

# RECOGNISING THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE

AN APPEAL FOR  
RENDERING JUSTICE





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# RECOGNISING THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE:

*AN APPEAL FOR RENDERING JUSTICE*

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## FACT SHEET ON THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE

- ▶ **3 million:** Estimated number of Bengalis killed during the liberation war.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **50,000 - 200,000:** Estimated number of Bengalis killed in ‘Operation Searchlight’.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ **10,000:** Number of Bengalis, killed around the largest killing field in Chuknagar, Khulna district in a single day.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **20,000 - 25,000:** Number of people killed and buried at Jalladkhana in Dhaka, one of the largest killing fields of the country.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ **200,000 - 400,000:** Number of Bengali women raped by the Pakistani military and its collaborators during the war.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ **202,527:** Number of rape victims who remained in the country.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ **131,250:** Number of rape victims among refugees.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ **170,000:** Approximate number of abortions by the raped women.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ **30,000:** Approximate number of women who committed suicide from torture and humiliation at the hands of the Pakistani military and Razakars.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ **5,000:** Number of war babies born and adopted mainly by Christian missionaries and orphanages outside the country.<sup>10</sup>

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- 1 Rummel, R. J., *Statistics of Democide*, (Germany: LIT Verlag, 1998). See also, Rahman, Arif., *Three Million Deaths: Excess or Reality?*, (Dhaka: Nandanik, 2015).
  - 2 Islam, Sirajul, *Genocide, 1971 Banglapedia*, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003).
  - 3 Mamoon, Muntassir, *1971 Chuknagar Genocide*, (Dhaka: International Centre for Bengal Studies, 2011).
  - 4 Miju, Miraj, *10 Killing Fields of Mirpur*, (Dhaka: Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee, 2008).
  - 5 Hasan, M. A., *War and Women*, (Dhaka: Tamralipi, 2010).
  - 6 Hasan, M. A., “Discovery of numerous Mass Graves, Various types of torture on Women” and “People’s Attitude”, War Crimes Fact Finding Committee (WCFFC), Cited In: [https://www.kean.edu/~bgsg/Conference09/Papers\\_and\\_Presentations/MA\\_Hasan\\_Paper\\_Discovery%20of%20numerous%20Mass%20Graves,%20Various%20types.pdf](https://www.kean.edu/~bgsg/Conference09/Papers_and_Presentations/MA_Hasan_Paper_Discovery%20of%20numerous%20Mass%20Graves,%20Various%20types.pdf), Accessed on 01 February 2022.
  - 7 Hasan, M. A., *op.cit.*
  - 8 Mohsin, Amena. "Gendered Nation, Gendered Peace: A Study of Bangladesh", in Samir Kumar Das ed., *Peace Processes And Peace Accords*, (US: Sage, 2005). See also, Islam, K. S., “Breaking down the Birangona: Examining the (divided) media discourse on the war heroines of Bangladesh’s independence movement”, *International Journal of Communications*, 30 August 2012.
  - 9 Islam, K. S., *op.cit.*
  - 10 Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1993).

- ▶ **10 million:** Estimated number of Bengali refugees who fled to India.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ **1.5 million:** Estimated number of Bengali women refugees who fled to India.<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ The approximate number of Bengali refugees who died in various refugee camps is as high as **1.2 milion**.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ **30 - 40 million:** Number of Bengalis internally displaced.<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ **1,000:** Approximate number of Bengali intellectuals and professionals killed by Pakistani military and collaborators to create an intellectual vacuum for the future. Out of that, more than 200 intellectuals were abducted, tortured and killed in the two weeks of December, based on a hit list of Pakistan military generals. Pakistani military and collaborators killed 4.2 percent of all Bengali University teachers.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ **80,000-100,000:** Number of troops of the Pakistan military involved in the genocide, equipped with heavy artillery, arms and ammunition.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ **75,000:** Approximate number of members of the different paramilitary forces involved in the genocide, formed with local Bengali collaborators of the Pakistan military.
- ▶ **175,000:** Number of freedom fighters with limited arms and ammunition, a combination of troops loyal to the then East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and guerilla forces.
- ▶ **942** killing fields were found all over Bangladesh, with skulls, skeletons and bones numbering in **1000-10000** people each.<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ According to one partial estimate the number of noted intellectuals including journalists, teachers, physicians, lawyers and writers killed is over **1100**, which practically crippled the nation.<sup>18</sup>

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11 Costa, Bina. D., *Nationbuilding, Gender and War Crimes in South Asia*, (UK: Routledge, 2011).

12 Susan Brownmiller, *op.cit.*

13 Seaman, John. A., "RELIEF WORK IN A REFUGEE CAMP FOR BANGLADESH REFUGEES IN INDIA", *The Lancet*, 1972. See also, Rahman, Arif., *op.cit.*

14 Alston, Margaret, *Women and Climate Change in Bangladesh*, (US: GARLAND Science, 2018).

15 Gerlach, Christian. "East Pakistan/Bangladesh 1971–1972: How Many Victims, Who, and Why?" in Andrew Barros and Martin Thomas, ed., *The Civilianization of War: The Changing Civil–Military Divide, 1914–2014*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

16 Rahman, Arif., *op.cit.*

17 Hasan, M. A., "Discovery of numerous Mass Graves, Various types of torture on Women" and "People's Attitude", War Crimes Fact Finding Committee (WCFFC), Cited In: [https://www.kean.edu/~bgs/Conference09/Papers\\_and\\_Presentations/MA\\_Hasan\\_Paper\\_Discovery%20of%20numerous%20Mass%20Graves,%20Various%20types.pdf](https://www.kean.edu/~bgs/Conference09/Papers_and_Presentations/MA_Hasan_Paper_Discovery%20of%20numerous%20Mass%20Graves,%20Various%20types.pdf), Accessed on 1 February 2022. See also, Rahman, Arif., *op.cit.*

18 Khan, M. Hussain "Killing of Intellectuals". In Islam, Sirajul" in Jamal, Ahmed A. ed. *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Second ed.). (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2012).



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Dismembered head of an intellectual killed on 14 December 1971 at Rayer Bazar, Dhaka.  
Photo: Rashid Talukdar.



