

CGS PEACE REPORT

an initiative of BPO

 CENTRE FOR
GENOCIDE
STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



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**Crime and Violence in
Bangladesh:
An analysis from BPO**

**Regional Overview
on Violence against
Minorities**

**Global Overview on
Violence against
Minorities**

**Structural Injustices
Mr. Philip Gain**

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BPO- Bangladesh Peace Observatory



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From the Editor's Desk

'Minority' can be understood in many ways - numerically, economically, socially, even politically. In the English language it came into being in 1533 describing "a condition or fact of being smaller, inferior or subordinate." The word 'majority,' on the other hand, came to be used almost two decades later in 1552 describing "the relationship between larger and smaller groups/values." Numerical though these concepts were at the beginning it is not difficult to see that both the concepts were not free from socio-political conceptualization of living experiences. Currently, however, the two concepts are dialectically related, with the one unable to exist without the other! But the conceptualization still remains varied, often socially determined.

Take the case of the Bangla words for 'minority' and 'majority' - *shankhya-laghu* and *shankhya-gorishtha* respectively - and the experiential use of them. When a sex-worker was asked to comment on the *shankhya-laghu* in her community, she quickly responded by saying: "Are you talking of the rich people? They are the *shankhya-laghu*." Indeed, if we were to take the current income inequality in Bangladesh with top 5 percent income people taking over 95 percent of total income and at the global level the world's richest 1 percent, those with more than USD 1 million, owning 45 percent of the world's wealth then there is no reason to disagree with the sex-worker's conceptualization of minority. Interestingly, the political implication of such economic categorization has remained relatively low compared to the conceptualization of minority from the standpoint of religion or ethnicity. In fact, in Bangladesh, *shankhya-laghu* relates to religious minorities, with 8.5 percent Hindus, 0.6 percent Buddhist, 0.3 percent Christians, and ethnic minorities consisting of 0.1 percent of the total population of 160 million. The power of the majority prevailing over the latter has been a source of alienation and conflict.

Violence against minorities, whether religious or ethnic, is certainly a concern. BPO data indicates that in the last 39 months, between January 2016 and March 2019, 60 members of the minority community were killed, 294 were injured, 284 were arrested, and 34 of its members were abducted. If we focus on the CHT alone then we find that 15 ethnic minorities were killed, 5 were injured, 18 were arrested, while incidents of abduction stood at 24. This apparently indicates that violence against religious minorities is more prevalent than violence against ethnic minorities, but a closer look will show that when it comes to 'killing' and 'abduction' the number of ethnic minorities in the CHT getting killed and abducted remains high compared to religious minorities across the country. But then, if we were to compare this figures with other countries, like India, Pakistan or the USA, the number of violent incidents against the minorities in Bangladesh remains relatively low. But this should not make us complacent as one incident is good

enough to mar the image of the country, not to mention of the pain and suffering that each victim goes through. More important would be to raise the question as to why in contemporary times minorities increasingly find themselves alienated from the majority community? And this factor seems to be almost universal, making no difference whether one is residing in Bangladesh, India or in the USA.

Three factors could be flagged in this context. One is ignorance that prevails between the members of majority and minority communities in their knowledge of each other, practically in every domain of life and living, including culture, religion, language, entrepreneurship, ingenuity, gastronomy, civilizational heritage, and the list goes on and on. And it is this ignorance, as the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd once remarked, that "leads to fear, fear leads to hatred, and hatred leads to violence." Ignorance otherwise reproduces violence between and amongst the communities.

The second factor is the issue of financial minoritarianism, with the rich minority detached and alienated from the majority have-nots. This is bound to distort not only the economic development of communities, whether majority or minority, but also the political relationship between them, indeed, with the possibility of one trying to blame, if not bash, the other on issues ranging from income inequality, financial networks to budgetary allocations.

Finally, the issue of electoral democracy or what has come to be referred to as majoritarianism. The race for 'electoral majority' has now come to a level that a dose of minority bashing is no longer an exception but the new normal. And such minority bashing could include issues related to religion, ethnicity, language, even cross-border migration. Both Trump and Modi made good use of it in winning elections in the USA and India respectively. Politics in Bangladesh has not remained immune to such majoritarianism. Indeed, if we were to contain violence against the minorities then there has to be a concerted effort to rid ourselves of ignorance, financial minoritarianism and electoral majoritarianism. This is no mean task but worthy ones in one's lifetime!

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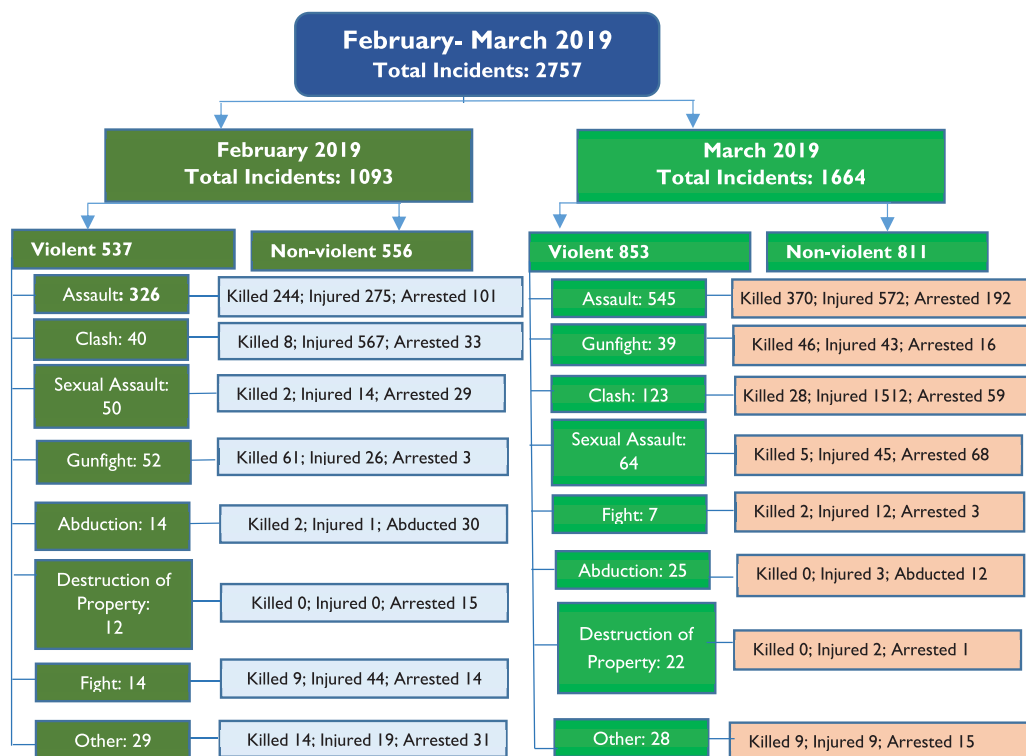
Crime and Violence in Bangladesh: An Analysis from BPO

Part A: Violence Update: (February 2019- March 2019)

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national dailies. From February 2019 to March 2019, BPO recorded 2757 violent¹ and

non-violent² incidents all over the country. **Figure I** segregates these incidents into some general categories by type of violence. A brief description of each category is available in the Annex.

Figure I: An Overview of Incidents (February- March 2019)



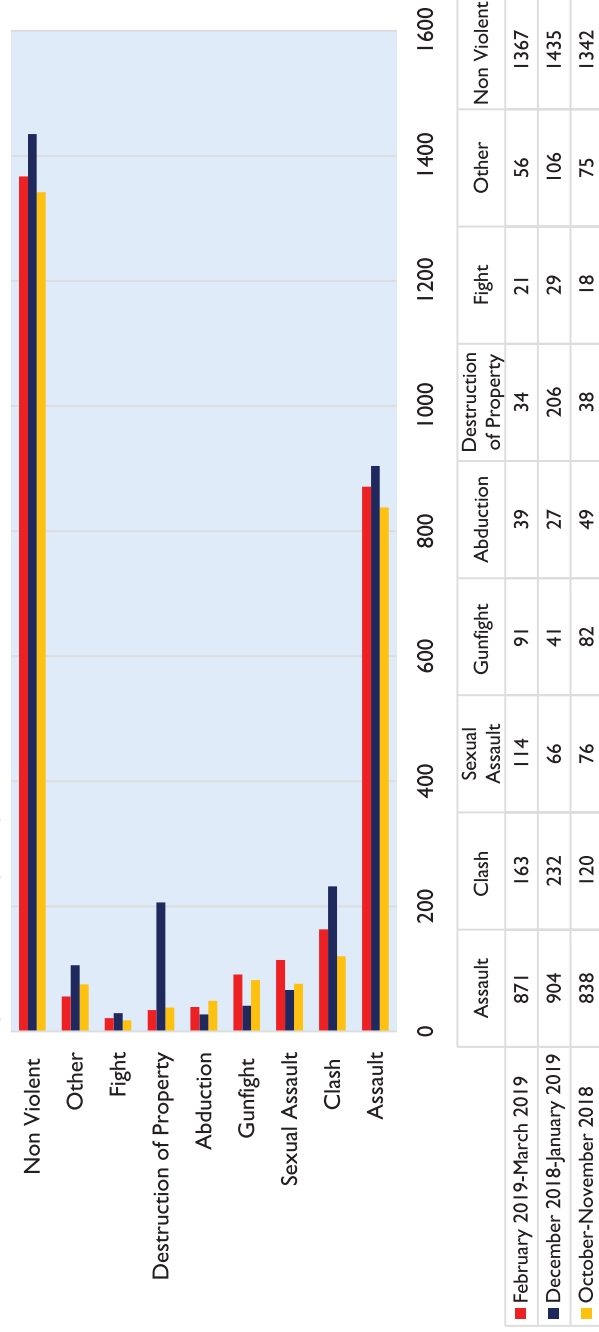
¹ **Violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident involved the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property.

² **Non-violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident did not involve the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property, e.g. Arrest, Peaceful Protest, Rescue and Recovery.

According to BPO data, the number of incidents has comparatively decreased in recent months in Bangladesh. During February-March 2019, incident prevalence decreased by 9.61% (from 3,050 to 2,757) than December 2018- January 2019. Till December 2018- January 2019, there was a constant increase in this trend of incident prevalence. For example, according to BPO data, the combined frequency of incidents during October-

November 2018 was 2,638, which increased by 15.62% in December 2018- January 2019. Previously, there was a 22.53% rise in October-November 2018 and 4.90% rise in August-September 2018 compared to June-July 2018 and a 30% rise in the period of June-July 2018 compared to April-May 2018. **Figure 2** makes some observations on the critical areas of incident prevalence of past six months subdivided into three bi-monthly groups.

