Unity Council Conference, Speakers from 7 Countries among participants

Bangladesh minority victims of persecution denied justice

--Jenny Lundstrom

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, USA arranged an international seminar titled “Election in Bangladesh: Advancing Democracy and Disenfranchisement & Persecution of Minorities” on Sunday, 10th November at Sunnyside Community Hall in Queens in New York. Representatives from seven countries spoke at the event. Among the speaker were—Writer and Freelance Journalist Ms. Madeline Brooks from New York, Director of Washington based Hindu American Foundation (HAF) Mr. J. Kansara, Swedish Moderate Party political leader and human rights advocate Ms. Mary Spanner, Netherlands based human rights activist Ms. Jenny Lundstrom, London based European Hindu Forum president Ms. Bharti Tailor, Hotline Bangladesh director Ms. Rosaline Costa from Dhaka, New York based Justice for Hindus leader Mr. Vincent Bruno, Professor at India’s Jadavpur University and CAAMB president Dr. Mohit Ray from Kolkata, BHBCUC’s European Union president Mr. Tarun Chowdhury and Chitra Paul from Sweden, BHBCUC Canada’s General Secretary Mr. Sharoj Dash from Montreal and others. The conference was chaired by Prof. Nabendu Dutta and moderated by Mr. Pradip Das. The third edition of the documentary, “Bangladesh: A Portrait of Covert Genocide”, edited by Mr. Sitangshu Guha, was also unveiled at the event. He also presented a Power Point presentation on the condition of religious minorities of Bangladesh.

The seminar was organized to preempt the historically election time violence against the minorities and to inform the world community about this grave issue. The panelists used PowerPoint presentations and film exhibits to show the seriousness of the problem and the urgent need of protecting minorities. The seminar was attended by well over two hundred human rights leaders and activists. Bangladesh based noted human rights activist, Shahriar Kabir produced documentary “Ultimate Jihad” was screened followed by welcome speech of BHBCUC, USA president Mr. Ratan Barua. A slide presentation by Mr. Sitangshu Guha, using the news clips of atrocities against minorities was also shown at the event.

Vol. 5 Issue 10–Oct 2013; Published on 17th Nov 2013  
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/oikyo.parishadusa; Website: www.bhbcuc-usa.org; E-mail: unitycouncilusa@gmail.com;  
Published & Edited by BHBCUC, USA; Page 1 of 11
Netherlands based human rights activist Ms. Jenny Lundstrom through her own documentary production, “Culture of Impunity” pointed that the perpetrators of atrocities against minorities are not held to account, no justice is meted out. She mentioned that she visited Bangladesh after incidents in Ramu and described her appalling experience.

Hindu American Foundation director J. Kansara opined that as a result of the last summer’s huge demonstration in front of the White House by the Bangladeshi minorities, there will be a hearing on November 20 at the Congressional Foreign Relations Committee for Asia and called upon everyone to attend the hearing. He said that HAF was dedicated to the Bangladeshi minority persecution issue.

Ms. Tailor of London expressed her bewilderment about the burning of temples in Bangladesh. The Swedish political leader Ms. Spannier questioned why the Hindu temples are attacked and Hindus persecuted. She promised to be very vocal about the issue. Mr. Saroj Dash of Canada and Mr. Tarun Chowdhury of Sweden denounced the hate mongers who attack vulnerable minorities in Bangladesh. Other speakers also challenged that when it comes to minority persecution Awami League or BNP all are equally culpable and no one’s hands are clean. They said that BNP-Jamat-Awami league all are involved in the attacks that took place in Sathia. They declared, “Enough of blame games; now the BNP_Jamat-Awami League must say what they will do to protect minorities.”
BHBCUC Conference NYC Minorities and the Elections, Nov 9, 2013 ---Speech: Jenny Lundstrom

