pigs. In all they took away 2 pigs, 4 ducks, 18 chickens and 9 hens by force.

**Case 10: Testimony of Indra Kumar Chakma, age 12, Dulupara**

Of the total 84 families that we were in our village, we are now 27 families staying back. The rest have fled in fear. They left of their own volition. I am not aware of anyone compelling them to leave. Those who collaborated with the JSS men are Satyo Kumar Chakma, Bano Kumar Chakma, Niranjay (father of Shefali), Nila Bhushan Chakma and Tridib.

**Case 11: Testimony of Sapta Bikash Chakma, 30**

I have not come to the market by then. “They are coming, here they come, they reached Dulupara” – such kind of news were coming to us. The people were scared. There were lots of rumors in the air. Even the guiltiest person was forgiven if he called on them. They issued orders for those who had their sons in UPDF or PCP to hand over their sons to them, with assurance that they would not be harmed. Such and such rumours were in the air.

One day, someone brought a message from Purnanga. He asked me to see him. Nishi said to me that all had lined up to see him and those who had seen him were forgiven. He said, “If they come here, they will destroy our houses.” He asked me whether I wanted to go to meet them. Rather than answering his question, I put the same question to him. He said, “What else can I do. I shall see them.” Since he said he would go to see them, I did not continue the conversation. He and some others went to see them on the next Friday. Supam, Rupam and their friends were also following the same line. However, Nishi later told me that he came back from midway and did not meet them. Many went to see them, but I did not go. Luzendra also did not go to see them. I knew the situation would change. We did not stay home at night. We slept in hideouts. One day we went to the village of Bermachari Boidyo Para and did a lot of blustering: “hay, the folks of Dulupara, now you are counting money for the Dui Nemberis. But you will be paid back in due time. The way you are now destroying our houses and the way we are being forced to pay money.

Some day you will be paid back in the same coin.” (The reason for addressing Dulupara is that a few of the villagers brought in the JSS men and collaborated with them. The people think that they had to suffer so much because of them.) We passed the time in this way defying them.

**Case 12: Testimony of a businessman, age 30, Bortoli**

They took away everything from my shop – betel, betel nut, biscuits etc. They also looted away cash Taka 868. He (an armed members of the JSS) said, “We are ex-Shanti Bahini, bandits.” They were introducing themselves as bandit. He warned me not to tell any one that they had come. I assured them that I would not. Until now I have not said anything about this. Even I did not tell anyone that I was robbed of money. I am telling the fact today. It is too dangerous to say these things.

**Case 13: Testimony of Lakshmi Kumar Chakma, age 52, Dalupara village (physician)**

It has been about three months since. I can't remember the date. The JSS men, I mean the ex-Shanti Bahini came and laid an ambush at Dulu Mukh for the UPDF members. But due to our pressure they could not do any harm to the UPDF activists. The JSS men went back that day. However, a few days later they shot dead a UPDF member at Boroituli. At that time I was at a medicine shop at Bermachari bazaar. Suddenly I heard gunshots. I could distinguish the gunshot by its sound and I was sure that the gunshot was not from the army. I was gripped by fear. My friends said there was nothing to be afraid of. I said the fire was not from the army. No sooner had I said this, Gorki Ram gave the news of the JSS men running about. A few minutes later they themselves appeared at the bazaar. It was Mr. Praggyan Khisha. I watched them shopping. From the way they were shopping it became clear what kind of “revolutionary” they had been. As far as I am concerned, not even the members of the government forces can buy so ostentatiously.

10 – 11 days after that incident, they raided our village. As soon as they came to the village, they began beating up Kamal Kirti of the teashop. They were asking him whether he was keeping a watch for them. On Tuesday I went to the bazaar, but could not go back home for fear of them. I took my eldest son with me and put up at a Barua house at Haldia. I stayed there for four days and on Saturday I came to Khiram to see if it was safe enough to be back home. There I came to know of the JSS announcement to the effect that they would kill or destroy the houses of those who were running away if they did not come back to the village very soon. I went back home. The JSS men turned three houses of Gumuttya Tali village into their den. From there they went out for raids. Later they moved to our village from Gumuttya Toli. They called people from every village and demanded tax. They killed and ate up all the pigs and chickens in our village. Not a single one was left. They needed pigs and we had to give pig to them. They needed chicken and we had to give chicken to them. Not only from our village, they brought in pigs and chickens from many other villages too. To be exact, actually it was the villagers who had to carry those pigs and chickens to their den.

I can't remember that date, but it was Thursday, I hope. The UPDF members were at the house of Mon Mohan at Bermachari bazaar. Having got this news, the JSS men split into

groups, marched in that direction and launched an attack. During the attack a Marma boy from JSS side was killed. His name was Paila Maung Marma. One or two days later, the UPDF launched a counter attack on their den at Gumuttya Toli. The UPDF supported by common village folks put up a fierce resistance. In the face of UPDF assault the JSS men failed to hold out and left the area. They ran away from the village in threes or fours.