Figure 2: Bi-monthly Comparison of Number of Incidents



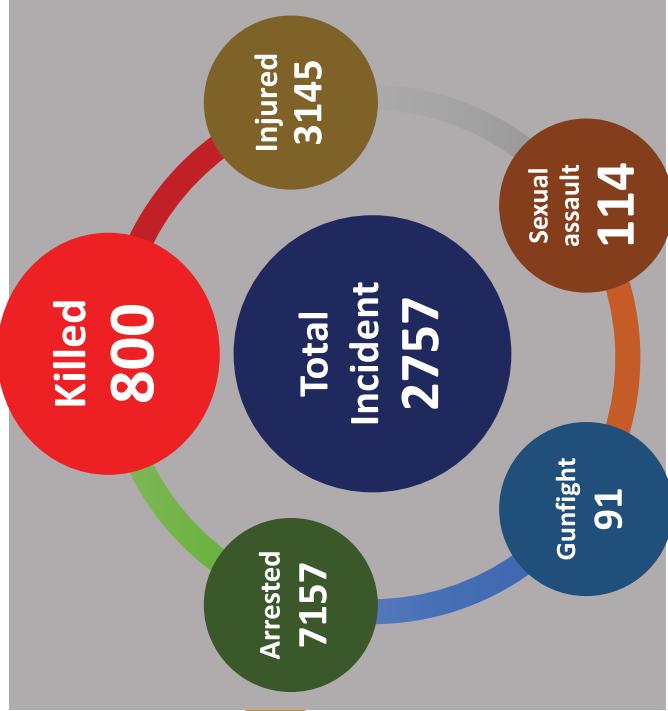
The data suggests that despite the decrease in the total number of incidents, there is a significant rise in the number of incidents of sexual assault (72.73% more than December 2018- January 2019) and gunfight assault (121.95% more than December 2018- January 2019). A total of 110 persons were victims of sexual assault during February-March 2019 in which five were killed. On the other hand, a total of 107 people were killed, 69 were injured in 91 incidents of gunfight, which mostly occurred between the law enforcement agencies and criminals of drug peddling and robbery. Apart from these two, significant drop in prevalence of assault (3.65%), clash (29.74%), and property destruction (83.49%) is noticeable during February-March 2019. In the previous months of December 2018- January 2019, the high numbers were mostly reported in connection with electoral violence during the period leading to general election. Still, in February-March 2019, 8.95% of the total assault, clash, and property destruction incidents were related to the electoral violence during country-wide upazila elections in which 13 were killed, 720 were injured, and law enforcement agencies arrested 94 in this connection.

Besides the above, while the number of abduction increased by 12 in February-March 2019, the number of non-violent incidents decreased by 68. In August-September 2018, a total of 5,774 people were arrested while in October-November 2018 the number of arrests was 7,104, indicating a 23.03% rise during the period in question while previously there was a 23.55% decline recorded in August-September 2018 than June-July 2018. In December 2018- January 2019, a 1.90% rise was observed with reported arrests 7,239 in 1,665 incidents. But again, in February-March 2019 the reported 7,157 arrests indicates 1.86% decline (**figures 3, 4**). But the figure also indicates that, although the number of incidents were less in February-March 2019 but the number of people killed is higher in these months by 167 than December 2018-January 2019. A monthly breakdown will attempt to assess this below.

Figure 3: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(December 2018 – January 2019)



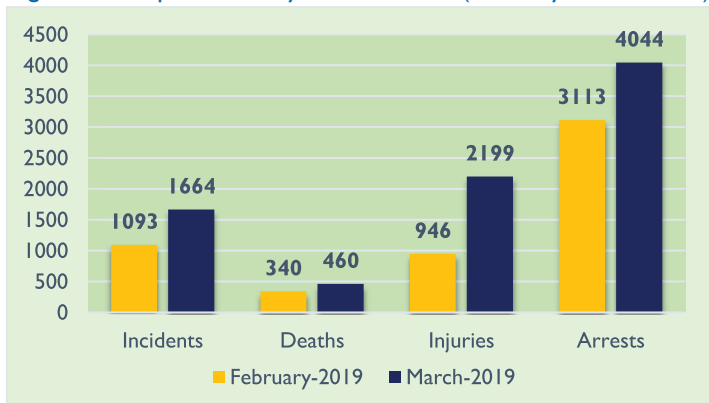
Figure 4: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(February-March 2019)



A monthly breakdown of February 2019 and March 2019 reflects a gap by incident prevalence and consequences (**figure 5**). The figure indicates that there is a trend of an overall increase in March 2019 than February 2019 in terms of the total number of reported incidents, death, injured, and arrests in large number. There is a noticeable increase in the number of reported injury in March 2019. The increase in incident prevalence is 52.24% and by consequence 35.29% increase in reported deaths, 132.45% increase in reported injuries, and 29.91% in reported arrests. In case of the number of reported injuries, in February 2019, a total of 946 people were injured in 175 violent incidents while in March 2019, a total of 2,199 people were injured in 361 violent incidents. Most of the reported injuries were caused by assault, sexual assault, and clash related to political confrontation, land dispute, personal issues, raid operations, and gunfight. Alone in March 2019, 1,512 people out of the total injured was subject to clash. 50 incidents of such clashes were related to the upazila elections in which 575 people were injured. Again, in the same month, more than a hundred people

were reportedly injured in clash triggered by petty issues like Facebook post and football match in different districts of Bangladesh.^{3,4} Figure 5 indicates an increase in the number of total people killed in violence in March 2019 compared to February 2019. A total of 340 people were reportedly killed in 315 incidents of violence in February 2019, while 460 were killed in 428 incidents of violence in March 2019. According to BPO data, there is an increase in the number of reported death in incidents like sexual assault, domestic violence, gunfight, and robbery in March 2019. But as a matter of concern, in February 2019, a total of 79 out of 340 were reportedly killed by unknown perpetrators all over Bangladesh while the number in March 2019 was 115 out of 460.

Figure 5: Comparative analysis of Incidents (February- March 2019)



³ *The Daily Ittefaq* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/03/13/images/06_109.jpg

⁴ *The Daily Jugantar* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: https://epaper.jugantar.com/2019/03/23/23/details/23_r4_c2.jpg

Figure 6: Bi-Monthly Divisional Distribution of Incidents (February- March 2019)

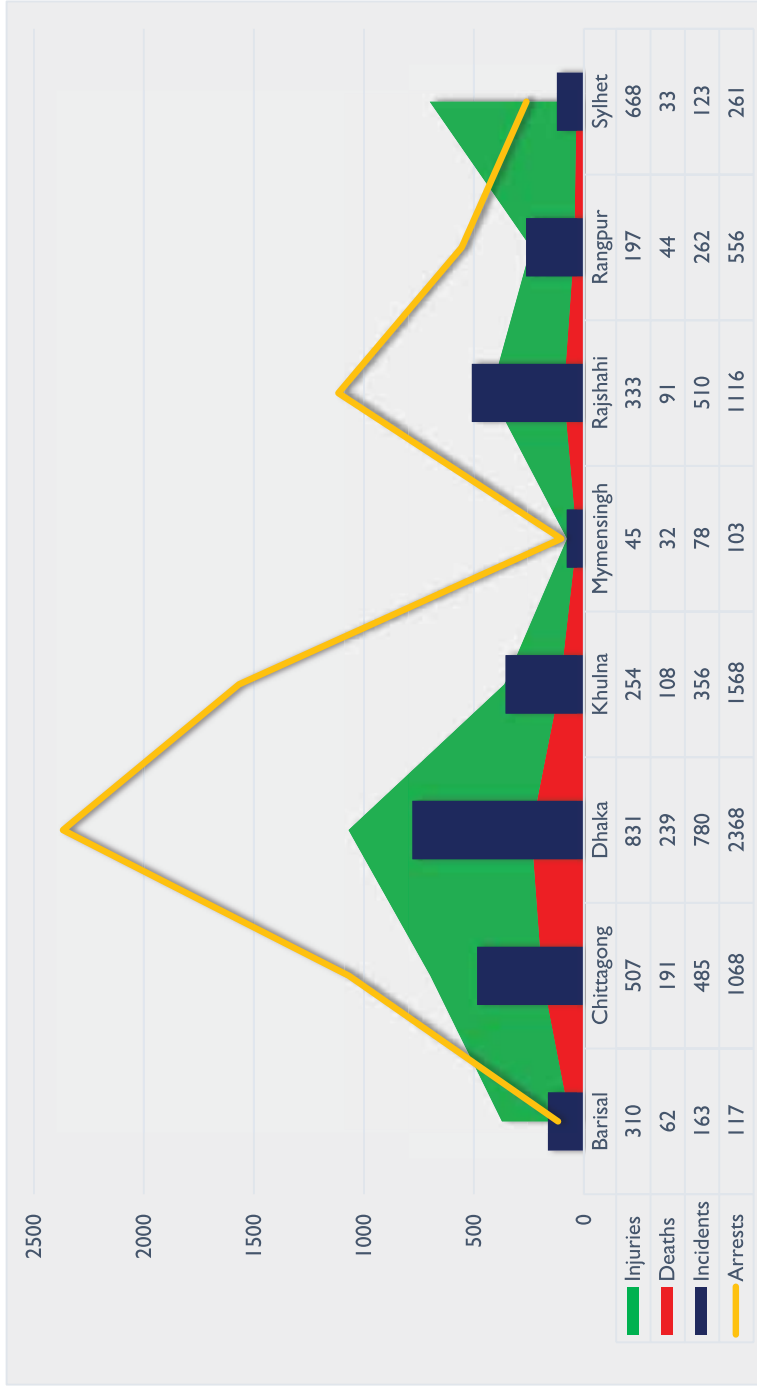


Figure 6 provides a spatial glimpse through the divisional distribution of the recorded incidents in BPO and their consequences. The figure indicates that Dhaka is at the top in terms of incident prevalence (780), reported death (239), injuries (831), and reported arrests (2,368). This suggests that Dhaka is in an all-over top position. In the previous two months,⁵ of all the divisions, Dhaka (239), Chittagong (191), and Khulna (108) divisions have the highest number of reported deaths during February- March 2019. In February- March 2019, a total of 538 (including 139 women) people reportedly died in 487 violent incidents in these three divisions. Notably, among them, 73 were victims of sexual and gender-based violence, 81 reportedly committed suicide, 99 allegedly killed in gunfight, and 23 reportedly killed in clash.

Among the reported deaths, noticeably on 18 March 2019, an incident of gun attack on a motorcade carrying election officials and materials claimed seven lives including six election officers and injured at least 20 in Baghaichari upazila of Rangamati district in Chittagong division.⁶ This was the deadliest attack with most causality of the two months.