Introduction

- Thank you Sitangshu Guha, and BHBCUC - I am grateful to be here with you today on this important event.
- At the same time, I am sad that it is needed. I have been working in the field of human rights in Bangladesh since 2007, and minorities in the elections has remained a concern ever since and before that
- It’s sad because I am convinced that the majority of the people of Bangladesh are tolerant, peaceful, and even rather secular, and yet
- At every election, regardless of which party is in power,
- 10% of the population are in fear.
- It is also an issue that is highly underreported in international media
- Which is why we made this film Culture of Impunity last year, and we are showing it both in Bangladesh and internationally.
- Some things have changed since this film was made: the war crimes trials are now in full operation and Jamaat were banned from participating in the elections.
- But unfortunately, our film remains highly relevant a year and a half later.

Facts: Describe Events in 2012-2013

- Because since the burning of Satkhira in April 2012, the situation for minorities has not improved
- And the attacks against Hindu, Buddhists, Christian and indigenous communities have continued.
- Almost exact a year ago I visited Ramu and other locations in Cox’s Bazaar, to witness the devastation after some of the largest attacks against Buddhists in Bangladesh’s recent history.
- In February - March this year, some 1500 Hindu homes in 20 districts were destroyed in response to the death sentencing of Jamaati leaders.
- And new attacks took place just a week ago, during the Diwali festival.
- There is no-one denying that these attacks are taking place.
- But the question that remains is why.
- Who benefits from a tormented minority community?
- I am convinced that these are not random incidents, but they are organized. There are clear patterns, and they are intended to create fear and insecurity amongst minorities.
- These attacks are organized in a similar way:
- They mostly take place at night and the attackers were large crowds of thousands of young Muslim men, armed with sticks, knives and even swords, often brought in to the targeted villages on trucks, and moving from village to
village, one after another over a couple of days.

- Road blocks are set up to hinder the police, ambulances, and fire brigades.
- Minority homes and businesses burnt down, property looted, temples destroyed, men are beaten, and women are sexually assaulted.
- The reason given is the “defamation of Islam”. (Often starting on Facebook and social media).
- Districts are often Jamaat e Islami dominated and the violence fuelled on by extremist propaganda and hate speeches through loudspeakers by imams and local leaders.
- Finally, the attacks often take place around the border areas: which could have a strategic function - if the purpose is to force Hindus to leave Bangladesh for India. Which also has been the effect
- My Hindu, Buddhist and Christian friends are concerned about what they call 'Islamisation over the past year, and that religion is coming to play a stronger role in their everyday life.
- They are afraid about the future. The idea that you do not know when the next attack will take place, when it is your house that is burnt to ashes, its creating fear. Those who can will try to leave and some might convert, they say.

Government Inaction

- The Government is regularly failing to intervene and prevent attacks.
- In several cases, including Satkhira and Ramu, it remains unexplainable, how masses of up to thousands of people, could move around this large area, for days, in a border district that employs various armed forces.
- And I also know from experience that the military intelligence in this area is very fast and efficient, when there is an interest!
- But it took 8 hours for the armed forces to arrive in Ramu when the violence broke out.
- Afterwards, Ramu became the centre of attention for all parties. There were several Jamaatis arrested and charged.
- But there were also allegations of involvement of politicians from both the ruling party and the opposition, and none of them were arrested.
- This is all happening at a time where the Government has gone on a harsh crackdown against the Jamaat and other opposition
- While I support and believe in the importance of bringing all criminals to justice, I am also worried because unless such procedures are carried out with respect for human rights and with due process, I fear that it will only create further polarization between communities, that leads to more violence.
- So I am also calling on all of us here today to propose solutions that are truly working towards peace and reconciliation, so that we can move away from extremism and hatred, and to prevent atrocities against those who are already vulnerable to become targets of more violence.

Thank you.