## INTRODUCTION

The indiscriminate killings of the Bengalis at the hands of the Pakistan military in 1971 can hardly be exaggerated. The Pakistan military committed one of the worst genocides in modern history in the eastern wing of Pakistan, now Bangladesh, from March to December 1971. As many as three million people were killed, thousands were raped, and some 10 million people were displaced and had to flee the country. The initial assault termed 'Operation Searchlight' began on 25 March 1971, in which the Pakistan military killed thousands of people within the first month of the genocide. Millions of people became refugees and took shelter in various refugee camps set up by the Government of India in West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam and other parts of India. The genocide lasted for nine months. It finally ended with the surrender of the Pakistan military to the Joint Command Forces of Bangladesh and India on 16 December 1971.

Although the international media, scholarly researchers, and some policymakers have highlighted the atrocities committed by the Pakistan military against the Bengalis in 1971, calling it "selective genocide,"<sup>19</sup> "the bloodbath in Bengal",<sup>20</sup> "one of the bloodiest slaughters in modern times"<sup>21</sup> and so on, the international community, particularly the United Nations, is yet to recognise the killing as 'genocide.' The Bangladesh Parliament has declared 25 March as "Genocide Remembrance Day" in 2017 to highlight the atrocities and commit Bangladesh to work relentlessly to put an end to genocide once and for all in this world. In this connection, several governmental and non-governmental institutions in Bangladesh have dedicated their time and activities to collecting evidence, carrying out research, and campaigning for the international recognition of the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide.

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19 Cable from Archer Blood, the United States' consul general in Dacca in 1971. See, Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: India's Secret War in East Pakistan* (Noida: Random House India, 2013), p. xiii.

20 Cited in <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/04/07/archives/bloodbath-in-bengal.html>. Accessed 6 February 2022.

21 Peggy Dubbin, "The Political Tidal Wave That Struck East Pakistan," *The New York Times*, 2 May 1971. Cited in <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/02/archives/the-political-tidal-wave-that-struck-east-pakistan-east-pakistan.html>. Accessed 6 February 2022.

## WHAT IS GENOCIDE?

'Genocide' is a legally codified and internationally accepted term under the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Article II of the Convention makes it clear that 'genocide' includes "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," and that such acts include:

- a) Killing members of the group.
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm.
- c) Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
- d) Imposing measures to prevent births within the group.
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Furthermore, Article III of the Convention states that the following acts shall be punishable:

- a) Genocide.
- b) Conspiracy to commit genocide.
- c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide.
- d) Attempt to commit genocide.
- e) Complicity in Genocide.

This would imply that 'genocide' could result from mental and physical conditions (i.e., *intention to destroy* and *bodily harm*). The Convention otherwise clarifies that there can be 'genocide' without killing. The critical factor is the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part," Such acts are punishable irrespective of time and space.

## GENESIS OF THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE

Bangladesh genocide is the only genocide in modern times that resulted from a policy of deliberately containing the *democratic aspirations* of the people. Other genocides resulted from immediate racial, religious, linguistic or ethnic animosities. But this does not discount the racial, religious, linguistic and ethnic prejudices of the (West) Pakistanis against Bengalis. Bangla, for instance, was practically unknown as a language in West Pakistan. Moreover, the Bengalis had to shed blood to establish the right of mother language for the Bengali nation on 21 February 1952. The day is now celebrated as the International Mother Language Day by UNESCO globally. The (West) Pakistanis also perceived the Bengalis racially and ethnically inferior and blocked the latter in the military and administrative services. Although Bengalis accounted for 55% of Pakistan's population, Bengali presence in civil, military, and bureaucratic services was virtually nil.<sup>22</sup> Only 2% of Pakistan's military elites were Bengalis, while an aggregate of only 14% personnel in the Armed Forces were Bengalis.<sup>23</sup> In the Central Civil Services (CSP), Bengalis were significantly underrepresented. During the Ayub Khan regime, Bengali representation in the CSP was smaller than West Pakistanis, at about 43 per cent in 1967. Bengalis were also underrepresented in bureaucratic services. Only about 27.4 per cent of all Class 1 officers in economic, commerce, finance, agricultural, industrial, cabinet division, establishment, planning, information, labour, and defence divisions were Bengalis.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, although the people of both the wings of Pakistan were predominantly Muslims, the Pakistani elite considered the Bengalis "lesser Muslims" infected with Hindu culture. But then, what mattered most was the refusal of the Pakistan military to accept the verdict of the 1970 general election and hand over power to a democratically elected political party from East Pakistan, the Awami League. This is probably because of the fear that such transfer of power would shift the balance of power to the eastern wing of Pakistan.

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22 "POPULATION HUGE IN EAST PAKISTAN," April 12, 1970, Cited In: <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/04/12/archives/population-huge-in-east-pakistan-political-issues-compound-problem.html>. Accessed on: 06 February 2022.

23 Tahir Amin (1988), *Ethno National Movements of Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies), p. 82. See also, Hassan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1974), p. 177.

24 Khawaja Alqama, *Bengali Elites Perception of Pakistan, The Road to Disillusionment, Uneven Development or Ethnicity?* (1995), p. 190.



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Language Movement in front of the Old Arts Building, University of Dhaka, 21 February 1952.  
Photo: Rafiqul Islam.

In this context, there is some merit in Michael Mann's contention that "genocides are essentially modern and the product of democracies that define the nation as 'us' to the exclusion of those minorities that do not fit."<sup>25</sup> Only that, in the case of Bangladesh, genocide resulted from the numerical asymmetry of another kind, that is, one between an empowered (military-backed) minority and disempowered (democracy-aspiring) majority! While referring to the military action in the then East Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan (1969-1971), is said to have rebuked the Bengalis by saying: "Kill three million of them, and the rest will eat out of our hands."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, the Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan, while taking charge of the administration, made it clear to the Pakistan military officers stationed in Dhaka that "We are in enemy territory.... We should change the race of this land."<sup>27</sup> It is not difficult to see that both mental and physical conditions required for a crime to be called 'genocide,' as indicated earlier, are pathologically present in the brutal action of the Pakistan military against the unarmed Bengalis in 1971.

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25 Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

26 Robert Payne, *Massacre* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

27 Major General Rao Farman Ali, the Adviser to the Governor of East Pakistan in 1971, said this in an interview with Mohiuddin Ahmed and Muntasir Mamun in the third week of March 1998. Later in the interview, Rao Farman Ali tried to mellow down Niazi's comment by saying that it was a kind of "loose talk" on his part.