In case of injuries, Dhaka (831), Sylhet (668), and Chittagong (507) divisions has the maximum number of people injured in violence. Most of this violence occurred in the form of sexual violence, electoral violence and clash among different actors. Among the divisions, despite being the third last in incident prevalence, Sylhet has the second most reported injuries in Bangladesh.

⁵ Chittagong was at the top in terms of incident prevalence (1811), Dhaka was at the top in terms of reported death (171) and injuries (2593), and Khulna was at the top in reported arrests (1535).

⁶ *The Daily New Age* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at:

http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/19_03_2019/regular_39943_news_1552936851.jpg,

http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/19_03_2019/regular_39944_news_1552937231.jpg

Ten large scale clash⁷ took place in different parts of Sylhet divisions in which 400 people were injured. The reasons include land dispute, control over natural resources, road construction, verbal dispute between police and laborers, and petty issue as mentioned above (Facebook and football). In Chittagong two large scale clash took place in which more than 60 were injured. One of the clashes took place over yaba

business while the other was an electoral clash.^{8,9}

In terms of arrests in February- March 2019, BPO data suggests that Dhaka (2,368), Khulna (1,568), and Rajshahi (1,116) divisions have the maximum number of people arrested by the law enforcement agencies. Most of the arrest occurred due to raids and special drives against drug peddling, subversive activities, and combing operations.

Part B: Incidents Recorded by BPO on Violence against Minorities

Bangladesh has one of the highest population density¹⁰ in the world. It is concerning that over the decades Bangladesh has witnessed a decline in religious diversity. It is reflected in the relative decline of religious minorities from 23.1% of the population in 1971 to 9.6% today— a contraction largely due to the mass migration of its Hindu population, who at 8.5% make up the largest religious minority group in Bangladesh, followed by Buddhists (0.6%) and Christians (0.3%).¹¹ The major ethnic community is Bengali, an ethno-linguistic group, comprising over 98% of the population. According to the 2011

Census, approximately 1.8% of the population are indigenous ‘Adivasis’, numbering around 1.6 million – though some community representatives claim the actual figure is considerably higher. The majority live in the plains of the north and southeast, as well as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The predominant ethnic groups are Chakmas, Marma, and Tripura. The government recognizes 27 ethnic groups, but does not recognize the concept of indigenous peoples.

The issue of unpeopling the minorities has always been on the table either in latent or in manifested forms in the realm of politics of Bangladesh. Major political

⁷ Incidents of clashes in which 30-50 people were reportedly injured.

⁸ *The Daily Jugantar* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: https://epaper.jugantor.com/2019/02/09/2/details/2_r11_5.jpg

⁹ *The Daily Ittefaq* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at:

http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/03/26/images/14_101.jpg

¹⁰ Bangladesh has a population density of 1,115.62 people per square kilometer,(2,889.45/square mile), which ranks 10th in the world. Bangladesh is the 8th most populous country in the world (Source:

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population/>).

¹¹ <https://minorityrights.org/country/bangladesh/>.

parties irrespective of their political ideologies use the minority card to achieve their political gains not only in the national level but also at the local level. The best example could be the 2012 Ramu violence which entailed a series of attacks on Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and houses of Buddhist inhabitants in Ramu upazila based upon a fake news.¹²

BPO records and maps reported incidents related to the minorities in Bangladesh. It includes incidents of violence and non-violence related to minorities. From January 2016 to March 2019, a total of 310 minority related incidents, violent and

non-violent, have been recorded at the BPO platform. The incidents comprised of issues ranging from inter and intra religion tensions, land grabbing, power struggle, hatred etc. The underlying causes of this violence could be categorized as structural factors where the state mechanism serves as an impetus towards the violence, political factors might work through scapegoating, hate speech, and manipulation of the mass media which are means with the potential to heighten existing discord between ethnic groups, economic and social factors, cultural or perceptual factors etc.

¹² *The Daily Star* (2012). Accessed 6 June 2019.
<https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-251955>



Figure 7: Overview of Violence against Minorities in Bangladesh from January 2016 to March 2019.

Table I: Top 15 District by Incident of Violence against Minorities.

Rank	District	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	Dhaka	13	6	9
2	Natore	13	4	0
3	Brahmanbaria	11	0	0
4	Dinajpur	10	4	0
5	Faridpur	10	0	18
6	Rangpur	10	1	43
7	Bogra	9	0	1
8	Jhenaidah	3	1	3
9	Bandarban	7	4	2
10	Chittagong	7	2	1
11	Gaibandha	7	2	42
12	Habiganj	7	0	11
13	Joypurhat	7	2	4
14	Mymensingh	7	0	2
15	Naogaon	7	1	1

Figure 8: Violence against Religious Minorities

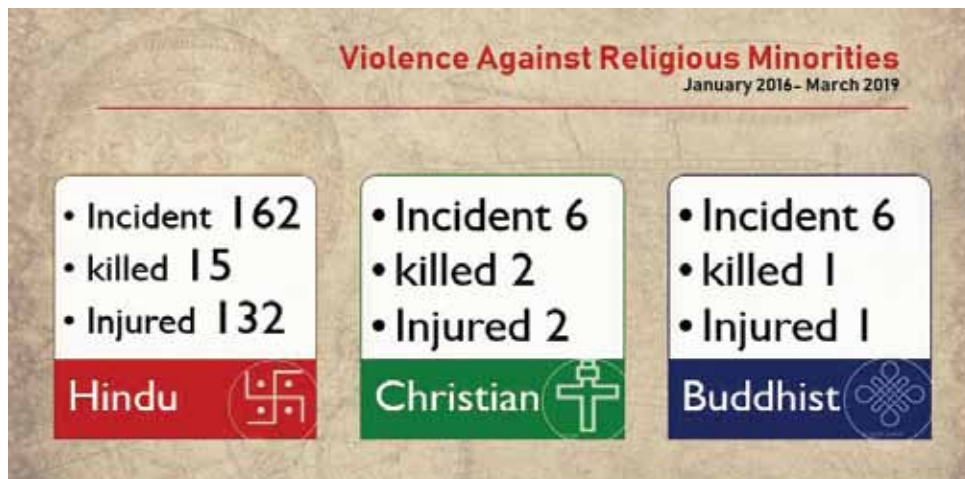


Table I indicates that Dhaka bears the highest death counts where six people who belonged to the minority group got killed. In one incident, a Hindu elderly couple was found dead in a septic tank.¹³ Rangpur observed the highest number of injuries: 43, since the number of clashes and violence relating to destruction of property were high during the mentioned time frame. In Dinajpur, miscreants torched 20 houses of 10 lower caste Hindu families at Bochaganj upazila.¹⁴ In

Santal¹⁶ people reportedly swooped on the law enforcers and workers of a local sugar mill which triggered a clash that left 30 people, including nine policemen, injured.¹⁷ The issue of religious sectarianism was also found in one incident in Panchagarh district where thousands of anti-Qadiani people held a violent demonstration demanding the ban of annual religious gathering of Qadiani community and vandalized at least eight houses and five shops and 50 people got injured.¹⁸

Figure 9: Motive of Incident (Land grabbing/ Dispute)



Incidents regarding religious sectarianism has increased due to the rise of Salafism among the Muslims in Bangladesh. Salafism promotes an extreme version of Islam, which excludes traditionalism, cultural and

another incident, 5 idols of Durga were vandalized.¹⁵ In Gaibandha district, the

communal factors, humanitarianism etc. and their messages get widespread viewership in the social media.

¹³ *The Daily Star* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: <http://epaper.thedailystar.net/index.php?opt=view&page=20&date=2017-07-28>

¹⁴ *The Daily Star* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: http://epaper.thedailystar.net/contents/2016/2016_12_05/content_zoom/2016_12_05_13_2_b.jpg

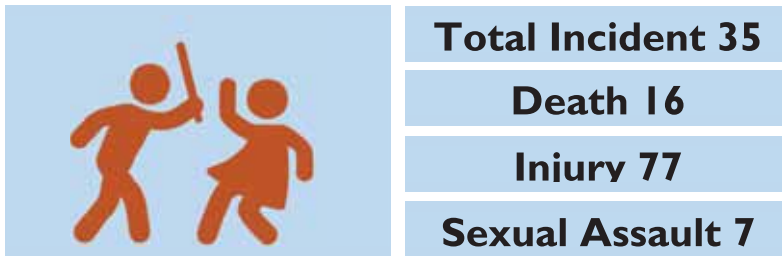
¹⁵ *The Daily Ittefaq* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2017/09/19/images/01_114.jpg

¹⁶ The Santal, or rarely Santals, are an ethnic group native to India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan in South Asia.

¹⁷ *The Daily New Age* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/07_11_2016/regular_21537_news_1478461450.jpg, http://epaper.newagebd.net/images/07_11_2016/regular_21538_news_1478460525.jpg

¹⁸ *The Daily Karatoa* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. Available at: https://ekaratoa.com/2019/02/14/1/details/1_r9_c3.jpg, https://ekaratoa.com/2019/02/14/2/details/2_r16_c5.jpg

Figure 10: Overview of Violence against Minority Women in Bangladesh from January 2016 to March 2019



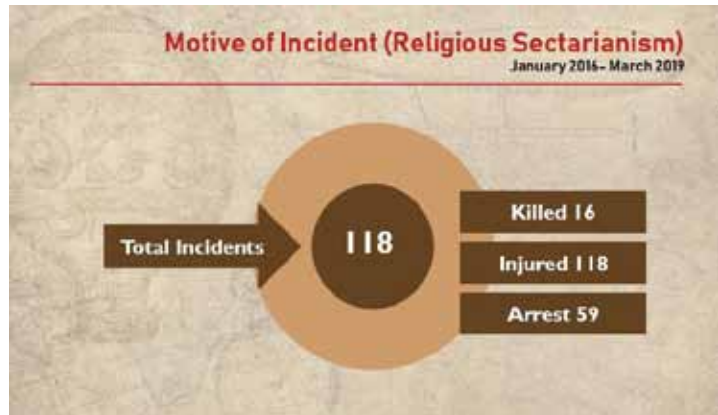
Women from the minority communities got affected due to various issues. In one incident, two minor girls were raped and killed in Sitakunda.¹⁹ In another incident, four females got injured over land related clash in Pirojpur.²⁰ The trend and patterns showed that women became the worst sufferers in many violent incidents since they are frequently being considered as the vulnerable groups.

In 2016, four bloggers and a publisher, whose writings and publications were critical of religion, especially Islam, were hacked to death. Alleged operatives of group,

which calls itself the Islamic State, shot dead an Italian aid worker and a Japanese farmer in 2015. An Italian Catholic priest

and a Protestant pastor narrowly escaped murder allegedly in the hands of the religious extremists. More than two dozen Catholic priests, Protestant pastors and Christians Aid workers have received death threats through mail, phone calls, and text messages.