Jenny Lundstrom
NYC 10 November, 2013
jenny@ethanfilms.com
Culture of Impunity
https://www.facebook.com/BangladeshCultureOfImpunity
www.ethanfilms.com
+0031643062934
Arson, Clash Ensued from Petty Squabble

Hindu locality burnt after Muslim youth’s death

15 houses gutted fully, seven partly; damage estimated at Tk 1 crore; most Nomopara residents flee village; 21-member police team deployed; meeting for amity held; arson victims given money, tin sheets

Our Correspondent, Barisal

It all started with a trivial matter on Thursday evening when youths gathered at the primary school premises in Nomopara, a predominantly Hindu locality in Char Kawa village, about six kilometres east of Barisal city, to play badminton in floodlights. During the match, an altercation broke out between a Hindu youth from Nomopara and a Muslim from neighbouring Char Aicha. At one point, Pavel Das, Shohagh Das, Pijush and Dhiman all from Nomopara slapped the youths from Char Aicha, numbering about seven. Pavel and his followers then held two of the Muslim men. The other youths from Char Aicha rang up their friends and sought their help. The moment reinforcement came from Char Aicha, the Hindu youths ran into their nearby homes and brought out sharp weapons and resisted the attackers. Shortly afterwards, four men from Char Aicha–Parvez Gazi, 20, his brother Pavel Gazi, 18, cousin Jahirul Hwladar, 22, and another relative Shamim Reza, 22–lay profusely bleeding on the ground with grievous wounds. Later when they were...
transferred to Barisal Medical College Hospital, doctors declared Parvez dead around 9:00pm. With teeth wounds, Jahirul was transferred to Dhaka Dental College Hospital.

It was one of more than a dozen Hindu houses, which were set afire on Friday morning by people from neighbouring Char Aicha village. Photo: Star


The district administration immediately deployed eight armed policemen in Nomopara and set up a camp there. But on Friday morning, four of the policemen were withdrawn by Officer-in-Charge of Bandar Police Station Rezaul Islam, leaving the strength of the law enforcers at only four. But things were boiling at Char Aicha. At around 9:00am Friday, a rumour was spread in Char Aicha about the death of Jahirul in Dhaka. Over a thousand men from Char Aicha joined in to
attack Nomopara at exactly 9:50am. As the four policemen watched helplessly, the men torched down whatever they found on their way. “I could never imagine so many people would attack the village in such a manner,” said the OC, Rezaul Islam. According to the probe report prepared by a three-member team with Additional Deputy Commissioner (education) of the district administration Abul Kalam Azad as head, 15 Hindu houses in Nomopara were gutted fully and seven partly, wrecking a damage of about Tk 1 crore. Most of around 300 residents of Nomopara have gone into hiding fearing further attacks. “I’m scared. I don’t know the whereabouts of my husband and two sons, who fled the house Thursday night,” said Purnima Haldar, 40, in tears, sitting by her razed house. Police arrested five youths of Char Kawa village including Pijush. At Char Aicha village, 20 youths were held yesterday for the arson attack, said the OC. A unit of 20 policemen was deployed in Nomopara.

Last evening, a meeting of amity between the victims and people from Char Aicha was held in the affected locality in the presence of Barisal Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Shahidul Alam and Divisional Commissioner Md Nurul Amin. The district administration gave some of the victims Tk 10,000 each and tin sheets to rebuild houses.

Hindu Community under Attack at Lalmonirhat

The daily Star/ The daily Dhaka Tribune/ Daily Sangbad: 5th Nov 2013: The incident took place on 4th Nov 2013 around 12.30pm at the Satpatki Majhipara village of Mohendranagar Union in Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila. The injured minority victims were admitted to the Lalmonirhat general hospital, but despite deployment of additional security personnel the atmosphere in the village remains electric with the villagers anticipating a repeated attack. Mr. Jamiruddin – Officer in Charge of Lalmonirhat Sadar police station confirmed the report of attack and said many men, women and children of the village had taken shelter in other households and had not returned home since.