## SELECTED INCIDENTS OF THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE

Incidents of genocide occurred almost on a daily basis at the hands of the Pakistan military in March-December 1971. Here are some of the important dates:

**25 March:** Around 11 p.m., the Pakistan military swooped on sleeping Dhaka residents to carry out *Operation Searchlight*. The objective was to “destroy” Bengali opposition, which included disarming and killing Bengali security personnel, liquidating students and intellectuals, and simply picking up and shooting Bengali men and women, including factory workers, rickshaw pullers, street vendors, even gardeners. Dhaka was practically on fire by midnight. Although the violence occurred in Dhaka’s provincial capital, the Pakistan military carried out ethnic cleansing operations across Bangladesh.

That was simply the start. Death squads rampaged through Dhaka’s streets, murdering perhaps 7,000 people in a single night. Half of Dhaka’s population fled within a week, and 30,000 people were slaughtered. International media outlets and English-language reference books have reported fatality counts ranging from 5,000 - 35,000 in Dhaka and 200,000 - 3,000,000 in whole Bangladesh. These systematic executions enraged the Bengalis. Many quickly took up arms and joined the liberation war.

**26 March:** Immediately following the crackdown, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issued a declaration of independence. 26 March 1971 is considered the official Independence Day of Bangladesh.

**27 March:** Iqbal Hall (now Sergeant Zahrul Huq Hall) students tried to resist, but the Pakistani military mowed them down either in groups coming out of the halls or in their rooms. The Pakistan military first stacked the dead bodies and then drove them away in trucks. Rokeya Hall (female student dorm in the University of Dhaka) was set on fire, and as the unarmed female students fled the burning buildings, Pakistan soldiers shot them. Many students, faculty members and office-bearers of the Hall were killed.<sup>28</sup>

**29 March:** *New York Times* reported 5,000 - 7,000 people were killed in Dhaka. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported 10,000 - 100,000 were killed. Later, rain exposed two mass graves, one at Zahrul Huq Hall and another at Rokeya Hall of the University of Dhaka.<sup>29</sup>

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28 “The Tilt: The U.S. and the South Asian Crisis of 1971,” 16 December 2002. Cited In: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/>. Accessed on 1 February 2022.

29 Ibid.



Even sleeping children were not spared on the horrific night of March 25, 1971, when the Pakistani military attacked the Bangalees.  
Photo: *The Daily Star* (File).

**31 March:** Cable from Archer Blood, the American Consular General in Dacca in 1971:

*The Army burned Hindu and Bengali areas in the Old Dhaka and shot occupants as they came out.<sup>30</sup> The Army searched room by room at the Hotel Intercontinental. Six naked female bodies were found with bits of rope dangling from the ceiling fans at Rokeya Hall. Apparently, the girls were raped, shot and hung from the heels. Workmen who were forced to dig the mass graves said that 140 were buried in the mass grave at Rokeya Hall. The other grave was equally large. A Japanese report mentioned that 400 were buried there. Servants and maintenance men were also killed.*

**13 April:** Mass killing by Pakistan military in Thanpara area under Charghat Upazila in Rajshahi District.<sup>31</sup>

**16 April:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre at Arpara and Vutergari in Ishwardi.

**17 April:** Pakistani military and local Razakars massacred 93 Hindus of the then Dinajpur district near Baraihat, the infamous Akhira Massacre.<sup>32</sup>

**21 April:** Sree Angan Monastery massacre in Faridpur where eight monks were killed.<sup>33</sup>

**23 April:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre in Jathibhanga area. An estimated 3,000 Bengali Hindu men were killed in that massacre.<sup>34</sup>

**8 May:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre at the village of Karamza.

**10 May:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre at the village of Bousgari.

**20 May:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre at the village of Chuknagar. Nearly ten thousand Bengalis were killed, including women and children.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> "Charghat Genocide Day observed," 14 April 2019, cited in <https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=193222>.

<sup>32</sup> "Akhira tragedy day today," 17 April 2013, Cited In: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/akhira-tragedy-day-today>, Accessed on 1 February 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Khan, Abu Saeed, *Faridpur in the Liberation War*, (Dhaka: Sahitya Bikash, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Haque, Farzana, *Jathibhanga Massacre* (Dhaka: 1971- Genocide-Torture Archive and Museum Trust, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Tripathi, Salil. *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent: The Bangladesh War And Its Unquiet Legacy*. 1st ed., (US: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 118–124.



**21 May:** Peace Committee members and the Razakars massacre of unarmed Hindu refugees at the village of Dakra, in the Bagerhat sub-division of Khulna.<sup>36</sup>

**13 June:** The Golahat massacre took place on 13 June 1971 in which the emigrating Hindu merchants and businessmen of the Marwari ethnicity of Saidpur were massacred by the Urdu-speaking people of the area who had collaborated with the Pakistan army.<sup>37</sup>

**3 July:** Razakar forces organised by Maulana Abdul Mannan fell upon the people of Faridganj. The Razakars, under instructions from Mannan and led by the village chairman, Khalilur Rahman, tortured and killed the people, raped the women, burned homes and looted their property.<sup>38</sup>

**18 August:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre villagers at Makalkandi village in Habiganj, Sylhet.

**18 September:** Pakistan military and collaborators massacre villagers in Krishnapur, Sylhet.<sup>39</sup>

**5 October 1971:** Pakistani soldiers tied Ms. Lutfunnahar Helen, an activist in the leftist student movement to a jeep and dragged through Magura town. Later on, she was shot and her dead body thrown into the Nabaganga river.<sup>40</sup>

**4 November:** Massacre of 42 unarmed Hindu men by the Razakars in Shankharikathi market, Alukdia village of Khulna district.<sup>41</sup>

**14 December:** Pakistani military and collaborator forces murder the intellectuals - professors, journalists, lawyers, doctors, writers, engineers, etc. in an attempt to destroy Bangladesh's intellectual leadership.

**16 December:** Pakistani military surrenders to joint forces of India and Bangladesh.

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36 Bagchi, Vishnupad, *Dakra Massacre*, (Dhaka: 1971 – Genocide -Torture Archive and Museum Trust, 2017).

37 Alam, M. R., “অপারেশন খরচাখাতা,” Prothom Alo (June 15, 2010). Cited in: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100618133522/http://www.prothom-alo.com/detail/date/2010-06-15/news/71002>. Accessed on 15 February 2022.