Figure 11: Motive of Incident (Religious Sectarianism)



¹⁹ *The Daily Purbokone* (2018). Accessed 6 June 2019. http://www.edainikpurbokone.net/content/2018/2018-05-19/zoom_view/11.jpg, http://www.edainikpurbokone.net/content/2018/2018-05-19/zoom_view/11a.jpg

²⁰ *The Daily Ittefaq* (2019). Accessed 6 June 2019. http://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/02/17/images/16_103.jpg

Minorities in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

Bangladesh is a land of natural beauty along with cultural diversity. Eleven ethnic groups inhabit the CHT region. The region has witnessed over two decades of insurgency. A peace accord was signed in December 1997. However violence continues. According to a report, the three districts of CHT consists only 1/10 (one-tenth) area of the whole country land but faces more violence in comparison to any other locality. For example, in 2018 around 68 persons died due to violence all over the country except the CHT region.²¹ On the other hand, in the same year, death due to internal violence numbered up to 47 in the CHT only.²²

The 1972 constitution failed to safeguard the rights of ethnic minorities²³ by ignoring the country's vibrant multi-ethnic history. There were protests by the

parliament representative from the CHT. An armed conflict started in 1975 for autonomy. The armed conflict resulted in the killing of 8500 people including 2500 civilians.²⁴ Nearly about 60,000 people have been displaced between 1975-1992 due to armed conflict in CHT.²⁵ During the 1970s and 80s, the government of Bangladesh settled 400,000 Bengalis from the plains in the Hill Tracts as a counter insurgency strategy. This brought about a demographic shift in the region. The settlement of Bengali people in CHT violated the customary "Jhumia" rights of the Hill peoples.²⁶ The Hill people got displaced internally; many crossed over to India as refugees. They also lost their land.

Despite the accord of 1997, due to the lack of it's full implementation human rights continue to be violated in the CHT. The figures below depicts the recent scenario of reported Violence against Minorities in CHT as recorded by BPO.

Figure 12: Destruction of Property in CHT (January 2016- March 2019)



²¹ Prothom-Alo. 2019. The peace of the Chittagong Hill Tracts has been stuck in the agreement. May 15. Accessed May 16, 2019.

<https://epaper.prothomalo.com/?pagedate=2019-5-15&edcode=71&subcode=71&mod=1&pgnum=1&type=a>.

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴

<http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA130012000?open&of=ENG-BGD>, Accessed 14 April 2019

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Banglapedia. 2003. Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, 1997. January. Accessed May 15, 2019.

http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Chittagong_Hill_Tracts_Peace_Accord,_1997.

Figure 13: Incidents and Consequences of Violence against Minorities in CHT (January 2016- March 2019)

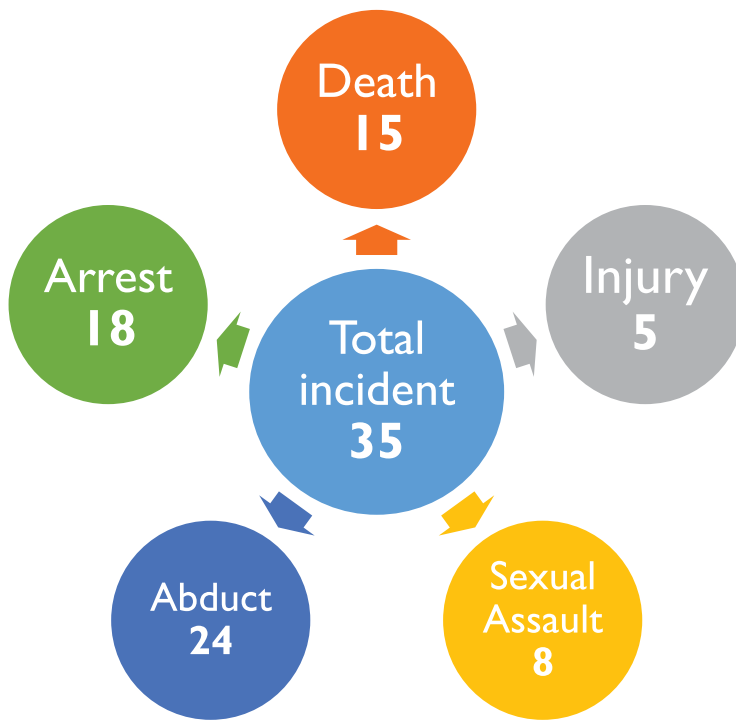
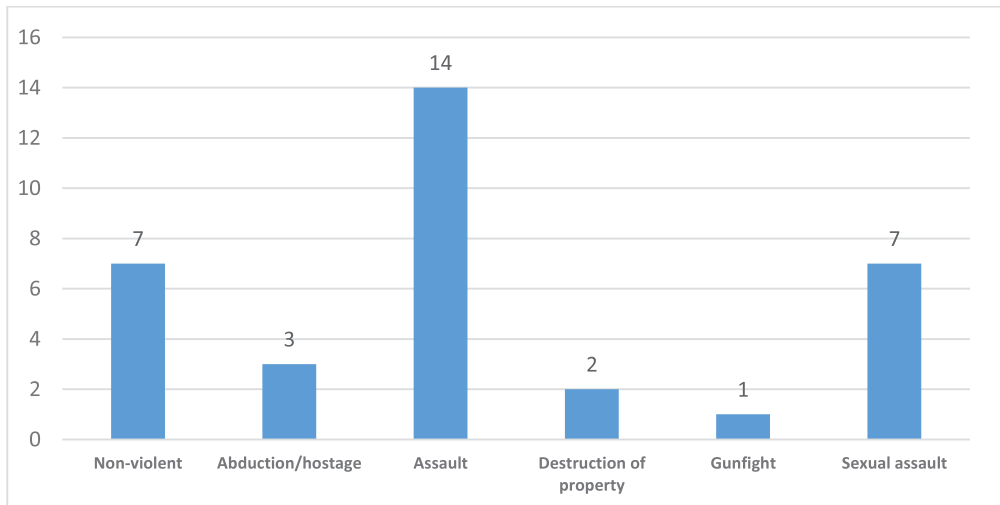


Figure 14: Types of violent incident against Minorities in CHT (January 2016- March 2019)



Global Overview on Violence against Minorities

Minorities worldwide are passing a *déjà vu* moment as physical and psychological violence against ethnic, religious, sectarian identities has increased in recent months. Whether it is genocide against Rohingyas in Myanmar or internment camp for reeducating Uyghur Muslims in China, the religious freedom and freedom of speech of minorities is at stake. The spaces for religious practice are under immense threat as well since Churches in Sri Lanka, Mosques in New Zealand and Synagogues in the United States were targeted by ultra-right religious fanatics in the recent months. The following section sheds some light on the violence against minorities in different parts of the world.

Violence and Discrimination against the Kurds

The Kurds are often labelled as the 'largest ethnic group who never obtained statehood.'²⁷ The Kurds inhabit a mountainous region that straddled into five countries: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Armenia.²⁸ The Kurds constitute around 15% to 20% of Turkish and Iraqi population and 7% to 10% of the Syrian

population.²⁹ The Kurds have, therefore, always been ethnic minorities in all these countries. The violent struggle for self-determination of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria are going on for decades. Different regimes of these countries simultaneously attacked on the Kurdish identity, culture, custom, language, etc. to subjugate them.³⁰ Syria and Iraq tried to Arabize the areas in which most Kurds inhabit. The Turkish government dubbed the Kurds as 'mountain Turks' to delegitimize the logic for Kurdish autonomy.³¹

The Kurds were suppressed violently throughout history. In Turkey, around 40,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands were displaced in the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) battle for independence initially and later, autonomy since 1978 when KKK was founded till date.³² In Syria, around 300,000 Kurds were denied citizenship and other basic rights since the 1960s.³³ In Iraq, the Kurds faced genocidal attacks as 3200 to 5000 people were killed and another 7000 to 10000 were injured in a chemical attack in

²⁷ "The Kurds: The world's largest stateless nation" 30 July 2015. Cited in <https://www.france24.com/en/20150730-who-are-kurds-turkey-syria-iraq-pkk-divided>. Accessed on 10 April 2019

²⁸ "Who are the Kurds?" 31 October 2017. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>. Accessed on 10 April 2019

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Kurdish Genocide" Cited in <https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/kurdistan-genocide/>. Accessed on 12 April 2019

³¹ Welat Zeydanlioglu "Turkey's Kurdish language policy." *De Gruyter*, 2012, pp. 99-125.

³² "Who are the Kurds?" *op.cit*

³³ Thomas McGee, "The Stateless Kurds of Syria: Ethnic Identity and National ID." *Tilburg Law Review* 19, no. 1-2, 2014, pp. 171-181.

the town of Halabja in 1988 carried out by the Saddam Hossain regime.³⁴

In addition to the state-sponsored violence, the Kurds faced further assaults after the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS launched attacks and captured Kurdish territories in northern Iraq and eastern Syria in between 2013 to 2014.³⁵ The Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and autonomous government in the Kurdish controlled region aligned with the US-led coalition airpower and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to counter ISIS.³⁶ The allied forces brought back the lost territories eventually as the ISIS forces weakened.

The Kurds in Iraq and Syria are now enjoying some degree of autonomy surrounded by multi-pronged civil war. Around 93% of people voted for secession from Iraq in a 2017 referendum, which did not get recognition from the central government in the Kurdish autonomous region.³⁷ In Syria, the PYD established specially administered autonomous region. But the future statehood of any Kurdish forces is very slim.



5,000 were killed in Halabja on March 16, 1988 (Photo:AFP)



Kurdish Independence Referendum in Iraq, 25 September 2017 (Photo:AFP)

³⁴ Khaled Salih "Anfal: The kurdish genocide in iraq." *Digest of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 2, 1995, pp. 24-39.

³⁵ "Iraqi Kurds 'fully control Kirkuk' as army flees" 12 June 2014. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27809051>. Accessed on 12 April 2019

³⁶ "Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State" 30 April 2019. Cited in <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>. Accessed on 12 April 2019

³⁷ "Kurdistan referendum results: 93% of Iraqi Kurds vote for independence, say reports" 27 September 2017. Cited in <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kurdistan-referendum-results-vote-yes-iraqi-kurds-independence-iran-syria-a7970241.html>. Accessed on 12 April 2019

The Turkish military started continued assaults against KKK and PYD again in 2019 after a brief ceasefire in 2013.³⁸

Rising Hate Crimes in the USA

The hate crimes from petty crimes to large scale terrorist attacks are on rise. As defined by Hate Crime Statistics Act codified by the US Congress in 1990, the hate crimes are “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender or gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.”³⁹ According to the FBI, the hate crimes in the US are increasing since 2014 but showed an unprecedented upward trend since 2016. The white nationalist terrorism, previously championed by Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is pointedly increasing in recent years although it is neglected from the discourse of terrorism in the US. As reported by Anti-Defamation League

(ADL), from 2009 through 2018, the home-grown terrorism accounted for 76% terrorist attacks out of which 73% are ultra-right white nationalist terrorism and 3% are extreme left-wing terrorism. Much touted Islamist terrorism accounted for 26% of attacks.⁴⁰ The religious spaces including synagogues, mosques, African-American Churches are frequently under attack by white nationalists as synagogues in Pittsburg and California as well as African-American Churches in Florida and Mississippi were attacked in 2019.

The following table provided by the Justice Department of the US is the comparison between the number of hate crimes in 2016 and 2017. The latest statistics.⁴¹ Show that the number of hate crimes based on race, religion or sexual orientation has increased rapidly from 2016 to 2017.

³⁸ “Turkey Begins Offensive on Kurdish Militias After Attacks” 4 May 2019. Cited in <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-04/turkish-soldier-killed-in-clashes-with-syrian-kurdish-militants>. Accessed on 12 April 2019

³⁹ “About Hate Crime Statistics” *U.S. Department of Justice* Cited in. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2010/resources/hate-crime-2010-about-hate-crime>. Accessed on 14 April 2019

⁴⁰ “The Terrorism That Doesn’t Spark a Panic” 28 January 2019. Cited in. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/home-grown-terrorists-2018-were-almost-all-right-wing/581284/>. Accessed on 14 April 2019

⁴¹ “About Hate Crime Statistics” *op.cit*

Table 2: Hate Crimes in the USA

Bias Motivation Categories	2016	2017
Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry	3489	4131
Religion	1273	1564
Sexual Orientation	1076	1130
Gender Identity	124	119
Disability	70	116
Gender	31	46

Source: Justice Department of the US Statistics

Hate crime incidents reported to the FBI increased by about 17% in 2017 compared to 2016, according to FBI Crime statistics. The statistics, which were released in the Bureau's annual "Hate Crime Statistics" report, are a compilation of bias-motivated incidents submitted to the FBI by 16,149 law enforcement agencies. The report found that 7,175 hate crimes were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2017, up from 6,121 reported incidents in 2016. While the number has increased, the number of agencies reporting also increased by about 1,000.⁴²

Anti-LGBT laws in Brunei

Brunei, a south-east Asian island state is planning to enact strict 'shariah laws' through direct command by its monarch, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah. One of the propositions includes anal sex and adultery offense which are punishable by stoning to death. The proposal if

implanted will make Brunei one of the few countries that implement the death penalty for homosexuality. OutRight Action International has described Brunei as "the country that has the most worrisome state of rights for LGBT people in Southeast Asia." LGBT Bruneians feel the need to remain very discrete about their sexual orientation because of the authoritarian nature of the rule of law and governance in the country.⁴³ In May 2019, after widespread international condemnation and media criticism, the Brunei government extended a moratorium on capital punishment which stalls the implementation of the law.⁴⁴

Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingyas

Since 25 August 2017, Myanmar security forces have been carrying out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State. Over half a

⁴² "Hate crimes increased by 17% in 2017, FBI report finds" 12 December, 2018. Cited in.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/11/13/politics/fbi-hate-crimes-2017/index.html> Accessed on 15 April 2019

⁴³ "Brunei's LGBT Community Faces Terrifying Future" 15 October 2015. Cited in.

<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/lgbt->

[brunei-n_561501f9e4b0fad1591a1167](https://www.brunei-n_561501f9e4b0fad1591a1167) Accessed on 15 April 2019

⁴⁴ "Brunei backs down on gay sex death penalty after international backlash" 6 May 2019. Cited in.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/05/05/asia/brunei-lgbt-death-penalty-intl/index.html> Accessed on 15 April 2019

million Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh. The Rohingya, effectively denied citizenship under Myanmar law, have faced decades of repression and discrimination. About 120,000 remains internally displaced from waves of violence in 2012 and 2016, in dire humanitarian conditions.⁴⁵ Since late August 2017, more than 7,40,000 Rohingyas have fled Burma's Rakhine State.⁴⁶ The atrocities committed by Burmese security forces, including mass killings, sexual violence, and widespread arson, amount to crimes against humanity. Military and civilian officials have repeatedly denied that security forces committed abuses during the operations, claims which are contradicted by extensive evidence and witness accounts.

Rohingyas have deep ancestral roots and cultural ties along the post-colonial borders of today's Myanmar. Hence Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingyas (locally known as 'racial' term Bengalis) straddled from south-east Bangladesh to lowlands of western Myanmar.⁴⁷ After the independence of Myanmar from Britain in 1948, this fluidity of diverse people along the borderland was recognized by the Burmese government. The Rohingyas enjoyed full citizenship and relative political autonomy. Even Rohingyas; who are not recognized by the Myanmar government as a separate ethnic group

according to the 1982 Citizenship Act had representation in the parliament of the central government.⁴⁸ But the status of Rohingya changed drastically when Myanmar went under military rule in 1962. To legitimize their regime, the military rulers along with their civil consultants used the popular racism against Muslims, Indians, Chinese and mostly foreigners. Supported by ultra-nationalists Buddhists, General Ne Win's military dictatorship allegedly tried to purify the ethnicities inhabited within Myanmar. The stance was taken by the Ne Win's regime (still supported in SPDC era) that the people who inhabited in Myanmar before 1824 first Anglo-Burmese war are true ancestors of Myanmar. Therefore, Rohingyas who lived in Myanmar for generations are not the citizens of Myanmar. Historians proved that this claim is not empirically proved and there is historical evidence that Muslims lived in today's low Myanmar before 1824. Meanwhile, the military regime launched 'Operation Nagamin' in 1977 which reached Rakhine province in 1978. The military started a violent campaign against Rohingyas in which the security forces confiscated NRC (National Registration card) from Rohingyas and around 2,00,000 people were forced to flee into neighboring Bangladesh. The violent repression of Rohingyas continued and reached its zenith in 2017 when almost

⁴⁵ "Rohingya Crisis" *Human Rights Watch* Cited in. <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>.

⁴⁶ "Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: Facts, FAQs, and how to help" *World Vision* Cited in. Accessed on 15 April 2019

<https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh-facts> Accessed on 15 April 2019

⁴⁷ N. Kipgen. "Conflict in Rakhine State in Myanmar: Rohingya Muslims' Conundrum" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33(2), 2013, pp. 298-310.

⁴⁸ "Burma Citizenship Law, Oct. 15, 1982" Cited in. <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Citizenship%20Law.htm>. Accessed on April 2 2019

7,00,000 people took shelter in Bangladesh following Myanmar Army's latest assault.

Of the five acts of genocide spelt out clearly in the 1948 Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, four of these acts of genocide has been committed against the Rohingya in Western Myanmar in this harrowing process of the past forty years.

The military controlled Burmese state has committed the first four acts, including intentional killing, harm to body and mind of the victims as a group, inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and preventing births, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as punishable acts of genocide.

Regional Overview on Violence against Minorities

India

India is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world. According to the official statistics of Home Ministry, the Hindus are majority which consists of 79.8% of the total population. A large number of Muslim minority (14.2%) and people of other faiths including Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%) and



Jains (0.37%) live in India.⁴⁹ Given the country's large overall population size of over 1.25 billion, India has the third largest Muslim population in the world of an estimated 172.2 million, behind only Indonesia and Pakistan.⁵⁰

Since 2014, religious and ethnic minorities in India continue to face violence led by

supporters of pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliated fronts including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Many senior BJP leaders publicly promoted Hindu supremacy and ultra-nationalism, which encouraged further violence.⁵¹

While the constitution declares India as a

secular country but the steady rise of pan-Hindu Hindutva ideology exclusively leads to suppression of religious minorities. Punishment for slaughtering the cows, which is sacred animal for Hindus, has been increased from seven years to life imprisonment in Gujarat.⁵² More than 21 states have already passed legislature for custodial sentence for slaughtering sacred animal.

⁴⁹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs (2015). RGI releases Census 2011 data on Population by Religious Communities. Cited in. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=126326>, Accessed 10 April 2019

⁵⁰ *The Hindu* (2015). Muslim population growth slows. Cited in. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Muslim-population-growth-slows/article10336665.ece> Accessed 10 April 2019

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch (2018). Country Chapter: India Cited in. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/india>, Accessed 10 April 2019

⁵² *The New Indian Express* (2018). Increased Religious Oppression in India, says report Cited in. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/dec/31/increased-religious-oppression-in-india-1918596.html>, Accessed 11 April 2019

Table 3: Frequency and intensity report in communal violence in India

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Incidents of communal violence	580	640	823	644	751	703	4141
Number of deaths	91	93	133	95	97	86	595
Numbers of injuries	1,899	2,067	2,269	1,921	2,264	2,321	12,741

Source: MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs in India), GSSS (Centre for Study of Society and Secularism)⁵³

From the report of Mumbai-based Centre for Study of Society and Secularism and the UK based Minority Rights Group International (MRG) statistics, India witnessed more than 700 outbreaks of communal violence in 2016 that killed 86 and injured 2,321 people. The actual number, however, could be higher as many cases go unreported.⁵⁴ According to the report of Persecution Relief, an ecumenical forum that records Christian persecution in India, Hindu attack on Christians in India doubled from 2016 to 2017. The country recorded 736 incidents of attacks against Christians in 2017 which was 348 in 2016.⁵⁵ Christian leaders claim

violence against their people increased after BJP came to power in 2014.

Human Right Watch released a report in New Delhi in February 2019 stated that between May 2015 and December 2018, at least 36 Muslims were killed across 12 Indian states. Over that same period, around 280 people were injured in over 100 different incidents across 20 states.⁵⁶

Forced conversion from Islam and Christianity to Hinduism is another rising trend from 2014 onwards. 54 Muslim families were converted to Hinduism in the town of Agra in December 2014.⁵⁷ 30

⁵³ Minority Rights Group International (2017). A Narrowing Space: Violence and Discrimination against India's Religious Minorities Cited in. https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MRG_Rep_India_Jun17-2.pdf, Accessed 11 April 2019

⁵⁴ New Internationalist (2018). Rape as communal violence in India Cited in. <https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2018/05/16/rape-communal-violence-india>, Accessed 11 April 2019

⁵⁵ UCA News (2018). Hindu Attacks on Christians Double in India Cited in. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-attacks-onchristians-double-in-india/81570>, Accessed 11 April 2019

⁵⁶ UCA News (2019). Religious Minorities in India 'Attacked with Impunity' Cited in. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/religious-minorities-in-india-attacked-with-impunity/84572>, Accessed 11 April 2019

⁵⁷ BBC (2014). Indian Agra Muslim fear Conversions to Hinduism Cited in. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-30429118>, Accessed 12 April 2019

Christians were converted to Hinduism in Kerala in December 2014.⁵⁸ Muslim and Christian clerics were also convicted in this period as they are shamed publicly and harassed legally in many cases.⁵⁹

others in several attacks. They also opened fire at Christian worshippers.⁶² The attack on the church in Quetta in December 2017 killed nine people and injured 57.⁶³

Pakistan

95% people of Pakistan are Muslims of different sects and it has a wide variety of religious



minorities. Hindus (1.9 %) and Christians (1.6 %) make up the largest minorities, but there are also many smaller religious groups such as Baha'i, Buddhists, Kalasha, Parsis, Sikhs, and Zikris.⁶⁰

Among the Christian people, about 50,000 live in Quetta (a southwestern Pakistani city) alone. Christians remain the target of repeated attacks by extremist groups.⁶¹ In the first half of 2018, ISIS has killed at least 14 Christians and injured many

The draconian blasphemy law has often created controversies. It violates the rights of Pakistani minorities and opens the box of propagandas against the minorities. Since it was introduced, dozens of men and women have been killed, hundreds are facing trial.⁶⁴ In recent years communal violence has increased with new threats in the form of targeted terrorist attacks.⁶⁵ A suicide attack targeting Christians celebrating Easter at a Lahore playground in March 2016 left 70

⁵⁸ The Hindu (2014). 30 Christians Converted in Kerala: VHP Cited in. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/30-christians-converted-in-kerala-vhp/article6713944.ece> Accessed 12 April 2019

⁵⁹ UCA News (2017). Indian Christians Arrested again over Forced Conversion Charge Cited in. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-christians-arrested-again-over-forced-conversion-charge/80618> Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶⁰ Minority Stories (n.d.). Introduction Cited in. <http://stories.minorityrights.org/pakistan-religious-minorities/chapter/introduction/>, Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶¹ Minority Rights Group (2019). Pakistan Cited in. <https://peoplesunderthreat.org/countries/pakistan/#backround>, Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶² Minority Rights Group International (2018). Pakistan: Christian and Hazara Minorities under Attack in Quetta Cited in. <http://minorityvoices.org/news.php/en/5273/>, Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶³ BBC (2018). Why are Pakistan's Christians targeted? Cited in. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35910331> Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶⁴ Minority Rights Group International (2018). Pakistan: Attack on the Interior Minister for Blasphemy Allegation Cited in. <http://minorityvoices.org/news.php/en/5276/>, Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶⁵ Minority Stories (n.d.). The Situation of Christians in Pakistan Cited in. <http://stories.minorityrights.org/pakistan-religious-minorities/chapter/chapter-3/>, Accessed 12 April 2019

dead and more than 340 wounded. Two bomb blasts at churches in Lahore in March 2015 killed 14 and hurt more than 70 people. A twin suicide bomb attack at a Peshawar church in 2013 left around 80 dead. In 2012, a Christian girl, became the first non-Muslim to be imprisoned in a blasphemy case although it was later discovered that she had been framed by a local Muslim cleric. In 2009, nearly 40 houses and a churches were burnt by a mob in a town in Punjab, with eight people burnt alive. In 2005, hundreds fled their homes in Faisalabad as churches and Christian schools were set on fire by a mob, after a resident was blamed for burning pages of the Koran.⁶⁶

The bulk of the Hindu population in Pakistan resides in Sindh, south-east of Pakistan. In March 2014, a temple in Larkana was set on fire following allegations that a young Hindu desecrated a copy of the Qur'an. Later, in November 2014 a temple in Hyderabad was attacked. A blasphemy allegation against a Hindu man in July 2016 in Sindh led to further tensions and the shooting of two Hindu men.⁶⁷

Moreover, a BBC report published on 25 October 2015 stated that about 12,000 people have migrated from Pakistan to India to escape discrimination and religious persecution.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ BBC (2018). Why are Pakistan's Christians targeted? Cited in. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35910331> Accessed 12 April 2019

⁶⁷ Minority Stories (n.d.). The Situation of Hindus in Pakistan Cited in. <http://stories.minorityrights.org/pakistan-religious-minorities/chapter/pakistani-hindus-migrating-to-india>, Accessed 12 April 2019

Sri Lanka

Violence against ethnic and religious minorities in Sri Lanka always has been a roadblock for political and economic prosperity since the country's independence. The unique religious, ethnic, and cultural composition of Sri Lankan demographics creates a meaningful yet thorny diversity. Sri Lanka has a comparatively smaller population than its peers in the South Asian region. As of 2019, it is 21.02 million. Sri Lanka is the 58th most populous country in the world.⁶⁹ The diversified demographic among the regions provides the country with a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic identity. Two of the most prominent ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sinhalese make up around 75% of the total population and are concentrated in the central and southwestern parts of the country.⁷⁰ The Tamils, mainly immigrants from the Tamil Nadu province of India make up around 11.9% of the total population and are thus the largest minority present in the country.⁷¹ The Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhist, and thus it is the major religion in the country, followed by Hinduism, which is actively practiced by the Tamils. The next most popular religion is Christianity, especially among the Burgher population. The major groups that make up Sri Lanka's almost 2

⁶⁸ BBC (2015). Why Pakistani Hindus Leave their Homes for India Cited in. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34645370>, Accessed 13 April 2019

⁶⁹ World Population Review (2019). Sri Lanka Cited in. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/sri-lanka-population/>, Accessed 13 April 2019

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

million Muslims (2012 Census) are Sri Lankan Moors, Indian Moors and the Malays. Muslims also include smaller Islamic sects including Boras and Kolas.⁷²

Sri Lanka has witnessed a longstanding civil war between two of the largest ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils from 1983 to 2008.⁷³ The minority Muslims often found themselves trapped between both warring sides. They were particularly targeted by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). The LTTE has been responsible for taking over large tracts of lands from Muslim agriculturalists. The end of the conflict enabled some displaced Muslim communities to return to their homes, Buddhist nationalists have become increasingly active in their dissemination of anti-Muslim propaganda through a range of public platforms, including social media. This wave of Buddhist nationalism was impelled by groups such as the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Sinhala Ravaya, Ravana Balaya and others.⁷⁴ Sporadic acts of violence and discrimination targeting Islamic places of worship have been recorded from 2009 onwards by various sources, the most notable being the 2012 attack on the Masjidul Kairiya mosque in Dambulla. 2013 attack on the Masjid Deenul Islam mosque in Grand pass and 2014 riot in

Aluthgama. The violence in Aluthgama left four dead, many injured and displaced, and significant property damage.⁷⁵

Christians are frequently targeted in Sri Lanka by Buddhist nationalists and Islamist extremists. One of the most catastrophic terrorist attacks was carried in Churches and high-end hotels throughout the country by ISIS sympathizers on the day of Easter Sunday, 26 April 2019 which resulted in 263 death and 500 injuries.⁷⁶ The attacks exposed the ethnic and religious division as the fleeing of Muslims from Christian localities was reported.⁷⁷

Nepal

Nepal has a population of 29.94 million as of 2019 which ranks 49th in the world.⁷⁸ It is a landlocked country in the Himalayan mountain range. More than 80 % of the population of Nepal is Hindu. Minority and indigenous communities in Nepal are Buddhists 2.96 million (20%), Muslims 1.12 million (4.2%), and linguistic minorities, including Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Thakali, Sherpa, Tharu and Raute.⁷⁹

Violence against minorities is a recurring issue in Nepal although due to greater homogeneity than neighboring states, ethnic and religious division is always

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ ThoughtCo. (2019). The Sri Lankan Civil War Cited in. <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-sri-lankan-civil-war-195086>, Accessed 21 June 2019

⁷⁴ Quartz India (2018). Buddhist Extremists Want to Protect Sri Lanka from “Foreign” Elements—Especially Muslims Cited in. <https://qz.com/india/1265399/why-buddhist-extremist-groups-like-the-bodu-bala-sena-are-targeting-muslims-in-sri-lanka/>, Accessed 13 April 2019

⁷⁵ Centre Tricontinental (2018). New Violence Against Muslims in Sri Lanka Has Old Roots Cited in. <https://www.cetri.be/New-violence-against-Muslims-in?lang=fr> Accessed 13 April 2019

⁷⁶ BBC (2019). Sri Lanka Attacks: What We Know about the Easter Bombings Cited in. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48010697>, Accessed 29 April 2019

⁷⁷ Deutsche Welle (2019). Sri Lanka's Catholics and Muslims Deeply Divided by Terror Attacks Cited in. <https://www.dw.com/en/sri-lankas-catholics-and-muslims-deeply-divided-by-terror-attacks/a-48899839> Accessed 1 June 2019

⁷⁸ World Population Review (2019). Nepal Cited in. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nepal-population/>, Accessed 13 April 2019

⁷⁹ Ibid.

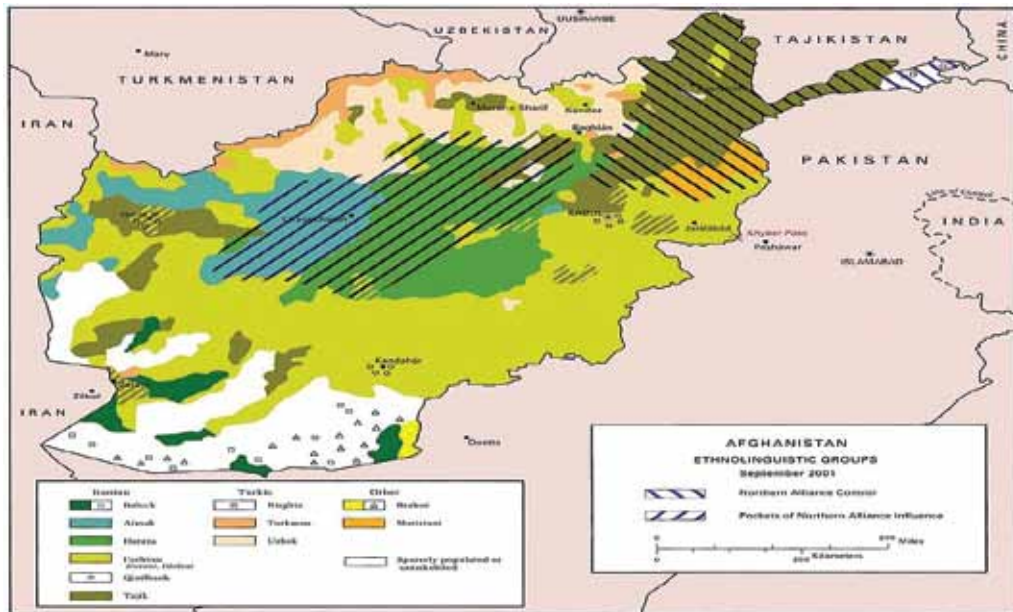
subsidied by political instability and civil war in the country's history. Nationwide violent protests occurred in 2015 against the newly adopted constitution in which many minority rights was excluded.⁸⁰ One Muslim died and several other injured in a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims in Nepali plains iinn December 2016.⁸¹ In other ways, Nepal is more adept in granting minority rights. Nepal is the first country in South Asia to grant and recognize LGBTQ+ rights in its constitution in 2015.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's population is estimated at 37.21 million in 2019 based on the most

recent UN data. There is a diverse range of ethnic groups within the country. Of the 31 million or so Afghan residents, 42% are Pashtun, 27% Tajik, 9% Hazara, 9% Uzbek, 4% Aimak, 3% Turkmen, 2% Baloch, and 4% fall into an unspecified "other" groups.⁸² As the statistics show, Afghanistan is the melting pot of multiple ethnicities of Arabic, Mongol, Persian, and Indian descent. Persecution based on sect and ethnicity is a regressing feature of Afghan history.

