

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council Europe

Situation of the minorities in Bangladesh

First of all I would like to thank the organizers to give us the opportunity to speak of ourselves and express our concerns and put our demands forward. We are here for our existence.

Bangladesh is for all irrespective of different cultures & tradition and religion. This is what the spirit of the 1971 meant for. Now we have divisions in ideologically, politically and religiously. As a result a culture of impunity is flourishing with the lawlessness. Islamic militancy is gaining momentum and the ethnic / tribal / religious minorities are facing atrocities. Atrocities gained its peak after the independence in 2001 and it is still going on.

Trial of war criminals of 1971 lead to the ideological conflict. Rape, murder, force conversion of the minorities are underlined in each and every trial. All the minorities belong to the Government party, is a general assumption of the opponents. Division in faiths needs no clarification. It is well understood by all. Now a days a new word "Religious Sentiment" is being added.

According to Kennedy report 80 percent of the victims are the religious minorities during the liberation war, as because they are targeted first, as a part of ethnic cleansing then came the genocide. No authorities recognized that the persecution and violence against the minorities are going on after the liberation. Now each and every political party recognizes the atrocities in Bangladesh including the Islamic militants. It is because of the great concerns of the international community after the general election. But no one takes the responsibility. The "Blame Game" continues as usual and the same group continues to suffer.

The persecution and violence against the minorities are of manifolds and have not come crisis overnight. It can be considered as ethnic cleansing and may be described as follows:

- Grabbing of minority properties by individual or groups by force or threat
- Large scale eviction of poor minority families and tribal minorities from their ancestral lands
- Rape, kidnap and sexual violation of woman belonging to the minority communities
- Forcing minorities either to convert to Islam or flee from the country
- Destruction and desecration of places of worships such as temples, monasteries and churches
- Depriving minorities of education, business and professional opportunities
- Extraction of money in the form of "infidel security tax"
- Election time violence or political attacks targeting minorities for their perceived role as "vote bank" for certain parties and being a factor in win/loss for candidates
- Attack and destroy in the name of "Religious Sentiment"
- Extra judicial murder in the name of crossfire.

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It came to lime light in 2001 and even the international community acknowledged it. Shahbuddin Commission report of 2001 atrocities had been made but it was never published because of its sensitivity. Hence no justice was done.

In the Ramu incident, which is based on the religious sentiment, both the political leaders of the government and the opponent parties led the atrocities. It is clearly seen in picture and video footage circulated globally. But they were never convicted as perpetrators. When the state appears to be the best patron to the process of discrimination, injustice and violation it promotes the atmosphere of impunity.

Still today not a single person has been convicted for the atrocities and came under judicial system except the 1971 war criminals. Perpetrators are living lavishly instead.

Minorities are being assaulted on the streets, in their homes and at their work places and threat to leave country. Even human right defenders are not spared. Namely:

- Roaline Costa was assaulted violently and threatened to stop the human rights activity but still working in Bangladesh and facing the challenges
- Rita Nandy belongs to BHBCUC activists in Bangladesh, threatened and assaulted left Bangladesh, when her son was abducted without trace, to save her life
- Rabindra Ghosh beaten and hospitalized and threatened as well but still working hard as a lone soldier in Bangladesh

International religious Freedom Report for 2013 Released by Secretary Kerry 28 July 2013

In Bangladesh, there were a large number of arson attacks and looting of minority religious sites and private homes across the country, especially against the Hindu community. According to a domestic human rights organization, 495 statues, monasteries, or temples were destroyed; 278 homes and 208 businesses were destroyed; 188 were injured; hundreds displaced, and one person was killed during the year. In November, a mob assaulted a Hindu man and set fire to 26 homesteads in a predominantly Hindu village in Bonogram, Pabna. The police reportedly did not detain any of the perpetrators the victim named but did detain an individual who sheltered Hindus during the attack. Increased violence against minorities in the lead-up to the elections shows how minority communities are especially vulnerable during periods of political instability, when some partisans exploit latent communal sentiment to settle scores, take land, or intimidate opponents to achieve political aims.

The main causes of the violation of the human rights are Islamic fanatics and militancy. More than 10 years back it is reported in the Far Eastern Economic Review that "the cocoon of terrorism" is taking place in the southern part of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Recently a

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rohingya person is arrested in Hyderabad, India, in connection with the bomb blast in Burdwan, West Bengal India. Burdwan became the operating center of terrorist activities when Bangladesh is not a safe heaven. Islamic institutes like madrasahs are popping up like mushrooms in the Indo-Bangladesh border and Bangladesh-Burma border. These are routes of terrorism. It reflects the whole network. Both the governments of India and Bangladesh are working on it to eradicate the terrorism. It might help the survival of the minorities.

Minority community cannot survive without the help of the major Islamic community and the government of Bangladesh. Demographic change is evident. If the trend continues minorities will be rooted out by

- Converting to Islam
- Leaving the country
- Facing death

We are here to demand protection, security, justice and rehabilitation to uphold the human rights situation in Bangladesh. Trials of special acts can be imposed as planned before and still which is not implemented yet. Identify the perpetrators and punish according to the law. Make the law and enforcement forces and the local authority responsible and compensate if they cannot give proper protection in their areas.

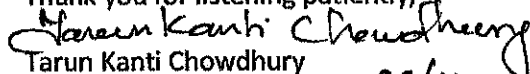
Therefore we are calling upon the majority Islamic community of Bangladesh, Bangladesh government and the civilized world to come to the protect the people of other faiths. Your understanding, support and collective effort is essential for the minority communities in Bangladesh.

Finally to curb down the trend and to prevent the flow some essential steps are to be considered.

- Return of the 1972 constitution for secular Bangladesh
- Minority protection bill to protect from the culture of impunity
- Minority welfare ministry to rehabilitate
- 2001 Shahabuddin commission report is to be published
- Convict and punish the perpetrators to give justice

We wish to live together in peace, harmony and with tranquility.

Thank you for listening patiently,


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