When they first came to Dulupara, they assured the villagers: “we have come to your village. However, if we can’t hold out for long, and have to leave, we will take you along with us.”

I saw them. None of their activities is revolutionary. They are not struggling for people’s right. I think we have been held hostage to them.

**Case 14: Testimony of Mrs. Apeibur Marma, age 50, shopkeeper, Labochari**

The JSS people took away a lot of things from my teashop without paying for them. They also took away cash Taka 4,235.

**15. Testimony of another woman shopkeeper, 58, Labochari**

This woman shopkeeper, who wished to be unanimous, said, “they took away Taka 50-60 from my shop. I did not have many goods in my shop. I just had these money and they took them away.”

## **2.3. Extortion**

**Case 1: Testimony of a villager from Paleli**

I am a villager from Paleli. I just eke out a living by running a tea stall. They (JSS) were staying at Dulupara village and asked for tax from us. They demanded an amount of Taka 15 thousand to be paid by our village. By selling whatever else we had, somehow we arranged the money and gave it to them.

However, a few days later they came to our village and unleashed a reign of terror. They took away some villagers and I was one of them. They took us to the shop and tortured us there. They looted cash Taka 4735 and goods worth Taka 25 thousand from my shop. They scattered things of my shop such as salt, rice, kerosene etc on the ground. They also kidnapped Ushamong and Rosa and extorted Taka 40 thousand from each of them.

They said they were members of the Shanti Bahini (who surrendered to the government of Bangladesh in 1998) and wanted us to call them Shanti Bahini. Anyway, the Shanti Bahini members searched our houses and took away many things. They even beat up the children. They said they were member of the “Full party” and would come back to the village and do the same thing. They exactly said this.

We just live on petty businesses. The situation has come to such a pass that when we meet each other at the market places or on the way we have to pretend not to know each other. Now we are living in deprivation. They took away all that I had. They even took away the cloths and dresses of my wife and my children from the house. They broke the doors and windows of the house too. Now we are living in the jungle.

**Case 2: Testimony of Satyo Bikash Chakma, age 32, Shuknachari**

My name is Sattyo Bikash Chakma, of village Shuknachari Mukh. The JSS men first came on 20 August 2004. It was Friday. Mr. Subal was the first to be kidnapped by them. He was soon followed by Jeoti Member and Shubro Moni Chakma. Shubro Moni was living with the family of the incumbent UP Member. Later Jeoti Member ran away. The JSS men took away Shubro Moni, Subal Bikash, Jyoti Bikash and asked their family members to contact them at the house of Lalit Member in Bermachari.

On 26 August 2004, I went there to inquire about the victims. The JSS men demanded Taka 300 thousand as ransom for the release of these three people. Anything short of that amount was not to be accepted.

They also sent letters to every village with a demand for a specified sum of money. As far as I know, they sent out letters demanding Taka 25 thousand from Shuknachari and Taka 50 thousand from Durung Chari village. Our village had to pay Taka 75 thousand.

**Case 3: Testimony of an unnamed villager**

In July 2004, the JSS sent a letter to the villagers of Baggi Para, which is situated to the west of our village. The letter was a demand note of Taka 25 thousand that should have to be paid in two days else, the village would be encircled and there would be mass beating. From other sources, it was learnt that the man who carried the letter was also engaged by the JSS men to ferry their weapons. They were reported to have said that they would start the fight again. We fled from our village in fear. But ultimately when we reached Dulupara, we met Purnanga and his men there. There were 12 men in his group. He said, "It is good that you have come. Otherwise, we would have to go out to search for you." We asked for 3-4 days time for the payment of the money. Later we raised Taka 15 thousand and gave it to them.

**Case 4: Testimony of an unnamed villager**

I am from Goamara village. I got a demand note letter from the JSS for Taka 15 thousand. We sat at the house of Karbari, raised Taka 15 thousand and handed it over to them. At that time, Purnanga said, "I have come here to play the game of 'buruz' (kind of card game), the game in which either of the two team is knocked out." What does the game of Buruz look like? He came to play 'buruz' with the people meaning thereby either he or the people will be finished. He has tortured the people. We had to arrange the money by selling our chickens, pigs and what not. Some gave Taka 200, some Taka 400 – this was how we raised the money.

#### **Case 5: Testimony of an unnamed villager**

A letter came to the Karbari (village head) of our village from the village of Dulupara Karbari. It was about money. We got the letter on Tuesday. After that the Karbari called a meeting. The villagers had to arrange the money by selling their livestock and cattle. The letter warned that if the money fell short of the amount asked for, then they would detain us. Our Karbari was able to raise Taka 15 thousand. The following day, I went to them (JSS) with the money. They wanted to know how much I had taken with me. I said that the Karbari could raise only Taka 15,000 within such a short time and that we needed one week's time for the rest of the money." We were given one week's time. We must reach the remaining amount on the next Monday. However, we could not contact them again as fear had struck us. And in the meantime, they were compelled to leave the area.