38 Hasan, Jamal, *Killers and Collaborators of 1971: An Account of Their Whereabouts* (Dhaka).

39 Mohammad, Tajul, *Massacres in Sylhet*, (Dhaka: Sahitya Prakash, 2005).

40 Source: Liberation War Museum - Bangladesh.

41 “Another war crimes suspect arrested,” 21 June 2014, Cited In: <https://www.thedailystar.net/another-war-crimes-suspect-arrested-29605>, Accessed on 1 February 2022.



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman giving a clarion call for a united civil movement for Bangladesh, 7 March 1971.  
Photo: <https://mujib100.gov.bd/>

## GENOCIDE AND THE REFUGEEHOOD OF THE VICTIMS

The 1971 genocide severely shook the entire population of then East Pakistan. More than one-third of its 75 million people became displaced. Nearly 10 million took refuge in India. The people of Dhaka city was reduced by a third. The panic-stricken city dwellers started running for safety, and most people left for the villages. The villagers extended shelter to the fleeing people. Some 200,000 people from Sadarghat in Dhaka crossed the Buriganga River and took refuge on the other side in Jinjira. Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna and Chalna had only 5,000, 15,000, 150,000 and 1,800 residents remaining out of their total population of 40,000, 80,000, 480,000 and 22,000, respectively.<sup>42</sup>

According to a post-war survey undertaken by the United Nations, 16.6 million Bengalis were displaced from their homes and had to seek shelter outside their communities within Bangladesh.<sup>43</sup> While being considered one of the great mass movements of modern times, it was, and will likely remain, one of the largest forced displacement of the 20th century.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1:** Distribution of Bangladesh refugees camps in India, July 1971

State	District	No. of Camps
Tripura	North Tripura	8
	South Tripura	12
	West Tripura	15
Assam	Cachar	8
	Goalpara	5
	Mizo	3
	N. Cachar Hills	1
	Nowgong	3

<sup>42</sup> Hasnat, A, *The Ugliest Genocide in History*, (Dhaka: Muktaadhara, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> Greenough, W.B.; Cash, R.A, "Post-Civil War in Bangladesh: Health Problems and Programmes," in Chen, Lincoln C., ed. *Disaster in Bangladesh*, (US: Oxford U.P., 1973), pp. 241-254.

<sup>44</sup> Chen, Lincoln C. (ed.), *Disaster in Bangladesh*. (US: Oxford University Press, New York 1973).

State	District	No. of Camps
West Bengal	24 Parganas	51
	Nadia	29
	Murshidabad	89
	Malda	66
	West Dinajpur	66
	Darjeeling	1
	Jalpaiguri	35
	Cooch Behar	113
Meghalaya	Garo Hill	14
	Khasi & Jaintia Hills	18

Source: India, MEA I971

One may note that despite keeping the borders open, it was made clear by the Indian government that the refugees were temporary guests and would have to return home. The refugees sheltered in over 500 hurriedly-made camps (Table 1) along the 1350-mile-long common border. Since the refugees were temporary residents, the camps were mainly ‘transit camps.’<sup>45</sup> By April 1971, the Indian Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation decided to establish 50 camps, each with the capacity of 50,000 refugees. By mid-May, the number of camps increased to 330. At the height of the crisis, the Central Government of India ran 17 camps. However, the State governments ran most of the refugee camps, including 486 in West Bengal and 273 in Tripura – the two states with the largest share of the refugees.<sup>46</sup> While the Indian Government bore the expenditure for the refugee camps, over 30 voluntary organisations took part in the relief effort.

45 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, *Fifth Lok Sabha*, (India: LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT, 1975), p. 5, Cited in [https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/4120/1/pac\\_5\\_218\\_1976.pdf](https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/4120/1/pac_5_218_1976.pdf). Accessed on 2 Feb 2022.

46 Luthra, Pran Nath, *Problems of Bangladesh refugee influx and emerging lessons for administration*, (New Delhi: Training Division, Dept. of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Cabinet Secretariat, 1975). See also, Antara Datta, *Refugees and Borders in South Asia: The Great Exodus of 1971* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 58.

By August 1971, the number of Bangladeshi refugees in India stood at 7.55 million. This number later increased to nearly 10 million. Over one-third of the rural population became temporarily displaced either within or outside the country (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Percentage distribution of displaced persons in Bangladesh by districts, 1971

Districts	Remained at home	Fled within Bangladesh for one month or more	Fled to India	Total displaced
Barisal	84.9	12.8	3.2	15.1
Chittagong	59.1	28.7	12.1	40.9
Comilla	78.9	13.2	8.0	21.1
Dacca	66.5	32.3	1.2	33.5
Dinajpur	26.2	30.7	43.1	73.8
Faridpur	61.2	10.8	8.0	18.8
Khulna	38.7	14.9	46.4	61.8
Kushtia Jessore	65.6	13.7	20.7	34.4
Mymensingh	76.1	15.9	8.0	23.9
Noakhali	59.9	31.0	9.0	40.1
Pabna Bogra	57.9	37.2	5.0	41.1
Rajshahi	42.1	32.4	25.6	57.9
Rangpur	56.3	25.2	18.5	43.1
Sylhet	58.9	22.9	18.2	41.1
Rural Bangladesh	64.2	22.1	13.7	35.8

Source: UNROD 1972.

The refugees suffered enormous hardship due to congested housing, starvation, nutritional deterioration. Julian Francis, who coordinated Oxfam's relief operation, assisting Bangladeshis in refugee camps in the bordering areas, wrote about the horrid situation prevailing in most refugee camps in September 1971:

*There are no walls to keep the rain from blowing in, nor any partitions except lines of washing to separate one family from the next. The thatched roof seems to sweat smoke, but just as the smoke drifts out, the rain comes in at every pore, and the mud floor which is their bed gets wet and slimy.*

*Regularly each hut disgorges a hundred refugees or more who form queues for their government rations, queues for the wells, queues for a place at the trench latrines. Those with dysentery seldom make it to the queue. The children form lines for their daily dollop of special nutritious food.*

*This is the totality of life for nine million refugees - there is no work, there is no money. They knew what they were coming to. They knew, that despite everything, it was better than what they were leaving, for here there is a chance of physical survival.*

*We shall go on trying to help them survive here. Please do not give up at your end. But above all, please push, press and persuade everyone with influence until the refugees are safe again. Get them out of these monstrous camps.<sup>47</sup>*

The abysmal sanitary conditions in many of the camps had been a source of concern to many observers. Despite the valiant efforts made by the Indian Government and other humanitarian organisations to cater to the basic needs of these unfortunate people, in some camps, especially during the monsoon season, the condition deteriorated. Those who visited the camps had the recollection of the sight of refugees wading knee-high in a putrid slurry of mud and excrement, hardly able to devour their meagre rations before a swarm of flies consumed them. Over half of the children in the Salt Lake refugee camp in Calcutta were severely malnourished and infected with diseases,<sup>48</sup> particularly cholera and smallpox.