According to several victims, pro-strike activists of BNP, led by local Jatiyatibadi Dal cadre Md. Shawn Islam, launched the attack in retaliation for refusal of some Hindu fish traders to pay tolls earlier this week. They said a group of 15-18 opposition activists, armed with locally made sharp weapons, attacked the village and forcibly entered at least 40 houses, assaulted 15 individuals and looted valuables.

Narayan Chandra Das, an affected villager said, “Mohd. Shawn and his cohorts demanded a toll of Taka 5,000 from each of 15 local fish traders on Sunday night, in the name of bearing hartal expenses. But they were denied. The traders apprised local BNP leader Abdul Mazid Mondol of the matter, which infuriated Mohammed Shawn. He took revenge on them by launching the attack on the village. Assaulted Sumitra Rani Roy(65) said her son- Nikhil Chandra Roy, was beaten right before her eyes and her cries to spare him went unheeded. Nikhil was beaten mercilessly by the strike supporters in my very presence, in my own home. I cried and cried but they would not stop any thing”-said Sumitra Rani Roy.

Name of the victims are Sri Nikhil Chandra Roy, Sri Paresh Chandra Roy, Sri Bakul Chandra Roy, Sri Punna Nath Roy, Sri Ukhil Chandra Roy, Sri Narayan Chandra Das. Case Number : Lalmonirhat Sadar P.S. case No.5 dated 4.11.2013 under section 143/448/323/307/385/386/427/34 of Bangladesh Penal code. Name of the perpetrators: Mohammad Shawn Ali, 25; Mohammad Alamgir, 25; Mohammad Maznu Meah, 50; Abu Taher; Badsha, 48; Mohammad Solaiman, 70 and 10-12 more unknown. All perpetrators are from village Satpatki Majhipara, P.S. Lalmonirhat Sadar- Lalmonirhat district.
Muslim mob vandalises 26 Hindu houses in Bangladesh


A Muslim mob burned down 26 Hindu houses in Bangladesh's Pabna district on Saturday. The attack was provoked after alleged reports of a Hindu boy committing blasphemy. (Reuter's image)

A mob went on a rampage in a Hindu-dominated neighbourhood in a village in Bangladesh's Pabna district following reports that a boy from the minority community had committed blasphemy, prompting the country's High Court to order arrest of attackers within 24 hours. The mob attacked the Hindu neighborhood at Bonogram village in Santhia upazila in Pabna district on Saturday, vandalising 26 houses, damaging several idols and forcing about 150 families to flee the area. The incident prompted the High Court to take suo motu cognisance, asking the Inspector General of Police to ensure the arrest of the culprits within 24 hours and deployment of adequate police forces in the area to protect the minorities.

"We have arrested nine of the perpetrators of the attack in the past two days and are looking for the others," officer in-charge of the local police station Rezaul Karim said.

The media reports, meanwhile, came up with a finding that a group of extortionists, mostly belonging to the BNP and their fundamentalist ally Jamaat-e-Islami, had planned to frame Hindu schoolboy Rajib Saha for maligning Islam after his businessman father refused to pay them. The Daily Star newspaper said it found that the Facebook page, photocopies of which were used to incite the attacks, had no links with Rajib.

Subcommittee Hearing: Bangladesh in Turmoil: A Nation on the Brink?

Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific | 2172 House Rayburn Office Building

Washington, DC 20515 | Nov 20, 2013 2:00pm
Steve's Blog

Bangladesh

November 6th, 2013
Posted by Steve

In my capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, I spent the last two days in Bangladesh. This moderate, secular, Muslim nation is strategically located between the first and second most populous nations on earth, China and India.

It is a very poor country. 80% of its people live on less than $2 per day. And it is incredibly densely populated. It has slightly more than one-half the population of the United States, 163 million people, crammed into a country that is smaller than Iowa!