#### **Case 6: Testimony of Bhushan, ex-UP Member**

The Shanti Bahini came to Dulupara two months back. It was Purnanga group belonging to the Shanti Bahini. They had another commander named Abhijan Babu. They sent a letter to me demanding money. The letter said, if the money were not paid by the 16<sup>th</sup>, I would be shot dead. They demanded Taka 10,000 from me. I gave Taka 5,000 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> they beat up two persons at Bortali Para village and looked for many.

I do petty business in Kudukchari village. They looted away all my goods. After that, they came to Labochari village. They beat up many people there and picked up two Marma people. Somehow, we were able to run away. They demanded Taka 40,000 for their release - Taka 20,000 for each of them.

#### **Case 7: Testimony of Rosy Kumar, age 50, Kudukchari**

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, I reached the money to them (JSS). On the 18<sup>th</sup> they went to Bortali village. They ransacked the shops and looted away everything. They looked for us. But we ran away. They demanded Taka 10,000 from me. Out of Taka 15 thousand, I gave them 5 thousand. But in spite of the payment, they ransacked the shop and looted the goods away. They belonged to Purnanga group of the Shanti Bahini. Mr. Abhijan Babu, son of Chawgulo Member, was along with them. Ex-UP chairman Patindra and Mr. Kalendra, a village doctor, of Dulupara village made arrangement for their stay. The JSS men turned the village into their base and unleashed repression on the people from there.

#### **Case 8: Testimony of Gyana Bikash Chakma, age 30, Pekkua Para**

The name of my village is Pekkua Para. The JSS men came and demanded Taka 5,000. When I failed to pay the money on time, they raised the amount to be paid to Taka 25 thousand, as a way of penalty. And they gave five days time. The money must be paid within this time. I exhorted them not to penalise me and tried see reason for the delay in paying. But they refused to listen to me. The only thing they said was that I must pay

them Taka 25 thousand. Finding no other way, I somehow managed to raise Taka 15 thousand and paid it to them. However, I did not have to pay the remaining amount.

**Case 9: Testimony of Shambhu Nath Chakma, age 42, Pekkua Para**

At first Praggyan Khisha came and wrote a letter asking to pay a sum of Taka 5 thousand. Then we sat for discussion as to whether we should pay the amount or not. UPDF asked us not to pay. And so we did not pay. After a few days, another letter came. This time, the amount to be paid was five times more. That is Taka 25,000. Seeing no other alternative, I called on them. The commander said, "I see, you don't want to obey the party; and you have not seen the power of the party." I said it was impossible for me to pay so much money. I don't know his name, but Purnanga was not there that day. A tall guy was in his place.

I was given only three days time to pay Taka 25,000. As I failed to pay on Tuesday, I must pay on Friday. They said they did not know what would happen if I failed again this time.

After that, I came back and called a meeting of the villagers to discuss how to raise the money. We decided that we would give them Taka 15,000, instead of Taka 25,000, and face any consequences for that. That day Purnanga came. After handing him Taka 15,000 we apprised him about the hardships we had faced in raising the money. He said that it was all right and added, "tell the Member (ex-UP member, and father of Super Jyoti Chakma, a PCP leader) to see me and hand over his son to me. In case of failure to turn his son over to me, he must pay a sum of Taka 200,000." He further said, "We have come here not so easily. Either UPDF or we will be finished off." I said, "sir, neither UPDF nor you are going to be finished off. It is we the people who will be finished off."

**Case 10: Testimony of father of Babita, Headman, Muktachari Mouza**

The JSS also wrote to me asking for tax. I had to pay Taka 4,000. A few days after the payment, they came to my house and wanted to know where the UPDF members were having their meals. I said, "Sir, we don't know." Then they said in intimidating voice, "why you don't know? You are feeding them. Since you are not showing the UPDF members to us, you are to pay a fine of Taka 20 thousand. You must pay it by 12 noon tomorrow and if you fail to pay within this time, you will have to pay Taka 40 thousand. If you fail again to pay Taka 40 thousand, you are going to pay Taka 80 thousand. And finally, if you fail to pay this last amount, you will have to leave the village." They further said that if ever they had to come to our village again, they would clear everything off, not even sparing a single dog.

**Case 11: Testimony of Monadhan Chakma, Muktachari**

After they had been taken away, they were beaten up with cricket bats. All along their way to Muktachari Mukh they were beaten. However, they were released from there. While releasing, they said, "tomorrow morning you must send us Taka 20 thousand." It was Tuesday. I was to pay the money on Wednesday, but I sent it one day later, i.e., on

Thursday. Apart from that money, they also demanded Taka 5,000 as public donation. However, we paid Taka 4,000. Even after paying the money, they treated us harshly. They threatened and rebuked us.