The tent-to-tent survey initiated by Save the Children in July 1971 revealed that nearly 10 per cent of the children under 12 had moderate to severe malnutrition signs.<sup>49</sup> At the Save the Children hospital near Salt Lake, and from discussions with relief workers, the researchers concluded that the mortality and malnutrition of refugee children became dire the longer they stayed in the refugee camps.<sup>50</sup> In May, dysentery and gastroenteritis had spread to refugee camps in West Dinajpur. Three wells in a refugee camp had no protective covering and had become polluted.<sup>51</sup> *Missionaries of Charity* had sent a team to combat the epidemic but was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers. In Malan camp, West Dinajpur, India, fifty thousand refugees took shelter, although the place could accommodate only 20,000,

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47 Francis, Julian. "Reflections On Refugees – 1971 And 2017". 28 Sep 2017, Cited in <https://opinion.bdnews24.com/2017/09/28/reflections-on-refugees-1971-and-2017/>. Accessed on 2 Feb 2022.

48 Hickman, Roger. "DETERIORATING HEALTH OF REFUGEE CHILDREN IN INDIA." *The Lancet*, vol 298, no. 7730, 1971.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 *The Statesman*, 9 May 1971. Accessed on 2 Feb 2022.



Bengali Refugees, Salt Lake Camp, Calcutta, 1971.  
Photo: Raghu Rai/ Muktijuddho e-Archive Trust.

which compounded the public health crisis.<sup>52</sup> With an imminent epidemic near Calcutta feared by the West Bengal government, they appealed to the World Health Organisation to provide syringes, needles, tetracycline, and oral rehydration fluid.<sup>53</sup> A similar crisis was brewing in Tripura, as well. In May 1971, about 2,000 refugees had died of cholera in Nadia, and there had been cholera deaths in Malda, Bongaon, and Basirhat. The camp authority refused many refugees shelter at Sahara camp in Salt Lake because of their sheer numbers, the muddy conditions, and the rain, which made the construction of tents and tube wells for the newcomers difficult.<sup>54</sup>

After the surrender of the Pakistan military on 16 December 1971, the refugees began to return to their respective homes in Bangladesh. By January 1972, approximately six million refugees left India, making it the largest repatriation operation in world history. The rest of the refugees also returned in 1972. The War of Liberation and the massive displacement of the population severely disrupted the economy of Bangladesh. Almost every family had experienced immeasurable material or human loss. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development reported that “most cities and major towns have sizeable pockets of destruction where market places, small shops and workers’ housing once stood ... Numerous villages have suffered heavy destruction, particularly market places and bazaars. The extent of damage and destruction varies greatly both between and within districts; however, few areas have escaped altogether.”<sup>55</sup>

According to another report on Kushtia, “90 per cent of the houses, shops, banks and other buildings were destroyed. The city looked like a World War II German town having undergone strategic bombing attacks.”<sup>56</sup> The Bangladesh Government calculated the extent of actual damage at USD 5 billion (at the rate of exchange \$1 = Tk 25). This calculation was close to the United Nations Relief Operation in Dhaka (UNROD) estimate. However, “Behind the tangible damages lie a world of damages, assessment of which is near impossibility.”<sup>57</sup> One must ponder this with great significance.

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52 Ibid.

53 Datta, Antara, *Refugees And Borders In South Asia* (US: Routledge, 2015).

54 Ibid.

55 Chen, Lincoln C. (ed.), *Disaster in Bangladesh*. (US: Oxford University Press, 1973).

56 Hasnat, A, *The Ugliest Genocide in History* (Dacca: Muktaadhara, 1974).

57 Gupta, J.S., *History of Freedom Movement in Bangladesh 1943-1973. Some Involvement*. (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1974).





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Bengalis fleeing for a safe refuge, 1971.  
Photo: Mark Godfret.

## **GENOCIDE, NUMBERS AND THE ‘INTENT TO DESTROY’**

Genocide often assumes a large number of killings. Although there is no numerical threshold for genocide in its definition under the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the recognition, acceptance and public perception towards a particular genocide is generally associated with the number of killings. But the number debate in the genocide studies is often problematic as many genocides that transpired throughout human history do not have a particular starting and endpoint. For instance, the genocide committed by the Pakistan military and its collaborators took place in many phases, in different ways and various locations.

The estimated number of killings does not correctly consider quantifying suffering and fail in creating affective and emotional responses. In addition to three million deaths in the 1971 Genocide, approximately 200,000 to 400,000 women were raped, of whom about 170,000 women aborted their unborn children. Around 30,000 women committed suicide from torture and humiliation at the hands of the Pakistani military and collaborators. Nearly 5,000 war babies were born and adopted mainly by non-Bangladeshis living outside the country. Almost ten million people fled and took refuge in India. Approximately 600,000 to 1.2 million people died in various refugee camps due to epidemic outbreaks and sub-par conditions in the refugee camps. But what is critical here is the “intent to destroy,” and that, again, it need not be “in whole.” Genocide could also be “in part”, only that the group must fall under one of the four categories - national, ethnic, racial, and religious, as indicated earlier.

The broad range of acts, from conspiracy to complicity ‘punishable’ under genocide, is noteworthy. One should read Articles II and III of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide together. This is because the “intent to destroy” remains at the core of the juridical meaning of genocide. The number of killings is not a factor. Also, time is not a factor, whether the acts were done momentarily, out of immediate anger or hatred, or at a slow pace, running over several years, decades or centuries. In this context, “conditions of life” leading to physical destruction remain as crucial as “killing members of the group,” so long such acts were carried out with the “intent to destroy” in whole or in part. Indeed, the ‘acts’ of killing could be immediate but reproducing “conditions of life” is undoubtedly an outcome of a policy or policies carried out over a longer duration. In this context, there can be no doubt about the Pakistan military’s “intent to destroy” the Bengalis (Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists alike) in the eastern wing of Pakistan in 1971.



