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BHBCUC EUROPE



**Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist and Christian Unity Council Europe**



A human rights advocacy group under the umbrella of BHBCOP, Bangladesh

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10<sup>th</sup> Session-Forum on Minority Issues  
Minority youth : towards inclusive and diverse societies  
30 November- 01 December 2017

Presented by, Amarendra Roy, President of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist and Christians Unity Council Europe and Board of Director Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities .An NGO (ECOSOC) in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.

Item :2

**Honorable Chair and distinguished participants,**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this important Forum. Bangladesh a country born as a secular democratic state in 1971. But now The Constitution designates Islam as the state religion as enunciated in Article 2A and Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim above the Preamble in contrary to the Principle of Secularism and Freedom of Religion as enunciated in Article 12 which provides "The principle of secularism shall be realized by the elimination of (a) communalism in all its forms, (b) the granting by the state of political status in favour of any religion, (c) the abuse of religion for political purposes and (d) any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practicing a particular religion. Parliament enacted a new law further regulating groups receiving foreign funding, including religious organizations.

Islamisation process is still being continued in different aspects of the society including educations. The recent incident happened during the admission test of Department of Fine Arts held on October 25, 2017 at Rajshahi University by distributing the question papers amongst the students which includes the questions with the object of spreading communalism.

According to the reports of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a human rights organization of religious and ethnic minorities, from January, 2017 to October, 2017 there were total incidents of 959 (the information have been compiled from reports received by BHBCUC, the news published in the newspapers, online media) committed by the criminal miscreants. Out of that Killing 60, Found dead 24 (cause of death is unknown), Attempt to murder 06, Death threats 25, Physical attack 277, Ransom of property-business 95, Houses, land grabbed 56, Attempt to grab 62, Threat to leave the country 10, Worship places/land grabbed 26, Attempt to worship places/land grabbed 12, Temple attack/vandalisation/arson 22, Vandalisation of the statue of Goddess images 166, Stolen statue of Goddess 14, Gang rape- 13, Rape 22, Attempt to rape 11, Kidnap 17, Missing 14, False case in the name of outraging Islam 10, Outraging of religious sentiments through Facebooks and miscellaneous 9. It is also to be noted here that in many of the incidents so far relates to land grabbing, looting, extortion concern there were involvement of some of the leaders, MPs and activists of the present ruling party. Although Vested Property Restoration Act was promulgated in 2001 and subsequently amended on 2011 and 2012, but a smaller proportion has been returned to the owners of the land as per Act. More than 200 thousand application are pending in the Tribunal of the Districts for restoration of the properties but not more than 3% of the same have been disposed of as yet. It is most unfortunate enough to note that those properties which have been declared by the Tribunal for returning the same to the owners but the Deputy Commissioners of the Districts are very much reluctant to execute the Order of the Tribunal as per Act. Moreso, the mysterious inaction of the Ministry of Law for taking necessary steps for the execution of the Act is very much deplorable. As such, the harassment and

humiliation of the minorities on their landed properties are still continuing as like as the last 7 decades. Report of 2011 minority population of the country is 9.7%. Further more in the context of above discrimination of allocations in every year and for continuous agitation and persuasion the Finance Minister in his Budget speech of 2016-2017 in the Parliament declared Taka 200 Crore for the development of Hindu Temples all over the country. But in reality not a single Taka was released even to date. When the matter was pointed out to the Finance Minister prior to the declaration of the Budget of the current fiscal year, he again committed Taka 200 Crore for the development of Hindu Temple in the Budget of 2017-2018 but nothing materialized till date. The role of the ruling party and some of its leaders, Parliament Members in case of recent Chief Justice S. K. Singha's observation against the Sixteenth Amendment of the Constitution is very much deplorable. Some of the leaders not only used filthy remarks against him both in the Parliament and Political Field in connection with his religious and indigenous identity, but also made hate speech spreading communal foebia all over the country which frustrates the entire minority community as well as the conscious citizens of the country. The culture of impunity to the communal perpetrators is still continuing which have shaken the minorities about their security in life and property for which the tendency of leaving the country for ever is still persisting.

**Honorable chair,** In order to achieve the said attainable goal, we believe, you might want to encourage Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to take the following steps, as soon as possible:

- 1) Enact a Hate Crime Law and take legal action against the perpetrators of crime against the country's minorities under that law in a special tribunal, starting the process using the Shahabuddin Commission Report or Probe Commission report.
- 2) Create separate foundations for the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians through legislation, exactly like the existing Islamic foundation that was created by Prime Minister Hasina's father Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1974.
- 3) Empower the country's minorities politically and economically by appointing members of various religious & ethnic minority groups in every stratum of the administration, preferable by reserving 20% minority seats.
- 4) Until the constitution of 1972 is not restored, reserve 20% of the parliamentary seats (Now that they are officially minority).
- 5) Form a national Minority Commission to ensure that the minorities enjoy basic Human Rights.
- 6) Fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of 1997 thus ending the sufferings of the country's indigenous peoples.
- 7) Revisit the Vested Property Return Act allowing for the victims (or their heirs) of that infamous law regardless of their current nationality, like the victims of Nazi persecution or holocaust survivors can reclaim their property in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and fully implement it in a speedy manner.
- 8) Constitutionally uphold secular democracy (as opposed to Islamic democracy that her party has) and equal rights of the minorities by restoring the 1972 constitution, as Prime Minister Hasina had promised to do during her election campaign in 2008.

**Honorable chair,** if you feel that the remaining 20 million religious & ethnic minorities of Bangladesh deserves to live in their ancestral homeland with human dignity enjoying the very basic human rights, please include the suggested measures in your list of recommendations.

Thank you for patiently listening to my presentation.