#### **Case 12: Testimony of Raush Kumar Chakma, ex-UP member**

It was Monday, 2nd August. We were having a discussion in the house of the Karbari (village head) about the provisions to be given to the Monks during the occasion of their rainy-season recluse. As you know, since the returning of the Dui Numberis, selling and buying of bamboo and wood log had been closed. What should we do? We received message from the Temple that it needed money. As we were discussing these matters, they (JSS) suddenly came and started shouting: “*Mogoda Ehmanun, tomare phele dibong*” (you beasts, we will finish you off.). There was a guy named Gouri Mohan Chakma. They began to beat him with his son’s cricket bat. The JSS man who were beating him said, “*Mogoda mua, aaro aajette, aajette. Nau dorei aaro aajette*”. (Bastard, what makes you laugh.) As I saw him beaten, I got scared and at the same time felt sorry for him. I ran a bit but one of them saw it. He said, “all right, go, run away! If you fail to show us your Fathers (UPDF members) you are dead meat. We will finish you in bulks. And you must send Taka 20,000 tomorrow. If you fail to pay 20,000, you are going to pay Taka 40,000. And if you fail again to pay 40,000, you will have to vacate your homestead. We don’t need people like you. We are leaving you out. We only need the soil.” We had not yet started to sow the paddy. To be able to pay their money, I had to pawn the only pair of bullock that I had. This fetched me Taka 10 thousand. In fact, I thought they would kill me that day. There was no hope for survival. As they said, “There is no gain in keeping you alive. You are feeding the UPDF. We are suffering because of you.”

#### **Case 13: Testimony of Bhagabannya Chakma, 60, Shuknachari**

We were the only family in the village who stayed back home. You will not find a village that did not have to pay money to them. Now the strength of the JSS members has doubled. You know why? It is because they got people to join their ranks here. Secondly, they take alcoholic drinks. (They go out for action after drinking wine. That is why they can behave so nastily with the people). Do you know how reckless a person can be when he is drunk? He loses his senses to care about life or death.

They demanded Taka 30 thousand from us – this whole Shuknachari village. We waited and watched; otherwise we would have to pay too. No sooner they arrived, the demanded money demanded from Dulupara villagers. The villagers paid Taka 15 thousand or something like that. No village is left. Ultachari, Morongchari, Bermachari, Boroitali – all these villages had to pay. My son and daughter’s in-laws from Bermachari, Upar Para himself paid money. I asked him not to pay. It does not matter whether you pay them or not. You are bound to get the beating. Therefore, we decided not to pay. Some times we received messages that orders had been issued to shoot us, and that they would come soon. When I heard such kind of rumours, I felt like running away. No other thoughts came to my mind.

#### **Case 14: Testimony of Rupam Kanti Chakma, age 30, Bermachari**

Since the formation of the UPDF, I had been living happily in our village although it was controlled by the UPDF. But suddenly the JSS men came. Here in our area, they are called Dui Numberi. Anyway, these Dui Numberi came and let loose terror, lawlessness, torture and looting. In fact, we lived in a suffocating situation. They exacted money from the villages by force. Our village had to pay Taka 30 thousand. They asked my father, brother and me to “surrender” to them, and warned that in case of non-compliance they would confiscate our movable and immovable properties and oust us from our home. We ran away from home in fear.

There was no end to the torture they inflicted on the people. On 30 August 2004, they shot dead one Dhana Kumar Chakma in our area. He committed no wrong. He was a very poor man. He just lived hand to mouth. On 21 September 2004, we took out a procession to demonstrate our protest against his killing.

When the Dui Numberi came, the UPDF retreated a little in the beginning. Later, they strengthened their organisational power. Many of us continuously and steadfastly gave our full support and encouragement. In the meantime, the patience of the people was running out. In this circumstance, we – the UPDF and the common people together drove the JSS out. With them, escaped their supporters too.

## **2. 4. Murder and Disappearances**

#### **Case 1: Testimony of Apurbo Marma, Age 32, Father’s name notknown, village: Bortoli, Fatikchari Union, Kawkhali Upazila, Rangamati**

On 9 September 2004, the armed members of the JSS picked him up and killed. In an interview given to the inquiry committee of the Hill Watch Human Rights Forum, his wife said:

My name is ..... I live in the village of Boroitali. The Shanti Bahini (JSS) picked up my husband on 9 September. They bound and beat him and killed him in the most brutal manner. When I asked about him they did not say anything. They did not ask for money. They just took him away and killed him. Now I have become a widow. I have three children. I don’t know what to do with them, I don’t see any way out. They have done a great injustice by killing my husband. My husband did no wrong. He never worked for UPDF. He was just an ordinary man.