Vultures on remains of slain Bengali at the bank of the Brahmaputra river in Mymensingh, Bangladesh. October, 1971.  
Photo: Naib Uddin Ahmed.

## **GENDERING GENOCIDE: RAPE AS ‘AN ACT OF GENOCIDE’**

“Rape” was defined and charged as a “crime against humanity” for the first time under international law in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1998. The International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague corroborated the UN General Assembly’s notion with a ruling in 2001, stating that the rape of civilians is a crime against humanity. There is no doubt that the mass rape of Bengali women in 1971 also constitutes a “crime against humanity.”

Considering the religious, social and cultural background, the Pakistani military and its collaborators carried out a mass rape campaign against Bengali women to destroy the Bengali traditional culture by dehumanising Bengali womanhood. There was also an attempt to wipe out the minorities from Bangladesh during the liberation war. The perpetrators selected the rape victims in 1971, even based on ethnicity or religion. The Pakistan military targeted women during the conflict primarily because they “belong(ed) to” the enemy’s community. It is not difficult to see that the 1971 rape in Bangladesh was committed with the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part,” a particular group.

Although the exact number of rape victims is difficult to calculate, several sources confirmed 200,000 to 400,000. The London-based International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) estimated 200,000.<sup>58</sup> An Australian doctor, Geoffrey Davis, was brought to Dhaka by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the United Nations to perform late-term abortions and facilitate large scale international adoption of the war babies born to Bangladeshi women. When asked to comment if the recorded figures of the number of women raped by the Pakistani military were accurate, Davis stated that “approximately 400,000 women were raped following the military crackdown, and the report of approximately 200,000 becoming pregnant seemed an underestimation.”<sup>59</sup> According to the findings of Dr Jahangeer Haider, then Director of the Bangladesh Women’s Rehabilitation Programme (BWRP): “Nearly four hundred thousand women have been violated of whom at least twenty per cent are social outcasts with their property or their male earning members lost.”<sup>60</sup> Susan Brownmiller claimed “2,00,000, 3,00,000 or possibly 4,00,000 women” were raped.<sup>61</sup> There is physical and material evidence of the birth, death and abandonment of the war babies, many of whom were born in the government established *Seva Sadans*, baby homes and other orphanage premises across Bangladesh.

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58 Ibid.

59 Bina D’Costa, “1971: Rape and its consequences,” an in-depth interview with Dr. Geoffrey Davis, published on 15 December 2010, Bdnews24.com. See, <https://opinion.bdnews24.com/2010/12/15/1971-rape-and-its-consequences/>. Accessed on 1 February 2022.

60 S. Jahangeer Haider, “Women’s Rehabilitation Towards Emancipation: Practice, Prospects and Problems For Family Planning,” Proceedings of the seminar on Family Planning, November 21-25, 1972, Dhaka, Bangladesh. See also, Geoffrey Davis, “The Changing Face of Genocide-Bangladesh,” 1972. Proceedings of the Medical Association for Prevention of War, Volume 2, Part 7, June 1973, p. 176. Geoffrey Davis argued that the report took into account only those who were reported as missing.

61 Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1993).



One of the estimated 400,000 birangona (brave women),  
who were raped during the war, 1971.  
Photo: Naib Uddin Ahmed.

The documentary evidence available through IPPF (from January-April 1972) indicates that approximately 200 reported cases where the victims had committed suicide following her rape to save themselves from the social stigma of shame.<sup>62</sup>

Ferdousi Priyabhashini, who was the first to announce herself as *Birangona*<sup>63</sup> publicly, gave a complete account of the incidents that happened to her in several interviews. She named at least 15 Pakistani armed forces officers based in Khulna and Jessore by accusing them of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault in the name of interrogation.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Mumtaz Begum, another rape victim and a survivor, lamented:

*My body is in pain, but I can't tell you what they did to me. I was unconscious throughout my captivity (which lasted eleven days). I was seven months pregnant when they took me to the camp.*<sup>65</sup>

As an organised military tactic, sexual violence during 1971 operated either in an institutionalised form through rape camps or random attacks in women's homes and surroundings. The Pakistan military practically turned schools and factories into rape camps in 1971. The subsequent Pakistani governments have continuously denied the incidence of genocide and rape. However, the official report of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission of Pakistan highlighted the atrocities, including rape, committed by the Pakistani Occupation Forces in 1971:

*Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, apparently in an endeavour to put the blame on his predecessor, then Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, stated that "military action was based on use of force primarily, and at many places indiscriminate use of force was resorted to which alienated the public against the Army. Damage done during those early days of the military action could never be repaired, and earned for the military leaders names such as "Changez Khan" and "Butcher of East Pakistan." He went on to add: "on the assumption of command I was very much concerned with the discipline of troops, and on 15th of April, 1971, that is within four days of my command, I addressed a letter to all formations located in the area and insisted that loot, rape, arson, killing of people at random must stop and a high standard of discipline should be maintained. I had come to know that looted material had been sent to West Pakistan which included cars, refrigerators and air conditioners etc."*<sup>66</sup>

But unfortunately, no one in the Pakistan military, serving in the then eastern wing of Pakistan in 1971, was held responsible and punished.

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62 Chowdhury, Mustafa. "Rape and Sexual Servitude in 'Occupied Bangladesh'," in Intiaz Ahmed, ed., *Genocide and Mass Violence: Politics of Singularity* (Dhaka: Centre for Genocide Studies, 2019), pp. 1-28.

63 Literally, a brave or courageous woman. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman awarded the term to the 1971 rape victims.

64 Ferdousi Priyabhashini in Shahriar Kabir (ed.), *Ektorer Duhsaha Smriti*, Dhaka, 1999.

65 Yasmin Saikia, Beyond the Archive of Silence: Narratives of Violence of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 58, Issue 1, AUTUMN 2004, Pages 275-287. Interview with Mumtaz Begum, 10 February 2001, Rangpur, Bangladesh.