The religious persecution dated back to 1888 to 1893 when more than half of Hazara population was persecuted by



⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch (2017). Country Chapter: Nepal Cited in. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/nepal>, Accessed 14 April 2019

⁸¹ World Politics Review (2018). As Nepal Strives to Become More Inclusive, Are Muslims Being Left Behind? Cited in.

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/24085/as-nepal-strives-to-become-more-inclusive-are-muslims-being-left-behind>, Accessed 14 April 2019

⁸² World Population Review (2019). Afghanistan Cited in. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/afghanistan-population/>, Accessed 14 April 2019

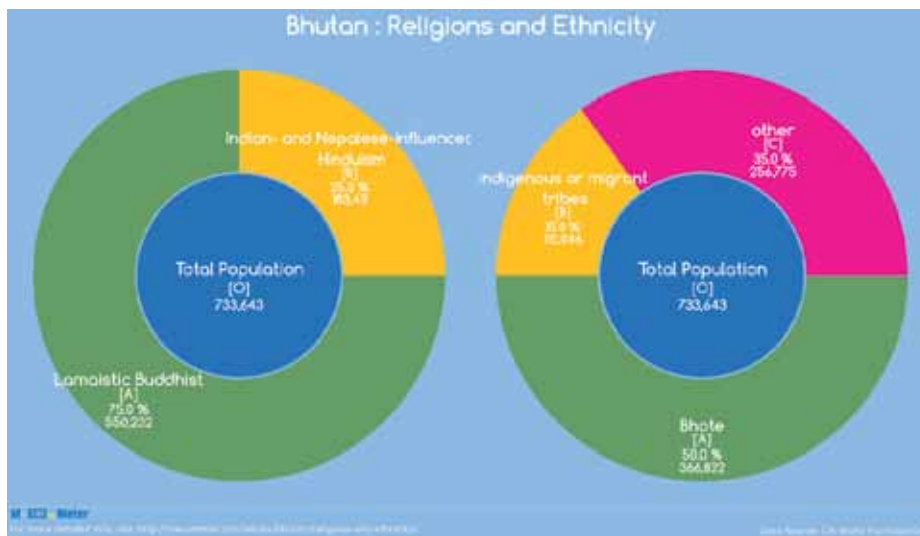
Emir Abdur Rahman Khan.⁸³ The history of persecution of Hazaras dated back to Emperor Babar in the 16th century. One of the main factors in Hazaras' continued persecution is their Shi'a religious faith, their distinctive ethnic origins (mongoloid feature), as well as their having separate economic and political roots. Hazaras faced particularly severe repression and persecution during the Taliban reign, including a series of mass killings in northern Afghanistan, where thousands of Hazaras lost their lives or were forced to flee their homes.⁸⁴

Consequently, Hazaras formed part of the Northern Alliance forces that opposed the Taliban and took power after the Taliban fell in 2001. Since then, the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan has improved considerably.

Bhutan

Bhutan is a landlocked country in South Asia at the end of the Himalayas. Most Bhutanese people belong to the Ngalops and Sharchops, or Western Bhutanese and Eastern Bhutanese.⁸⁵ The Lhotshampa, or southerners, are a group primarily of Nepali descent. In 1988, this group accounted for 45% of the population and it included migrants who fought a war with Bhutan over rights to language and dress.⁸⁶ Although Bhutan is renowned for introducing the Global Happiness Index, Bhutan has a dark past of discriminating and evicting Nepali origin people.

In early 1996 nearly 100,000 people from Bhutan – nearly one-sixth of the total population of Bhutan and the large majority of them Nepali-speakers, were



⁸³ Minority rights Group International (n.d.). Hazras Cited in. <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/hazaras/>, Accessed 14 April 2019

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ World Population Review (2019). Bhutan Cited in. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bhutan-population/>, Accessed 14 April 2019

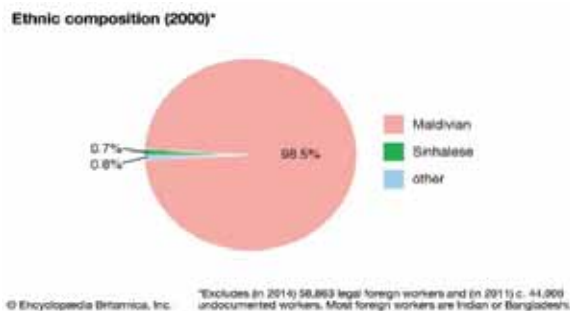
⁸⁶ Ibid.

residing in refugee camps in Nepal.⁸⁷ This forcible exclusion took place as a result of a series of discriminatory measures pursued by the Bhutanese government beginning in the 1980s. Forced eviction has been the main form of discrimination against, and repression and exclusion of Nepali-speakers. Other more subtle mechanisms have also been adopted, for example the policy of national integration on the basis of northern Bhutanese traditions and culture, decreed by King Jigme Singye in January 1989.⁸⁸ This policy has aroused fears that the government intends to erase Nepali culture in Bhutan by requiring the whole population to adopt distinctive northern Bhutanese practices.

Maldives

The Maldives, officially the Republic of the Maldives and referred to as the Maldivian Islands, is an island nation in the Indian

Ocean-Arabian Sea region. The people of the Maldives have an identity that is a blend of the cultures of people who settled in the islands. It is believed the earliest inhabitants were from Sri Lanka and southern India. The Maldivian people are ethnically related to those of the Indian subcontinent and are ethnically known as Dhivehi.⁸⁹ There are about 70,000 foreign workers in the Maldives, as well as 33,000 illegal immigrants, who make up about one-third of the total population.⁹⁰ Most workers and immigrants are from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Violence against minorities in Maldives is related to anti-immigrant rhetoric. Immigrants are often targeted by native mob or gangs as reported in many instances. Bangladeshi immigrants are often targeted as two Bangladeshi workers were stabbed to death and few others were attacked in April 2015.⁹¹ Thereafter, Bangladesh High Commission opened a 24 hour helpline for Bangladeshi workers.⁹²



⁸⁷ *The Diplomat* (2016). Bhutan's Dark Secret: The Lhotshampa Expulsion Cited in. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/09/bhutans-dark-secret-the-lhotshampa-expulsion/>, Accessed 14 April 2019

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *World Population Review* (2019). Maldives Cited in. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/maldives-population/>, Accessed 14 April 2019

⁹⁰ U.S. Library of Congress (n.d.). Ethnic Groups and Language- Maldives Cited in. <http://countrystudies.us/maldives/5.htm>

⁹¹ *The Daily Dhaka Tribune* (2015). Tragedy in the Maldives Cited in. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/uncategorized/2015/04/03/tragedy-in-the-maldives>, Accessed 15 April 2019

⁹² *Bdnews24.com* (2015). 24-hour Helpline Opens for Bangladeshis in Maldives after Malé Murders Cited in. <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/03/27/24-hour-helpline-opens-for-bangladeshis-in-maldives-after-male-murders>, Accessed 14 April 2019

Structural Injustices faced by the Marginal and Excluded People in Bangladesh

Mr. Philip Gain⁹³

A significant portion of the 170 million people of Bangladesh has turned into marginal and excluded—socially, economically, politically and otherwise—for various reasons such as ethnic identity, captivity, occupation, casteism, culture, geographical locations, landlessness and eviction from their homesteads. The marginal and excluded communities can also be called micro-minorities given the number and size of population.

Micro-minority communities, excluded from the mainstream and vulnerable to isolation can be grouped as follows:

a) Minority in terms of casteism and occupations despised: Harijan (sweepers), Rishi, Jaladas (the ones who catch fish in the deep sea and coastal rivers and water bodies), Kaiputra (those who raise pigs in herds in open fields particularly in marshland), Teli, Napit, Dhopa, Tanti (Urdu-speaking weavers from Pakistan), Dorjee, Hajam (unrecognized physicians who engage in Muslim circumcision), Majhi or Khotra, Behara (those who carry palanquin), Kasai etc. No data is available from the government sources about their population sizes. According to different sources (as of 2010) their population ranges between 1.5 to 6 million. Many of these

groups, especially the Harijans, Rishi and Kaiputra identify themselves as Dalit. The fifth category in the Hindu caste system—the Dalits—are caste minorities and occupational groups and the most marginalized, deprived, broken, exploited, oppressed, and excluded group of people among the minorities of Bangladesh. Scattered throughout almost all the 64 districts of Bangladesh (except for the CHT), the Harijans are considered ‘untouchables’ by many people of the both, majority and the upper castes of the Hindus, who themselves face discriminations.

The Rishis (cobblers), an occupational group belonging to the Shudra community (the lowest rung among the Hindus) and found predominantly in south-western Bangladesh are considered as Dalits by their majority neighbours.

The Kaiputras are concentrated in Satkhira, Khulna and Jashore districts. They however are the ones seen rearing pigs in herds throughout the country. Treated as Dalits, they are one of the most despised communities because they rear pigs, an animal filthy to the Muslim majority. They are considered ‘untouchables’ and unwelcome to the majority in the society.