Now I am in great distress. I don’t know for what crime did they kill my husband. My husband’s name is Apurbo Marma.

#### **Case 2: Testimony of Suiching Marma, age 21, Father’s name not known, village: Mong Hla Para, Lakshmichari Upazila, Khagrachari**

The armed members of the Jana Samhati Samiti allegedly shot him dead on 24 May 2004. Suiching Marma was an active member of the UPDF. The members of the inquiry

committee have been informed that the incident occurred at around 6:30 in the morning. Earlier, at night the JSS members lay in wait at a place called Hillyabag in Boroitali. Suiching was going out when he was attacked. At first he was hit in the leg and he ran away a little distance till his killers chased and caught him. Then they shot him repeatedly and left.

**Case 3: Testimony of Dhana Kumar Chakma, age 28, s/o late Kalabiza Chakma, village: Reserve Para, Bermachari, Lakshmichari**

He was allegedly killed by the armed members of the Jana Samhati Samiti on 23 August 2004 at a shop at Gashbunia. The villagers who came from Labochari to give interviews told the Hill Watch Human Rights Forum that at around 2-3 p.m. Dhana Kumar Chakma was gossiping at the shop. At that time the JSS men came and dragged him out of the shop. He was accused of working for the UPDF. After taking him out of the shop, the assailants beat him mercilessly breaking his ribs. Later, he was moved a little distance and shot dead.

**Case 4: Testimony of Bindukko Chakma, age 25, s/o Jyoti Kumar Chakma, village: Bannyacholla, Lakshmichari**

Hill Watch Human Rights Forum was able to get the following information about him:

In order to form a terrorist group with two other youths, Bindukka Chakma allegedly demanded tax from the villagers Mountola Shunachari and Belokka. As the JSS men were camp at the nearby village of Dulupara and extorting money from the villagers, the villagers mistook them to be members of the JSS. Caught in such situation, the villagers of these two villages were going to Dulupara with the money they had raised. Bindukko Chakma and his accomplices halted them on the way, but they were not a match for the villagers. At Dulupara the villagers knew that Bindukko Chakma and his accomplices were not members of the JSS. When everything became clear, Bindukko Chakma surrendered to the JSS and confessed his faults. But the JSS members did not trust him. Later they killed him. This happened in the later part of July 2004.

## **2.5. Testimony of the public representatives**

In addition to the victims, the HWHRF team also interviewed the public representatives who provided the following testimonies.

**Case 1: Suniti Chakma, Chairman, Lakshmichari U.P.**

I am Suniti, Chairman of Lakshmichari (U.P.). Now my question is that .... Recently, the JSS has tortured the people of the area, and I want to say something about that.

On 13 July 2004, they sent me a letter. It contained a threat, which read like this: “if you don’t see me in person, then an incident may occur for which you will have to take the responsibility.” The way they treated others struck fear in me. Later, three of us discussed things and decided to go to them.

We met them. They said, “Good that you have come. Otherwise, we would have let the incident happen. Riding a jeep, we would have gone to attack either UPDF or you.” They told me that they wanted to have separate talks with me. What they said is this: “you are being warned for the first time and you must pay money to us.” They asked to reach them Taka 10 thousand by next morning. Then they talked about my son Ratan and my daughter. They said, “Your son works with Hill Students Council and your daughter with Hill Women’s Federation. Both of them have been given one-month’s time, and they must surrender to us within that time. If they fail to surrender, then we may mete out monetary punishment or even more severe punishment to them.”

Recently, what they have done..... if they had a political ideology or if they had plans to stay here permanently, I think, they would have treated the people differently. I heard that whenever they went out for operation, they drank wine. And when they were drunk, they did these things. Therefore, it is clear that they have not come with a political mission. They have come with the motive of committing robbery. Let me say one thing in this regard. To the JSS as well as the Thana administration here, Lakshmichari is a UPDF stronghold. The C.O. (of the army), who has been transferred from here, would sometimes call us and say, “I am unable to preserve your honour and prestige. My superior authority told me that Lakshmichari Upazilla is a stronghold of the UPDF, and they (UPDF) take up and implement such programmes in Lakshmichari that they cannot do that in other parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. I am in serious trouble.” The C.O. would some times speak to me in this way. The (civil) administration also says that Lakshmichari is a UPDF stronghold. Anyway, here in Lakshmichari only 5% of the people are educated. But the people here are politically conscious. Nonetheless, a few people have been compelled to come to terms with JSS and pay money, partly due to fear and partly due to anti-UPDF propoganda in newspapers. Now, my final word is: “since Lakshmichari is known as a UPDF stronghold, we must remain united and be ready to overcome every obstacles in the future in order that we are able to maintain this status.”

