

9 May 2018

Our reference: MIN/119162/2018

Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your email of 23 April regarding human rights abuses in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

I was appalled and saddened to hear of the attack on the two sisters on 22 January and the subsequent assault on Rani Yan Yan on 15 February. The UK publicly condemns violence against women and girls, particularly where committed by those whose profession places them in a position of trust and authority. Our High Commission in Dhaka raised this specific case with the Bangladesh military as well as our concerns about violations by security forces more generally.

Bangladesh remains a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights Priority Country. Ministers are actively engaged across the range of our human rights concerns, including violence against women and girls (VAWG). Our human rights concerns were raised with Foreign Secretary Haque during the UK-Bangladesh Strategic Dialogue in London on 15 March. I raised our concerns when I met State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque in November.

The UK carries out a range of activities to help prevent VAWG, and provide support to victims and survivors of sexual violence in Bangladesh. Since 2015, UK Aid has supported more than six million women and girls to access security and justice services. Through funding to the Manusher Jonno Foundation, we have delivered campaigns to raise awareness about sexual violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We provided funding for leadership capacity development to female leaders in the region, empowering them to help in the fight against violence.

The UK Defence Academy has also delivered training courses to officers and leaders in the Bangladesh military with gender equality and sexual violence awareness elements embedded.

Regarding UK military export licenses, the Government takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We examine every application rigorously on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing

Criteria. We draw on all available information, including reports from NGOs and our overseas network, and risks around human rights abuses are a key part of our assessment. For Bangladesh, as for any other country, we do not export equipment where we assess there is a clear risk that it might be used for internal repression.

Individuals from the Bangladesh military and police forces found to have committed sexual exploitation or sexual abuse are not permitted to serve in UN peacekeeping missions, but there is no policy against the Bangladesh army as a whole. Since 2015, there have been four cases of Bangladeshi military and police personnel serving in UN field missions implicated in allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. You can find more details of misconduct here:
<https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

The UN have clear Standards of Conduct which its peacekeeping missions personnel must adhere to and a zero tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse. Misconduct issues are an essential component of pre-deployment and in-mission induction training, and troops are subsequently monitored and any accusations investigated to prevent abuses occurring.

Wim W. van
Marin

The Rt Hon Mark Field MP
Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific