

Atrocities Against Minorities in Bangladesh

Visit to Banskali, Chittagong

*A special Report by Rabindra Ghosh,
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Dated 14 th June, 2002

I, Adv. Rabindra Ghosh, Co-ordinator of HRCBM-Dhaka, Bangladesh visited the place of occurrence at village Palagram, Shalpur Union No. 5, Banskali police station, Dist. Chittagong on 14 th June, 2002 as soon as we heard from various source that Inthe name of dacoity (robbery) numerous Hindu women/girls/children have been gang-raped and some of the inmates of the houses have been brutally tortured by terrorist on 8th May, 2002 and 14 th May, 2002.



Picture (courtesy of HRCBM-Dhaka): Brutally gang raped victim Ms. U. Dey

The detailed report is as follows: June 14, 2002:

On 14.06.2002, I alongwith Mr. Barua of Chittagong started from Chittagong town by car at 9:30 a.m., the car could not enter into the ferry ghat due to disruption of bridges over Karnafuly river. We hired a motor bike and reached Banskali Palagram at 1-30 p.m. and we got a man namely Dilip Dutta who is also a organizing Secretary of Hindu Boudda Unity Council of South Chittagong to help us locating the place of occurrence and victims. We first went to the house of Mrs. Anjali Hore (62) where we talked with her old husband Mr. Bijoy Gopal Hore (82), elder son Mr. Uttam Hore, another son Banshi Hore and Jishu Hore.

I talked with victims separately starting with Mrs. Anjali Hore who told me that about 12:30 at night on 14th May some unknown terrorists armed with pistol, country made Dao, lathi (wooden stick), Kirish (Sword) and other deadly weapons burst into house through windows and immediately started beating up the inmates mercilessly.



Picture (courtesy HRCBM-Dhaka): Advocate Rabindra Ghosh is examining the wounds Mr. Bijoy Hore.

The notorious brigand then beaten up Mrs. Anjali (62) to senseless condition while unclothed her and started to brutally gang raped her. Her utter cry went in vein; the miscreants did not step down from the monstrous deeds and medieval torments.

She further asserted that those miscreants were Islamic fundamentalists although she could not identify them. The victims also asserted that the terrorists were numbering 30

to 40 armed with deadly weapons, the faces of the miscreants were covered with black clothes and their language were filthy. After they raped the women of the household, miscreants threatened to slaughter the head of the household if all the belongings are not given. About 40,000 Taka worth jewelry and cash were stored in a steel Almerly which was pushed upon Mr. Hore (72) until he agreed to hand over the belongings to the miscreants. I have verified the wounds of his body and found severe strain that even after a month is the clear indicatives of the nightmare he went through.



Picture: (courtesy HRCBM-Dhaka): Mr. and Mrs. Hore. Mrs. Hore (62) was brutally gang raped.

I then went to Aditya Ashram (an orphanage) at Palagram, one kilometer from the house of Mr. Hore. There I met with the principal of the Ashram Shri Pradiwpananda Brahmachari who was mercilessly beaten up by the miscreants on 8th May, 2002. I found and asked the following victims there and noted, video-taped their statements:

1. Shri Pradiwpananda Brahmachari (50)
2. Smt. Jhinu Dey (35)
3. Shri Parimal Dey (50)
4. Ms. Uma Dey (12)
5. Ms. Rupna Dey (16)
6. Smt. Shapna Gupta (52)
7. Shri Sukdev Dey
8. Shri Rupna Dey



Picture: (courtesy HRCBM-Dhaka): Adv. Rabindra Ghosh talking with the victims at Aditya Ashram at Palagram, Banskhal, Chittagong.

I have taken the interviews of the victims who tearfully told me the nightmare. According to the victims, around 12:30 at night, a group of miscreants numbering 30 to 35 burst into Aditya Ashram beaten up the Principal of the Ashram mercilessly. As a result, Brahmachari of the Ashram became senseless. Fearing brutal torment, the inmates climbed up in the roof of the Ashram cottages in spite of the hurdles to save them from further attacks and started to cry utterly.

I asked Smt. Jhinu Dey (35) who was in course of describing me the nightmare started to cry. I allowed her to calm giving a little break. Mrs. Dey then told me that miscreants dragged down her daughter Ms. Uma Dey (12) and Ms. Rupna Dey (16) from the roof and started to brutally gang raped. The miscreants were armed with deadly weapon and henceforth the inmates of the Ashram were unable to rescue Ms. Uma and Ms. Rupna from the notorious brigands despite multiple failed attempts.

I have verified the strain on the right forehead of Shri Brahmachari who is a well-known humanitarian activist who has served for mankind and given refuge to orphans. The injuries of Shri Brahmachari were homicidal in nature.

I asked Shri Brahmachari whether the terrorists are Muslim or any other caste, he hurriedly replied that “terrorists has no identity”. His mode of introspection is that the terrorist’s main aim is to remove him from the Ashram and constant pressure is going on to remove him from the Ashram. It is to be noted that attacks on minority owned orphanages is not new in Bangladesh. In series of attacks on minority owned orphanages a number highly motivated principals were slaughtered. It is a new trend, some afraid if this trend continues, there will be no minority owned orphanage or religious institutions to safeguard orphans belonging to minority community.

Latter, I talked with Ms. Uma Dey (who is student of class VIII) in a room of the Ashram. I first comforted her that HRCBM will take full care of education, food and shelter. Once comforted Ms. Uma followed by Ms. Rupna described me the nightmares

of 8th May. They were at loss while describing their ordeals. Ms. Rupna told me that the miscreants before leaving the Ashram warned for stern action if they impart it to others. Ms. Rupna was crying terribly and I tried to comfort her promising HRCBM's rehabilitation effort and security thereof. I consoled her time and again and requested her to be courageous to fight against such heinous crimes. Ms. Rupna repeatedly appealed for justice. She tried to show me the scar on her neck, which is a clear indicative that Rupna struggled to escape from the clutches of the terrorists but failed. According to Rupna, her mother was also tortured in front of her eyes. I asked them why they did not report this to local police, they flatly told me if they have done so justice will not be attained, miscreants will never be arrested instead, they will be subject more torture and perhaps brutal slaughtering.



Picture (courtesy of HRCBM-Dhaka): Advocate R. Ghosh taking video interview of Sub Inspector of local police station who dressed in casual cloth.

I have asked them whether or not any political leader came to their rescue, the victim asserted that local Minister Mr. Zafrul Islam Chowdhury of BNP has visited them and assured them for the safety and security. I saw a temporary police camp has been setup for their safety. But the victims told me that temporary police camp is not a permanent solution, once the protection is taken off, terrorist will return to torment them again. I also talked with the father of Ms. Uma and Rupna Dey who was detained by terrorist at the ground floor of the premises. He was tied with rope and beaten up by the terrorist while gang rapes are going on. He also asserted that the terrorist has threatened him to leave the country or else face brutality. The miscreants also demanded more money, which they will collect in the forthcoming days. Even 7 year old Rupan Dey was not able to escaped the torture. While asked Rupan recalled with anguish the incident of gang rape and brutal torment on his mother and sisters.

I had a chance to talk with the locals who described that torture and oppression on minorities are going on for a while and administrations are not protecting minorities. Most of the terrorists are known to local police and district administrations.



Picture (courtesy of HRCBM-Dhaka): Mr. Das showing broken door which was split open by the miscreants. The door (separate color portion is newly added wood, the door was latter fixed) still reminds the night of the ordeal.

I latter visited the house of Shri Titu Das and Shudanshu Bimal Das near to the house of Mr. Hore. I saw the house was partially damage. According to the head of the household, the incident occurred on 14th May, 2002. At the middle of the night, a group of miscreants numbering 40 armed with deadly weapon surrounded the house and broke open the door. They not only looted belongings worth 200000 Taka (Bangladesh currency) and wanted to gang rape women. Fortunately women of the household were away from home. The miscreants latter attacked the adjacent house of Mrs. Sujya Mukki Das and brutally gang raped her. We could not find the family members of Mrs. Surjya Mukki Das, her house was locked and according to locals, she along with her family members perhaps have left the village for ever.



Picture (courtesy HRCBM-Dhaka): Mrs. Das showing her broken Almyer that was broke open by the miscreants for money and jewelry.

We on behalf of HRCBM-Dhaka could not immediately provide relief materials to the victims at Banskhal. We returned from Banskhal to Chittagong that day. We did not rescue the victims but assured the family member to safeguard their children. The family members of gang rape children and women repeatedly requested us to rehabilitate their children in some place away from Banskhal, Chittagong and we are in process of finding appropriate shelter to safeguard gang rape victims. We have assured the victims and the family member that gang rape girls/children will be given proper rehabilitation by HRCBM-Dhaka and Chittagong chapters.