



Drishtipat Human Rights Charter for Rights: Recommendations for Bangladesh's New Government

In keeping with Drishtipat's core focus on human rights, we urge the incoming government to deliver on an election manifesto that promised economic and human security for all citizens. In particular, given our focus on human rights, we believe this is a unique and historic moment for Bangladesh to respond to the needs and demands of ALL her citizens.

Background:

The history of impunity started with lack of justice against those who perpetrated war crimes during the liberation struggle. The trial must begin now along with investigations of political and extra judicial deaths, and it must be spearheaded by a strong, empowered, independent National Human Rights Commission. The government should reaffirm that real resolution of law and order problems is only possible through a strengthened and independent judiciary. So a total focus on judicial reform is an absolute priority. Part of this reform would also mean repealing various black laws of our country, which has in various times disenfranchised all citizens, and especially the minorities, and has been in violation of international treaties we have signed. This will also help us establish the respect that we deserve among the international community. To further enhance our international standing, we must harness the Global diaspora network that is spread worldwide. We must also ensure rights and dignity of millions of migrant workers, whose remittance is a key pillar of Bangladesh economy. In the international forums, Government must also argue the case of impact of climate change on Bangladesh from a position of strength, and from a point of view of basic economic rights of millions of people. Last but not the least, government must take specific policies and measures that help, promote and facilitate entrepreneurship among the rural and marginalized sections of our population though public-private enterprise collaboration. Based on the above context, we offer the following recommendations for the new government as a priority for the first year in office.

Ensuring Rule of Law and Putting an End to Impunity:

1. Stop political interference in the judicial process, and take appropriate actions to appoint suitable judges and stop corruption in the judiciary.



2. Ensure full independence and accountability of the entire judiciary and establish a Judicial Reforms Commission to review outstanding concerns regarding appointments and related matters.
3. Begin immediate legal process for the trials of war criminals, working with Sector Commanders Forum, legal experts, forensic scientists and organizations that have been involved in documentation process over last 37 years.
4. Develop a coordinated, comprehensive and transparent documentation process, review domestic and international laws for a war crimes tribunal and repeal of amnesty laws, assess capacity of existing legal institutions, identify national and international lawyers for prosecution and approach the international community for institutional support as well as support for providing documentation and extradition of war criminals if they are living in other countries.
5. Activate the newly formed National Human Rights Commission, and provide it with sufficient resources.
6. Expand the mandate to include ability to file legal cases against offenders.
7. Sign and ratify international legal documents on human rights and ensure that national laws are reformed promptly in accordance with the international obligations.
8. Review policing practices and procedures to bring them into conformity with human rights standards, including through enactment of a law to replace the Police Act 1861, following further public consultations on the Draft Police Bill. Review and enact the Draft Jail Code following any necessary amendments through public consultation and discussion in Parliament.
9. Put an unambiguous stop to extra judicial killings by RAB and various other agencies.
10. Institute a constitutional ban on any form of torture while in custody, in line with international covenants on torture.

Rights of Global Bengali Diaspora

1. Full voting rights should be given to citizens of Bangladesh anywhere in the global Diaspora.
2. Implement programs to channel Diaspora remittance into productive investment in country's various economic sectors. Create large-scale incentive schemes to channel remittance through productive and transparent channels.
3. Put an immediate end to human trafficking in the name of migrant labour. Interest of the migrant workers must get top priority in national consulates and various international negotiations. State-funded mandatory training



- for all unskilled workers before they leave the country, on language of destination country, and also on basic legal rights must be ensured.
4. Register all recruitment agencies, with provisions for legal action against recruitment agencies for corruption or failure to comply with laws. Require all recruitment related transactions to be made through banks, but ensuring this is accomplished through a rapid and transparent process.
 5. Establish and strengthen labour wings in all overseas consulates.