⁹³ Director, Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), Bangladesh.

b) Ahmaddiyya Muslim Jamaat: No official data is available about them. Unofficial sources estimate them at 100,000.

c) Ethnic groups in the CHT: Bawm, Chakma, Chak, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pangkho or Pangkhua, Tripura and Tanchangya. Official source estimates them at 551,695. Unofficial and communities sources estimate them between 851,016 and 973,846. The ethnic communities of the CHT are distinct because of history and ethnic identities in the hill they live in.

d) Small ethnic groups of the plains land (government enumeration): Paharia, Santal, Oraon, Mahato, Robidas (inclusive of 235 families in tea gardens), Buna, Munda (inclusive of 7,193 families in tea gardens and 695 families in Satkhira and Khulna), Garo, Koch, Hajong, Khasi, Monipuri, Dalu and Rakhine. Official source estimates them at 384,926. Unofficial and community sources estimate them between 529,216 and 1,051,822.

e) Small ethnic groups of the plains land (in addition to official list): Bakti, Baraik, Bhuimali, Bhuiya, Bhumij, Bindumondol, Chowhan, Ganju Singh, Ghatual, Gorait, Hajra, Hari, Kadar, Kairi, Kalwar, Karmokar, Koda, Kol, Kora, Kurmi, Mahale, Mahato, Malo, Modok, Munda, Mushohor, Noonia, Pal, Rajbhar, Rajwar, Robidas, Tanti, Teli, Turi, Banai, Dalu, Hodi, and Lyngam (a group among the Khasi). Their estimated population is 450,362. There is a strong indication that one-third of around 650,000 Kshatriyas in nine

districts in the Northwest—Bogura, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon, Kurigram, Joypurhat, Dinajpur and Sirajganj—may be Koch.

f) Small ethnic groups in tea gardens: Almik, Bakti, Baraik, Barma, Bashphor, Bauri, Been, Bhar, Bhokta, Bhuiya, Bhumij, Bihari, Bunerjee, Chasha, Chatri, Dusad, Garo, Ghatuar, Giri, Goala, Ganju, Gorait, Goswami, Gour, Goyashur (They are also known as Ashur), Hajra, Jhora, Kahar, Kairi, Kalindi, Kalowar, Kanu, Karmokar, Keot, Kharia, Khodal, Kol, Kondo, Kora, Kumar, Kurmi, Lohar, Mandraji, Mahale, Majhi, Mal, Marma, Monipuri, Mridha, Munda, Mushohor, Naidu, Nayek, Nepali, Noonia, Oraon (also spelt Orang), Painka, Pashi, Phulmali, Pandit, Pradhan, Rajballobh, Rajbhar, Rajbongshi, Rajgor, Rajwar, Rautia, Reli, Robidas, Sadhu, Santal, Shabor, Sheel, Suklaboiddyo, Shobdokar, Tanti, Teli (also known as Pal), Tongla, Tripura, Patro (outside of tea gardens) and Shobdokar (outside tea gardens). Their estimated population is 415,622 (Bangladesh Tea Board, 2015). The enumeration includes 5,500 households of Bangalee workers.

The constitution of Bangladesh identifies them as tribal, small ethnic group, and ethnic groups or communities. In the *Khudra Nri-gosthi Sangskritik Pratisthan Ain, 2010* (The Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institution Act 2010), they are called 'Nri-gosthi (small ethnic groups).

According to the 'Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institution Act 2010', the number of "tribal, small ethnic group, and ethnic groups or communities" is 27. If we drop three duplications (Marma and Mong are the same group, Tripura, Usai or Usui

belong to the same group and Malpahari and Pahari are also the same group), their number would stand at 24. However, according to many of those who belong to the small ethnic groups, the number of such groups would be at least 45. If those who are working in tea estates are taken into account, the number would be more than 100 as mentioned above. The ethnic communities, particularly the smaller ones are among the poorest of the poor.

g) Communities which are excluded and invisible due to variety of reasons such as occupations, culture, geographic locations and eviction from the land: Bihari (over 300,000 people); Bede (between 500,000 and 800,000 people); Sex workers (92,572); Hijra or transgender (8,533); people with disability (1,600,000 registered population); inhabitants of chars or river islands (above 4,000,000); Bawali (300,00 people); and Rohingya (around 1,000,000 people).

(Note: the statistical account of the marginal and excluded communities has been drawn from *Social, Economic and Political Protection of the Marginal and Excluded Communities* by Philip Gain in 2019).

A large number of these communities, especially those that inhabit the tea gardens, the districts in Northwest and North-centre. The smaller ones especially in the fringe districts and those in the CHT face insurmountable structural difficulties.

Structural Injustice and Violence faced by micro-minorities

Political protection: Micro - minorities who are non - Muslims in particular are less

protected than others politically, socially and economically. The Constitution of Bangladesh says that our state religion is Islam and state language is Bangla. The constitution further says "All people of Bangladesh are Bangalis and the citizens shall be identified as Bangladeshis." Thus the constitution puts those who are not Muslims and Bangalis in more vulnerable position than others. They may find a consolation in the constitution as well. Article 23A of the constitution says: "The State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities."

However, a large number of communities who are not Bangalis and Muslims find themselves unidentifiable and invisible to the state and they do not get even the meagre protection the constitution promises. The political parties also do not fulfil the pledges that they make for protection of these people before election in particular. Political participation of the ethnic, marginal and excluded communities outside the CHT is very little.

Economic protection: The people we identify as small ethnic groups, marginal excluded communities, are not only poor, a large percentage of them are hard-core poor. It is one of the major challenges of the government of Bangladesh to pull them out of poverty and extreme poverty.

The foremost of the key concerns for the economic protection of marginal and excluded communities relate to rights over forest and land. The indigenous communities of the CHT depend on forest

and commons. Santal, Garo, Oraon and Pahari peoples of the plains were once dependent on the forest. Forest, once commons, is now under the state control. The tea communities that live in the labor lines of the tea garden have no ownership over land that they prepared through hard labour for production of tea. The little-known ethnic communities are largely landless.

Other marginal people who have no right over land and who are mostly landless, include the Harijan, Jaladas, Bihari, Rishi, Bede and Kaiputra. Of them, the Harijans are entirely landless. Like the tea garden workers, the Harijans were also brought in by the British colonial rulers from different parts of the then India. Non-Bangalees, they clean cities and live on government land and in dirty places. The Bede (gypsy) is floating people and have little access to land. For the Jaladas community, natural disasters, apart from landlessness is another factor that make them more vulnerable. They live along the coastline of Chattogram and Cox's Bazar; storm and tidal surge damage their houses. The Biharis who live in 70 camps across the country have no land as well. They live under social pressure, face eviction threats and physical threats including killing and arson attacks on their houses.

Landlessness and violence including killing over land disputes and harassment are common experiences of the small ethnic communities and marginal people.

Wage deprivation and income disparity is a common problem for the workers of the tea gardens, members of the Harijan community and other marginal communities. Wage deprivation of the tea

workers and Harijans is common. Even in 2018 the daily cash pay of a tea worker was Taka 102 which is around 700 Rupees for a Sri Lankan tea worker. Wages of the sweepers (Harijans) of the cities, are similar to that of the tea garden workers. Until recently the daily wage of a sweeper in Jashore municipality was Taka 37, which has now been revised to Taka 50 a day. The conditions of sweepers in other cities can be assumed in the light of the Jashore experience. There are allegations that the Harijan community members are not getting permanent jobs as per quota reserved for them.

Unemployment and lack of decent work condition of the tea workers, Harijans and sex workers, Bede are serious concerns.

While poor economic condition in general restricts the marginal communities from accessing adequate and standard healthcare, communities such as tea workers and Bede in particular face greater difficulties. As a result maternal deaths and other diseases such as leprosy, cancer, tuberculosis and diabetes are higher among these communities.

Education is considered to be the most important factor for the marginal communities to come out of poverty. Children of the tea gardens in most cases become tea workers. The tea garden owners run around 200 schools for the children of the tea workers. The boys and girls going to these schools get literacy but remain deprived of real education. In recent years, some non-government organizations and missionaries have come forward to provide education to the children of tea workers. However, education for the Bede children is even more limited. Because most

of the Bedes are floating, it is difficult to provide education to the Bede children. The literacy rate among the Bede is therefore very low. There is lack of education opportunity for the children of the Harijan community; but the educated among them also do not get jobs, only because they are Harijans.

What Needs to Be Done

It is needless to say that protection of the minority and marginal people of a country largely depends on the majority. It is the responsibility of the majority to push the state to ensure not only equal opportunities for all but preferential discrimination for the marginal and excluded who, for generations, have faced discriminations and abuses. Some suggested actions are:

State institutions should keep correct statistics: There are significant differences between the official and unofficial statistics on the ethnic and marginal communities mentioned above. It is the responsibility the state to keep the correct statistics. Separate state agencies similar to Anthropological Survey of India, but not limited to it, may be set up to help Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in objectively and accurately enumerating the ethnic and marginal communities.

Addressing violence: The ethnic and marginal communities are more prone to physical violence because of their weaker social standing, capability and deprivations. One major source of physical violence against them is related to land. When an incident of violence occurs, the law enforcers should act swiftly and objectively. The government should expedite the

functioning of the Land Commission created to resolve the land disputes in the CHT. There are good reasons for the government to respond to the demand for a land commission to look in to the land issues of the ethnic and marginal people of the plains. The key responsibilities of the land commission should be to resolve disputes over land on the one hand, and to ensure fair distribution of *khas* (public) land to the landless mass.

Compliance with international instruments and end to legal discrimination: There are more than 20 international instruments and national laws to provide security and political protection to small ethnic groups, tea workers, and other marginal communities. Responsibilities of the national institutions and international organizations towards these peoples have also been defined in the instruments and national laws. Two national laws—Labour Act 2006 and East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950—are very important for the small ethnic groups and tea garden workers. Reports confirm the misuse of these two laws. Despite restriction on sales of land owned by the *adivasi* people, the Bangalees grab their land tactfully violating the law. Many small ethnic groups cannot take advantage of this law because they are not recognized as ‘Aboriginal’ or Adivasi. The concerned state institutions concerned and court system need to be more proactive to ensure the compliance of the state with the international instruments and national laws to end or at least minimize legal discrimination.

Fair wages and decent work condition: The government needs to take necessary measures to make the employers of the tea workers, Harijans and others

comply with labour law to ensure fair wages and decent work condition. There is also the need for amendment to labour law and other legislation and formulation of new laws.

Protection of languages and cultures:

It is critical that the languages other than Bangla and the diverse cultures in Bangladesh get better attention and protection.

Annex:

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

Gunfight. Shootout opposing the police or security forces to criminals, militants or other irregular forces that do not match the definition of a non-state armed group.

Clash. Two-sided violence between groups, outside of the context of war or insurgency. *Example: supporters of rival political parties fight each other.*

Assault. One-sided violence by an individual or small group against another

individual or small group. *Example: stabbing, shooting of someone by a perpetrator*

Fight. Two-sided violence between individuals or small groups. *Example: brawl between 3-4 people.*

Sexual assault. One-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group.

Destruction of property. One-sided violence perpetrated with the intent of damaging property. *Examples: vandalism, arson.*



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