**Case 2: Testimony of Mrs. Deb Rani Chakma, Chairman, No. 3 Bermachari U.P.**

JSS men came and tortured the people of Bermachari Union. They persecuted the people of my Union in such a way that even though they are alive they seem like dead. Many have been physically tortured and financially crippled. When the JSS first came to Bermachari, I was in Lakshmichari, sick. They sent for me from there. And when JSS came to Dullyatoli, they sent for us – the three chairmen. We went there to meet them. They demanded money from us. I told them that I was very weak financially, physically and mentally, that I was facing various problems and that I had no income. I told that because of those reasons I would not be able to pay them money. As regards my husband (Anil Chakma), they said he must be handed over to them. I said it was not possible for me to do that.

A few days after that meeting, I received a letter from the JSS men, who were staying at Bermachari. Purnanga did not sign it. It was a demand note of Taka 150,000. After receiving this letter, I avoided Bermachari, but continued to keep in touch with the people and through them I tried to be in touch with the happenings there. In Bermachari two of

my Members – Swapan and Lalit – have been subjected to financial, physical and psychological harassment. (He had to pay money to JSS). My view is that if the JSS had minimum political consciousness, they could not have done these things. What they did is nothing but banditry. The common people are now scared and disappointed. The area in which they were carrying out all these activities was unmanned by UPDF at the time. That is why people were not in a position to go anywhere to take refuge. The people gave me landslide victory, but I failed to show them any way out and I could not be of any help for them. Actually, I was not in a position to stand by their side. Secondly, they demanded so much money and I did not have the courage to contact them.

Because of what happened at Dulupara, near my Union, the people of that village fled their homes. So far I know, they left the village after obtaining assurance from JSS. UPDF has not forced them to leave the village. I also heard a few things about UPDF. But I could not verify. A few minor mistakes have been committed from UPDF side too – I heard allegations of this sort. I hope UPDF will refrain from doing what the JSS did to the people. I expect UPDF to comfort the people.

### **Case 3: Mong Kyo Ching Chowdhury, Chairman, Dullyatoli Union Parishad**

My name is Mong Kyo Ching Chowdhury. I am working as the chairman of Dullyatoli Union Parishad. Before the election (UP election) this area was under the control of the JSS. Before our election, JSS and UPDF fought against each other in Dullyatoli and in the end JSS was ousted from the area. Later, the UPDF supporters came. It is still carrying out its activities in this area.

In my view the activities of the UPDF are quite appreciable. They carry out their activities in consultation with the elderly and prominent members of the village. The common people have faith in the UPDF. We are quite fine with them.

This year in the month of July the armed members of the JSS suddenly reappeared in the area. As soon as they came to the area, they sent for three Chairmen of the area. I was one of them. After that, we had a meeting with them. At the meeting they said, “You must not support the UPDF. If you support them you will face dire consequences. We will evict you from your village.” They also asked for financial help from us and said, “Not only you the chairman, all the villagers must pay us money”.

They demanded Taka 10,000 from me. I said it was not possible for me to pay so much money. “Though I am the chairman of Dullyatoli UP I do not earn much money and my financial condition is very weak. So it is impossible for me to pay more than 5 thousand,” I said. They agreed and asked me to keep in touch with them in the future.

The JSS members also made many of the villagers pay money to them. They “taxed” the people by force. They have failed to settle here permanently. The common people were completely fed up with them and they did not co-operate with them. This is the reason why the JSS people had to leave the area. Now the area has come under the UPDF control again. I hope UPDF will always treat us as a friend and share our joys and sorrows.

We met the JSS members at a Chakma village called Kallyan Para. We did not know the name of the commander. So we asked his name and he said his name was Ripen. This is what he said to us.

#### **Case 4: Swapan Kumar Chakma, Member of UP, Pekkuapara**

I am a resident of Pekkuapara and a member of Bermachari Union Parishad. JSS men came here long time back. At first they stayed one week at the market. The next week I went to the market. On that day also, I saw them in the market armed with weapons. They (JSS) came to the market. I went to them to ask permission to collect tax with my UP card, but they demanded Taka 50 thousand from me.

Many days later I met them and gave them Taka 20,000 in cash. I gave the money to Purnanga and asked for 2-3 days for the payment of the rest. Later, I raised the balance amount by borrowing and gave it to them myself. After receiving the money they asked me to tell Gulmani Member that he must appear before them with Taka 200,000. Accordingly, I conveyed the message to Gulmani Member. However, he said he would not pay them any money. I told him that if you did not pay them money, I would not be able to live in peace. They would look for me and destroy my house. After that, I no longer stayed home and went to Lakshmichari. Here I forgot to say one thing. After giving Taka 50 thousand, they asked me not to go to Lakshmichari. I said, "Our main office is at Lakshmichari. So how can I do my work without going there?" They said, "Then stop acting as a Member." I said people elected me and so I could not do as I wish.