Rights of Ethnic, Religious & Linguistic Minorities, & Indigenous People

1. Ensure express constitutional recognition of the rights of Adibashis in the plains and in the CHT, and also effectively implement existing constitutional provisions on affirmative action, and equal opportunities for all without discrimination on grounds of race, religion and language
2. Full implementation of 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, with priority given to withdrawal of security camps from the Hill region.
3. Create a Land Commission to take appropriate actions to solve land related problems of the indigenous peoples of the plain land and Chittagong Hill Tracts
4. The Urdu-speaking community should be fully integrated into the economy and culture.
5. Fully repeal the Vested Property Act, and remove the inconsistencies in the 2001 Vested Property Return Act, and take appropriate actions to return or financially compensate for all properties acquired through Enemy Property Act and Vested Property Act..
6. Expand the mandate of the National Human Rights Commission to conduct a large-scale research on representation of religious & ethnic minorities in public, private, education, government, defense, police and all other employment sectors.
7. Ensure effective implementation of existing quotas in public service and implementation of fair recruitment policies and non-discriminatory practices (on grounds including sex, race, religion, disability, age, language) in both public and private bodies.

Economic and Cultural Rights:

1. Facilitate business ownership and create policies that encourage micro, small and medium sector business particularly among the young and the women.



2. Enforce labour laws on health and safety and enable the factory inspectors to hold prompt and effective investigations into causes of worker deaths and injuries, and appropriate payment of compensations.
3. Adopt laws in accordance with High Court Guidelines to prevent eviction of slums without alternative resettlement.
4. Ensure a free space for cultural artists and free thinkers.
5. Enforcement of the original national women's policy passed in 1997.

Rights of those affected by Climate Change:

1. Argue the case of climate change in international forum, from a position of strength by demanding justice and funds for the national adaptation fund based on the number of people affected by global warming in Bangladesh.
2. Ensure the national adaptation fund is monitored and managed by a national body rather than multi-laterals.
3. Present a stronger case for Bangladesh, by showing in international forums that the impact of climate change has already started in Bangladesh

About Drishtipat:

Drishtipat is a non-profit, non-partisan volunteer organization, built up of membership of young people inside Bangladesh and the global Diaspora (<http://www.drishtipat.org>). Drishtipat works towards building human and economic rights for all citizens of Bangladesh. Drishtipat uses digital technology, including blogging, podcast, vlogging, online chat, electronic publications, etc. to organize and network between the global Diaspora and those living and working in Bangladesh. Drishtipat members have written numerous opinion essays for publications as diverse as Daily Star, New Age, Prothom Alo, Shamokal, Forum, Foreign Policy (US), Guardian (UK), etc. Drishtipat members have also appeared on RTV, ATN, CNN, and BBC to discuss matters of human rights. Its forthcoming book will be a compendium of all Drishtipat essays written in the run-up to Election 2008. Drishtipat also raises funds for various philanthropy projects focused on the marginalized people in Bangladesh.

Drishtipat also raises funds for various philanthropy projects focused on the marginalized people in Bangladesh. Drishtipat also works to empower and enable the underprivileged and marginalized segment of the society and individuals living on social and economic poverty so that they can exercise the most basic human rights with dignity, opportunity and hope. Established in 2001, Drishtipat has quickly managed to establish itself as the biggest secular philanthropic organization in the Bangladeshi diaspora. Started from a single



website and one man effort, Drishtipat has mobilized quickly over the years and has grown into having nine chapters in five countries with more than 5000 members and donors. Since its inception, Drishtipat has far successfully completed numerous campaigns, many petitions and appeals. Its notable campaigns include, Women of 1971 Campaign, Arsenic Project Campaign, the Tipu Sultan Campaign, Campaign for Survivors of Acid Violence, Ushnota and the Cheye Dekho Campaign. Drishtipat recently completed via the United Bangladesh Appeal one of the biggest fund raising projects for the victims of Cyclone Sidr through a compensation fund for the victims.

In compiling these recommendations, we have also used, as reference, research work done by organizations such as Ain O Shalish Kendro, Nijera Kori and Amnesty International. More information on Drishtipat can be found here: <http://drishtipat.org> contact: info@drishtipat.org