If you’re of a certain age, when you hear “Bangladesh” one of the first things which may come to mind is former Beatle George Harrison’s “Concert for Bangladesh.” Back in 1971, Bangladesh had been hit by a powerful cyclone, and was experiencing a horrendous civil war. George Harrison and Ravi Shankar wanted to help, so they organized two benefit concerts in New York’s Madison Square Garden, featuring besides Harrison and Shankar, fellow former-Beatle Ringo Starr, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Leon Russell, and the band Badfinger. It resulted in the bestselling live album called “Concert for Bangladesh”, and paved the way for future benefit concerts such as Live Aid, Farm Aid, etc.

But I digress.

Bangladesh has been in the news recently, due to several horrific tragedies which occurred there. The most tragic was the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory, resulting in the deaths of over 1,100 workers, mostly women, and injuries to an additional estimated 2,500 workers.

The other tragedy was the Tazreen Fashion factory fire, which killed 117, and injured another 200, again mostly women. Unfortunately, these two tragedies were but the latest in a series of arguably preventable occurrences over recent years. American companies, the most prominent being Wal-Mart, have done business with these Bangladeshi companies for years now, principally because the price is right. Bangladesh has the second cheapest labor costs in the garment industry in the world; only Burma (Myanmar) being cheaper.

One of the many things which I discussed with Bangladeshi officials during my time there, was what is being done to improve safety conditions, so as to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future. They have a long way to go. And I’d be remiss if I didn’t make the point that American, and other Western businesses, have a moral responsibility, if not a legal one, to ensure that workers’ conditions are safe, even if it’s outside the United States.

The political situation in Bangladesh is quite interesting. Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy, and therefore the leader of Bangladesh is the Prime Minister, not a President, as is the case in America. For the past 22 years, two powerful women have fought each other, just about to the death, to hold that position. The current Prime Minister is Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League political party. Sheikh Hasina’s father, who also headed Bangladesh, her mother, and her three brothers, were all assassinated in 1975. She was out of the country at the time, so she survived. She has been Prime Minister about half of the last 22 years.

Her great rival, Khaleda Zia, has been Prime Minister the other 11 years, and is likely to defeat Sheikh Hasina, and again take over in a few months, if the polls are correct. Her husband, who also headed Bangladesh, was assassinated in 1981. So both of these powerful Bangladeshi leaders have known great tragedy in their lives. It brings to mind the saying “What doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger.”

I met with both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and probably soon-to-be-again Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (separately of course!) while I was in Bangladesh. I had met each of them when I was first in Bangladesh back in 2006 (Khaleda Zia was Prime Minister then, and Sheikh Hasina was leader of the opposition.) They are both very intelligent, very impressive
people; it’s just too bad they can’t get along better, for the benefit of the people of Bangladesh. Of course I guess you could say that about Barack Obama and John Boehner, or a lot of other people in Washington.

One other interesting thing I’ll briefly discuss; there are war crimes tribunals underway in Bangladesh, and a half dozen now-elderly Bangladeshis have been sentenced to hang (although none of these sentences have actually been carried out yet.)

Here’s the deal. India and West Pakistan (today just Pakistan), and East Pakistan (today Bangladesh) were all part of the British Empire until they gained independence from Great Britain back in 1947 (Gandhi and all that). Because Hindus and Muslims almost immediately began killing each other, most Muslims fled India, either heading west into West Pakistan, or East into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Hindus in West and East Pakistan fled into India. Got it?

West and East Pakistan were one country, until 1971, when an independence movement gained strength in East Pakistan, and a civil war lasting nine months took place, and an estimated 3 million people, mostly civilians, in East Pakistan, lost their lives.

Now Sheik Hasina’s government is attempting to prosecute the perpetrators of the atrocities, which took place 42 year ago. Oh yeah, and all the alleged perpetrators are now leaders of Khaleda Zia’s party, or members of Zia’s allied party, Jamaat-e-Islami. Now those who commit atrocities should be held accountable for their crimes. But the tribunals have not met internationally recognized fair trial standards. And many in Pakistan believe that the current government is rushing the tribunal to find the defendants guilty, so as to weaken the opposition in the upcoming election.