After staying a few days in Lakshmichari, one day I paid a visit to my house. All of a sudden they appeared at my house and caught me. They said they needed me to go with them to Shuknachari. They would pick up "criminals" like me. They said, "We needed money." I was forcibly taken with them. Before we set off, they wanted to know how long it would take to reach Shuknachari. I replied that it would take two hours. At one stage on our way they tortured me physically.

After reaching Shuknachari, I showed them the house of Mr. Subol. He had just built a new home. They kicked at the door of the house. Subol was not at home; he was at a nearby house. One of the members of that house came out and showed the house Subol was in. Later, the JSS men picked him up and went to the house of Jyoti Member or Ulshi Member. After picking him up too, they headed towards upstream of Shuknachari. They reached at the Headman's house and picked up two persons – Eregulo and Letto – from there. They brought Letto to the Headman's courtyard while beating. Then Jyoti Member fled from there. This made the JSS men furious who ransacked his house and destroyed properties.

Anyway, we came to Pekkuapara from there. There I had to cook for them. After the meals, they left. While leaving they threatened me with dire consequences if I ever visit Lakshmichari again.

**Case 5: Sukriti Bikash Dewan, Member, Lakshnichari Union Parishad, and Headman of Shuknachari Mouza**

I represent Ward No. 7 of Lakshnichari Union under Shuknachari Mouza in Lakshnichari Upzila (sub-district).

In fact, I enrolled as general member of the JSS on 23 November 1987. I took 14-days military training at a place in Navanga. After completing the training, I was posted to Bermachari. My duty was of the kind of an organiser and an administrator. After spending seven months there, I was transferred to Guimara, where I spent eleven months. After District Council elections in 1989 I took a few days leave. In 1990 I was sent to F. M. (Furomoun and Myunt) and worked there for three long years. After that I was transferred to Toichakma in Udaipur in Indian State of Tripura 1992. There I carried out party activities till 4 February 1995. Then I enjoyed 2-months leave. I came home and quarreled with my father. Ultimately I became inactive in party activities and began farming. Since then I have been living as an ordinary people.

At one time, my father handed over his Headman's duty to me. It is now 3 – 4 years since I took up this responsibility. In the last UP elections I was elected a member.

On 14 August, Sunday, I was returning from Lakshnichari bazaar. On the way at a teashop the villagers called me in to discuss something. They showed me a letter. It came from JSS men at Bermachari. In the letter they asked to pay Taka 200 thousand by 15 August 2004. Even one Taka short of that amount was not to be accepted. If the amount was less than 200 thousand, then Taka 400 thousand would have to be paid as penalty. I looked for Rankhi Sona, a female member of Lakshnichari UP representing Ultachari. It was raining heavily. Not finding her at her home, I left a message with her family members that if any JSS members came to her she should tell them that I had come to contact them after receiving their letter, but since I had not found them I was going back home.

Later on 20 August I went to Bermachari bazaar to meet the JSS men. I found them at Bermachari Primary School. They were armed and dressed in army uniform. I told them that three of our men had been picked up and that I had come to inquire about them. They took me to Dulupara for discussion. We began discussing at a teashop. They said, "Those who had been arrested have their fathers or brothers working for UPDF. If they surrender to us we will release them without taking a penny." Then we came back and talked to the relatives of the hostages. Each of them would have to pay Taka 100 thousand. Then, after collecting as much money as we could, we went to meet them again. One of the kidnapped persons, Shukra Moni Chakma had a brother Amrita Chakma working with UPDF. His family had to pay Taka 50 thousand. Jyoti Bikash Chakma, son-in-law of Jeoti Member, had to pay Taka 80 thousand. Apart from them, all the villagers also had to pay a total of Taka 75 thousand – at first Taka 30 thousand and then Taka 45 thousand. They had to raise this money with much hardship.

Subal Chakma, who lives near our village, have his brother working with UPDF. He was also kidnapped. The JSS men demanded Taka 100 thousand as ransom for his release, but in the end they obliged at Taka 92 thousand.

**Case 6: Lalit Kumar Chakma, Member of Bermachari U.P., Bermachari Mukh Para village**

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, I received a letter. It was dated 9 (July?). They used polite language. The letter was addressed to four of us. Of the four, two of us went (to meet them). As soon as we reached, they (Shanti Bahini) bound us. Then they moved us to some other place, blindfolded and beat us. They also interrogated us.

Our relatives contacted them to get us released. A sum of Taka 500,000 was demanded for our release. And the amount was to be paid in three day's time. Finally, on the 13<sup>th</sup> the local elders got us released after paying Taka 250,000.

Until recently we thought JSS had an ideology, because whatever it may be it is at least a party. Now after our detention we have been disillusioned. What they are doing is nothing but terrorist activities. It is not the JSS of the past.