66 Hamoodur Commission Report. See, [https://www.thedailystar.net/sites/default/files/upload-2014/freedomintheair/pdf/Hamoodur%20Rahman%20Commission%20Report\\_Dawn%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.thedailystar.net/sites/default/files/upload-2014/freedomintheair/pdf/Hamoodur%20Rahman%20Commission%20Report_Dawn%20(1).pdf). Accessed on 7 February 2022.



Sexual abuse: Survivor and victim, 1971.

Photo: Photographer Kishore Parekh

*Bangladesh: A Brutal Birth* (Hong Kong: Image Photographic Services, 1972).

## TESTIMONY ON THE EVIDENCE OF GENOCIDE

Numerous investigations, surveys, estimations, and research have been conducted on the 1971 genocide. Thousands of testimonies and interviews with victims and oppressors were gathered and meticulously studied. Despite certain views to the contrary, overwhelming evidence shows the irrefutable reality that what occurred in 1971 in Bangladesh was *Genocide* in every sense of the legally codified and internationally recognised term.

The different investigative articles and news stories produced by international media and newspapers are some of the most significant testimonials to the genocidal events in Bangladesh in 1971. On 12 April 1971, *Time* reported a death toll of 300,000. *Newsweek* reported 700,000 deaths in late April. *The Wall Street Journal* wrote an estimated 200,000 - 1 million deaths in July, the *Hampstead & Highgate Express* reported 2 million deaths in October. *National Geographic* reported a horrifying 3 million deaths at the hands of Pakistani soldiers in their special report in September 1972.<sup>67</sup> The increasing death toll revealed by these news outlets invariably implies that millions of people have been mercilessly murdered to annihilate a national identity.

Studies on the casualties immediately after the war estimates that even excluding natural disasters, the loss of life was around 200,000 to 1.5 million,<sup>68</sup> a genocidal number even at the lower bounds. This estimate increased gradually in subsequent studies after discovering thousands of mass graves and mass killing spots in almost every district of Bangladesh.<sup>69</sup> One of the foremost statisticians of Genocide, Rudolf J Rummel, calculates a partial estimate of deaths during the war “to be 300,000 to 3,000,000, or a prudent 1,500,000”, which he dubs as a ‘democide’. This umbrella term exceeds the confines of genocide in severity.<sup>70</sup>

There are other elements to the war’s casualties that indicate the genocidal nature of the war. The displacement of an entire demographic of Bengalis cannot be ignored. Estimates of the number of refugees who have been dislocated and displaced are around millions. While the Pakistani government estimated the number of two million at the time, India cited a figure of ten million. Subsequent UN and World Bank assessments corroborated the Indian number.<sup>71</sup> The plight of those refugees during the war is well documented through academic studies, media evidence, and surviving families of the refugees.<sup>72</sup>

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67 Rahman, Arif., *Three Million Deaths: Excess or Reality?* (Dhaka: Nandanik, 2015).

68 LaPorte, R., *Pakistan in 1971: the disintegration of a nation*, *Asian Survey* 12 (2), 1972.

69 Hasan, M A., “Discovery of numerous Mass Graves, Various types of torture on Women” and “People’s Attitude”, Paper presented at ‘BANGLADESH 1971: Addressing Claims of War Crimes, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity’ conference by Bangladesh Study Group (BGSg) at Kean University, 2009.

70 Rummel, R.J., *Statistics of Democide* (Germany: LIT Verlag, 1998).

71 Ibid.

72 Sarker, S., “Treatment of the 1971 East Bengali refugees: A forgotten experience,” *Times of India*, 19 December, 2021. Cited In: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/sarkari-thoughts/treatment-of-the-1971-east-bengali-refugees-a-forgotten-experience/>. Accessed on 1 Feb 2022.



Moreover, there was widespread rape and torture of the Bengali populace. Susan Brownmiller writes, “An Asian relief secretary for the World Council of Churches called a press conference in Geneva to discuss his two-week mission to Bangladesh. The Reverend Kentaro Buma reported that Pakistani soldiers had raped more than 200,000 Bengali women during the nine-month conflict.”<sup>73</sup> Later studies report as many as 450,000 women were raped at the hands of Pakistani soldiers, many of whom became pregnant due to rape.<sup>74</sup> These heinous actions demonstrate the Pakistani government’s *raison d’être* during the conflict, a systematic genocide of the Bengali population.

Ironically, one of the most critical pieces of evidence about the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide comes from Pakistan in the form of the Report of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission’s Inquiry into the 1971 War.<sup>75</sup> Pakistan President and later Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (December 1971 - July 1977) established the inquiry primarily to investigate the events behind their defeat and subsequent surrender on 16 December 1971. In August 2000, the Pakistani daily *Dawn* and the Indian magazine *India Today* released excerpts from the report. However, substantial portions of the report remain highly classified and inaccessible. While contesting the official number of death by a large margin, the report indicated that mass killings of civilians had genuinely occurred during 1971. The report also recounts army officials’ testimony about plotting to arrest and interrogate Bangladeshi intellectuals in December 1971, based on a list they compiled with the cooperation of local collaborators. A copy of the list was discovered in Bangladesh and later published in the media. Many intellectuals on that list were kidnapped and murdered in December 1971 – their families are witnesses to that tragedy. We shall be doing a grave disservice to the martyrs and victims of the genocide if we do not acknowledge it as such.

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73 Susan Brownmiller, *op.cit.*

74 Hasan, M A., *War and Women*, (Dhaka: Tamralipi, 2010).

75 See, Hamoodur Commission Report, *op.cit.*



This photo shows the brutality and cowardly attacks carried out by the Pakistani occupation forces on the unarmed Bangalis, 1971.  
Photo: *Dhaka Tribune* (Collected).



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Martyred Intellectuals at Rayerbazar in Mohammadpur, Dhaka.  
Photo: Photographer Kishore Parekh  
*Bangladeshi: A Brutal Birth* (Hong Kong: Image Photographic Services, 1972).



A commemorative plaque in front of the Arts Building gate with the list of martyred students, teachers and employees of the University of Dhaka.  
 Photo: Hasan Mahmud Prottoy/The Daily Star.

## RECOGNITION OF THE 1971 BANGLADESH GENOCIDE

Two arguments are critical for recognising the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide. From a definitional standpoint, one can argue the merit of the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide as per its standard definition. The second argument is from a human rights perspective. Hundreds of thousands of non-combatant civilians were tortured, raped and murdered is a human rights issue, as it concerns honouring the memory and identity of the hundreds of thousands of victims. Apart from the evidence and legal arguments, the booklet includes references to the research works, documents, testimonies and narratives of the identifiable victims to make a case for the urgency of recognising the Bangladesh 1971 Genocide.