There’s so much more that could be said about the volatile political situation in Bangladesh, and its effect on U.S. interests, but in the interests of time, I’ll leave it there.

I get back to the United States tomorrow, and Friday I’ll be participating in a series of veteran’s events across our congressional district. Next Monday, November 11th, is Veterans Day. Please remember to thank a veteran for securing the freedoms we enjoy in our great nation every day.

See you next week.

- See more at: http://stevechabot.com/blog/bangladesh/#sthash.mF5n1Ca7.dpuf

---

STATEMENT FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY DHAKA

DHAKA, NOVEMBER 6 -- We are deeply concerned by recent attacks on Hindus in Pabna district and in Lalmonirhat. We call on all those involved in these incidents to desist from abusing the rights of minorities, and ask all parties to ensure they are stopped immediately and the perpetrators are held accountable. We ask the Government of Bangladesh to act authoritatively against those who incited and committed this violence and protect the rights of minorities.

We are also remain deeply concerned by the deaths, injuries, and ongoing violence associated with hartals. While engaging in peaceful protest is a fundamental democratic right, we firmly believe violence is never the answer. We call on all parties to ensure that their protests are peaceful and we look to the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety of all its citizens and encourage all Bangladeshis to peacefully express their views.

Vol. 5 Issue 10–Oct 2013; Published on 17th Nov 2013
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/oikyo.parishadusa; Website: www.bhbcuc-usa.org; E-mail: unitycouncilusa@gmail.com;
Published & Edited by BHBCUC, USA; Page 10 of 11
Rinku, 17 a Hindu college girl
Kidnapped & Converted

Minority Hindu College girl (17) kidnapped on 30th July 2013 by Muslim perpetrators, forcefully converted at Mymensingh. Police did nothing (The daily “Karatoa”, 28th Aug 2013 & daily “Bartaman”, 9th Nov 2013). Ms. Rinku Rani Saha, 17 a student of Dhanbari Nabab Institute was forcefully kidnapped from the road by a Micro Bus. As per FIR lodged by Ms. Noyan Tara Saha, mother of the victim (Being Mymensingh Model P.S. case No.10 dated 03.09.2013 under section 7/9(1)30 of Women and Children Repression Act,2003) against those perpetrators. A general diary Number 80 dated 02.08.2013 was also filed Mr.Krishna Saha (uncle of the victim) at Mymensingh Model police station. On 30.07.2013 at about 7.10 a.m. Police neglected to take any action for recovery of the victim girl. Perpetrators converted the victim girl by swearing an affidavit by the Notary public on 20.08.2013 as alleged.

Hindu House Wife Gang
Raped

Hindu Women, 28 gang-raped by Muslim perpetrators on 20th Sept 2013at Kalkini Upazila of Madaripur District. No perpetrators were arrested, no justice, GHRD/BDMW investigated on 15th Nov 2013: Mrs. Anita Rani Mondol, 28 a Hindu married to Monu Mondal, a van driver was passing their life. But on 20th Sept 2013 Anita Rani along with her husband was sleeping at night four perpetrators forcibly entered into their bamboo made house. Two perpetrators namely Mohammed Sajib Khan and Mohammed Hafizul Sardar tied Monu’s hands and took him outside. Two other perpetrators namely Asad Sardar & Kalu Sardar started raping Anita, while all 4 gang raped her one after another until she became senseless. Then the perpetrators left. This happened at Village-Char Doulatkhan- in the house of her husband Mouza No.139, U.P. X of Kalkini police station, District – Madaripur, Bangladesh. Anita and her husband informed the police and journalist on the next day, but police neglected. After 5days Anita Rani was brought to Police station at Kalkini and she was advised to lodge first information report (FIR) ( Kalkini P.S. case No.28 dated 26.09.2013 under section 9(1)/30 of Women and Children Repression Act,2003 against four perpetrators mentioned above. Local newspapers published the news.