You can speak endlessly about the terrorist activities they have carried out here. They even demanded Taka 20,000 from each of those who had merely participated in PCP meetings. Finally, they had to pay Taka 10,000 each. In our village there is someone named Choitannyo Bap. Alleging that his son is a member of the PCP, the JSS men shot dead and ate up his two pigs and some ducks and chickens. Many could not stay home for fear of torture. Many had been on the run. We heard that they shot dead an innocent villager at Gashbunia. And they kidnapped people all the time.

At the time of my release they put condition, "You must not visit LakshMichari and your movement will be limited to Bermachari bazaar."

I had to co-operate with them against my wish. Even I had to collect money for them.

**Case 7: Rabi Chandra Chakma, UPDF member working in LakshMichari**

I would like to talk about the general situation in Bermachari, LakshMichari and Kawkhali. UPDF has been active here since its inception. Among the people, support for UPDF is overwhelming. On the other hand, even before the signing of the accord, the people of this area were fed up with JSS. The JSS used to treat people in highhanded manner. Because of this, its relation with the people was not good. Before the accord, the people gave mass beating to a JSS member. He was called Monon Babu. Then, at some point of time when UPDF was very much active in the area, the JSS men came – armed with sophisticated weapons. In the beginning, they unleashed a hell of destruction in Kalo Pahar area of Kawkhali. They tortured villagers and destroyed their houses. They also extorted money from the people and killed three people for failing to pay them.

Finally, they came to Dulupara. They told villagers of Dulupara: “If we can’t hold out and have to leave the area, you must follow us. You can go with us. We have already made arrangements for you.” After they have come, they demanded money from every family. They demanded money from those who are financially solvent. They particularly did these things in Kawkhali area. For example, they took money from Saroj Mohan and Mangol Shanti and many others. Not only that, they also stole cows, goats, ducks and chickens from the villagers. They took them in sacks. Looking at the havoc they caused, many thought that it was they who would win. These people did not care about UPDF then. Later, UPDF stepped up its activities organising and encouraging people and mobilizing public opinion. At one stage when we put up resistance, the JSS members fled away. And while escaping, they took away their own supporters with them, as was promised before. Actually, the JSS did it in a planned way. UPDF did never use force against anyone. Neither did it force anyone to leave home. UPDF does not believe in politics of vengeance.

Anyway, the JSS kept their supporters at Ghagra Community Centre after evicting them either by force or by providing inducement. Many fled with them via Ghilachari. Purnanga (member of an armed group of JSS) took these people along with him. As you know, when he came to Dulupara, he told them that they could go with him if he failed to hold out. The fact is that the JSS did this in a planned way to malign UPDF. Not all the villagers of Dulupara left. There are many who stayed back.. No one from other villages fled.

Those who left with JSS members can come back to their homes. UPDF will do no harm. We are now talking to people in every village.

When Purnanga came here, he ordered that each village would have to give him six youths to enroll them as armed members of the JSS. The villagers told this to us. If Purnanga could have hold out a few more days, he would have certainly taken them too. The people now say that they have been saved because we – the UPDF – came and drove the JSS away. In particular, the Forester said he would have to pay JSS a sum of Taka 300,000 if we had not come. Many would have to pay money in the same way. For instance, the armed members of the JSS picked up one of our colleague’s father. He was released after a pledge to pay Taka 100,000. In first installment he paid Taka 15,000. He too would have to pay the remainder. As the JSS has now been ousted, he would not have to pay it.

We are working here with unstinted support from the people. The people may fear JSS, but they don’t consider it as friend. People fear JSS – in this statement lies the very truth that JSS is not friend of the people.

### **3. Commentary of the Investigation Team**

The present situation of continuous conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is an eloquent testimony to the failure of the so-called CHT Peace Accord signed between the Jana

Samhati Samiti and the government of Bangladesh in 1997. Six years after the signing of the Accord, there is no peace and the indigenous Jumma peoples are still being subjected to persecution.

The Jana Samhati Samiti in order to suppress any political opposition has launched a violent campaign against innocent civilians. Torture, killings, extortions, kidnapping and other cruel forms of human rights violations are perpetrated. While Bangladesh army had earlier had monopoly over human rights violations, the JSS has added its name to the list. The fact that the JSS leaders run the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council provides them impunity.

Despite the signing of the CHTs Accord and establishment of the Regional Council, the military is still the de facto ruler of the CHT. The military are responsible for serious human rights violations. Instead of rolling back military camps from the CHT, new army camps have been set up in various places. Hill Watch Human Rights Forum team was informed that when the JSS armed cadres came to Lakshmirhari and began terrorising the indigenous Jumma villagers, the public representatives and prominent individuals of the area urged the military to take actions against the said armed group. But the army let them down and refused to take any actions against the armed group.

Hill Watch Human Rights Forum makes the following recommendations to the government of Bangladesh:

First, begin a process of demilitarisation of the CHT and improve human rights situation;

Second, start a process of dialogues with all representative political parties with a view to find a just solution to the CHT crisis and establish durable peace in the region.