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## **Bangladesh: Intimidation and False Accusations Against Woman Human Rights Defender Rani Yan Yan**

On 6 April 2026, the Rangamati District Magistrate, acting on the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs, issued a formal cautionary letter to woman human rights defender **Rani Yan Yan**, accusing her of spreading false and misleading information against the government and the military. Rani Yan Yan's legal counsel has denied these accusations and requested the withdrawal of the letter, arguing that its broad dissemination has harmed her reputation and credibility, as well as undermined her work as a human rights defender.

[Rani Yan Yan](#) is a women human rights defender and indigenous rights activist based in Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. She holds the position of Chakma Rani (queen) and serves as advisor to the Chakma Circle Chief. Her decade-long activism focuses on movement building, empowerment of indigenous women and youth in the CHT, and advocacy on ensuring justice, equity, and inclusiveness at local, national, and international level. For her commitment, courage, and efforts to protect and defend marginalised peoples' rights, she was honored with the Global Anti-racism Champions Award in 2023, and was nominated as a finalist for the Women Building Peace Award 2021. She was also a recipient of prestigious Distinguished Humphrey Fellowship and Canberra Fellowship.

On 6 April 2026, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate Nazma Ashrafi, acting on the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs, issued a formal cautionary letter to Rani Yan Yan and circulated it to several government offices. The letter accused Rani Yan Yan of engaging in propaganda at the international level by raising "false and misleading allegations" against the Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Army, and of seeking to unite members of different indigenous organisations in the CHT. The letter further warned that her activities "could potentially deteriorate the situation" in the CHT and instructed her to strictly adhere to the law. However, the letter does not cite any specific statement or action by Rani Yan Yan that justify these accusations.

On 24 April 2026, Rani Yan Yan's lawyer Sara Hossain sent a formal written response to the Rangamati District Magistrate on behalf of the woman human rights defender, denying the accusations in the Magistrate's letter as "vague, unclear, and unfounded" and requesting its immediate withdrawal, cancellation, or rescission. The response also demanded a clarification of the legal basis for the letter's issuance and its dissemination to multiple government offices, noting that the broad circulation of the letter has caused substantial harm to Rani Yan Yan's reputation and therefore constitutes defamation.

When contacted by the media, the Deputy Commissioner of the Rangamati District Magistrate [confirmed that she sent the letter](#) on the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs and advised

human rights activists to raise the matter with the Ministry directly. Human rights defenders and civil society actors in Bangladesh have condemned the letter as an attempt to suppress freedom of expression and silence legitimate human rights advocacy, particularly in relation to the CHT.

Rani Yan Yan has previously been targeted for her human rights work. On 15 February 2018, she was physically attacked by members of law enforcement agencies at Rangamati Sadar Hospital while providing support to two Marma sisters, a minor and an adult, who had been sexually assaulted by border guard personnel. Front Line Defenders [documented and condemned the attack](#) at the time. The current incident reflects a continuing pattern of harassment, intimidation, and obstruction of human rights defenders working on indigenous peoples' rights in Bangladesh.

Front Line Defenders believes that the cautionary letter is directly connected to Rani Yan Yan's legitimate and peaceful advocacy for the rights of indigenous peoples and women in the CHT. The accusations are unsubstantiated, and the letter's broad dissemination to multiple government offices constitutes an act of intimidation and defamation intended to silence her advocacy efforts at local, national, and international level.

**Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Bangladesh to:**

1. Immediately withdraw, cancel, or rescind the cautionary letter issued to Rani Yan Yan on 6 April 2026, and provide a full explanation of the legal basis and authority for its issuance and dissemination to multiple government offices;
2. Cease all forms of harassment and intimidation targeting Rani Yan Yan, and take all necessary measures to guarantee her physical and psychological integrity and security;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bangladesh, particularly those working on indigenous peoples' rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

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