*The Blood Telegram* is an official communication of dissent, sent to Washington DC by the then US Consul General in Dhaka, Mr Archer K. Blood and 29 staff of the US Consulate in Dhaka, which narrates:

*...Our Government has failed to denounce atrocities... [W]e have chosen not to intervene, even morally...in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional public servants express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected in order to salvage our nation's position as a moral leader of the free world.<sup>76</sup>*

The writing of defected Pakistani journalist, Anthony Mascarenhas, who visited the refugee camps in April 1971, entitled "GENOCIDE," published on 13 June 1971 in *The Sunday Times*; the editorial of the US publication *Saturday Review*, titled "Genocide in East Pakistan," published on 22 May 1971; and "The Testimony of Sixty," posted by the eminent personalities, including Mother Theresa and US Senator Edward Kennedy, had accounts of atrocities committed by the Pakistan military in the eastern wing of Pakistan. The British magazine, *The Spectator*, in its issue of 19 June 1971, in an article entitled, "Another Final Solution," had the following:

*We, in this country like to think that among the reasons why we fought the Germans in the last war was to rid the world of the evil of Hitler and his gang and their genocidal final solution. It is easier to imagine Germany's gas chambers than Pakistan's choleric slaughter in the Bengal Plain, but it remains the case and it ought to be declared that the Pakistani crime now matches the Hitlerian in dimension and horror and threatens monstrously to exceed it. Difficult and unpleasant though it may be, each one of us ought to endeavor to the best of his ability to imagine the enormity of the Pakistani crime.<sup>77</sup>*

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76 Bass, Gary J. *op.cit.*, pp. 77-78.

77 "ANOTHER FINAL SOLUTION", *The Spectator Archive*, 19 Jun 1971, Cited in <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/19th-june-1971/3/another-final-solution>, Accessed on 2 Feb 2022.

The International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, prepared a report in 1972, based on documentary evidence and oral testimony collected from European and US citizens with access to Bangladesh and the Indian refugee camps. Three internationally reputed jurists conducted the study from October 1971 to March 1972. Although the military-backed Government of Pakistan did not cooperate, the Commission reviewed key news reports and publications related to the situation in then East Pakistan. The report pointed out that some of the actions of the Pakistan military and their auxiliary forces had been directed against Bengalis simply because they were Bengalis. It also mentions the killing of prominent intellectuals because they constituted a potential future leadership for the Bengalis, the latter stands as evidence of racial discrimination. There have also been cases of discrimination based on “descent, national or ethnic origins.” The report concluded:

*In addition to criminal offences under domestic law, there is a strong prima facie case that criminal offences were committed in international law, namely war crimes and crimes against humanity under the law relating to armed conflict, breaches of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions 1949, and acts of genocide under the Genocide Convention 1949 (Part IV).<sup>78</sup>*

With all these testimonies, evidence and references put forth in these documents and thousands of others not mentioned, it is rather indefensible that this heinous crime has yet to be universally recognised as a genocide globally, particularly by the United Nations and other international bodies. The overwhelming evidence of the violence committed by the Pakistan military in 1971 against the people of then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh satisfies every condition of the UN definition of genocide. Not recognising the events of 1971 as genocide will not just be a severe injustice done to the memories of the victims of genocide; it will be an injustice done to history itself.

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<sup>78</sup> *The events in East Pakistan, 1971: A Legal Study by the Secretariat of the International Commission of Jurists*, Geneva, June 1972. See, <https://www.icj.org/the-events-in-east-pakistan-1971-a-legal-study/>. Accessed on 7 February 2022.

THE SUNDAY TIMES, JUNE 13 1971

# GENOCIDE

ANWER HUSSAIN had run out of luck. Like thousands of other people in East Bengal, he had made the mistake—the fatal one—of moving within sight of a Pakistani army patrol.

He was 24 years old, a white shirt, and surrounded by soldiers he was trembling because he was about to be shot.

"Nervously we would have liked him as he ran," I was informed shortly by Major Walker, the G.O. of the 5th Infantry, as we stood on the outskirts of a hamlet near Dhaka, about 20 miles south of Calcutta. "But we were checking him and he ran into this one here and I saw you have a speechless attack."

"Why did he?" I asked with mounting interest.

"Because he might be a Hindu or he might be a rebel, perhaps a member of an Azadi League. They know we are watching them and they betray themselves by running."

"But why are you killing them? And why pick on the Hindus?" I



by ANTHONY MASCARENHAS  
(the background to the writing and publication of this remarkable report is told on Page One)

"For that's what they did—  
I said, 'It's a mistake. It's  
not a village.'"

Walker gave me a definite look  
and took a warning hand.

As the day went on a crush of  
the few stragglers of green had  
gathered up already as they were  
being shot at.

The kind of a rifle that makes  
the shot more precise the open  
looking.

"When the gun"  
"MURDER!" No, it was in  
about that. I'm a tailor from the  
New Market in Dhaka."

"DON'T know you're a Hindu.  
Why don't you run?"

death in the aftermath of the  
Civil War (and administrative  
headquarters) in Calcutta. I have  
seen thousands of other human  
beings and those who had the  
hardship to try to help them  
killed off "for discipline" under  
the cover of darkness and night.  
I have witnessed the brutality of  
kill and burn operations in the  
open fields, after shooting and the  
rifles, pursued the progress in the  
villages.

I have seen whole villages des-  
erted by "punitive action."  
And in the aftermath of night  
I have followed hundreds of  
refugees in their and immediate  
surroundings.

have tried to move hastily that  
the scale did in the past few days  
in 1971. But you are still keeping  
at large this."

The same thinking, military  
operations, has now become  
routine. It is what the soldiers  
are told to do. The "clearing  
operations" is a euphemism for  
killing. The other is the "evacuation  
of the area." This is a way of  
describing the mass exodus of  
West Bengal into a safe refuge of West  
Pakistan. The military is now  
operating and the reported  
official policy is to "evacuate  
and 'militarize' the part of the  
country which is being attacked by  
the enemy."

words suggest that the progress  
was not the result of a systematic  
or unadmitted reaction to an  
attack.

It seems clear that the  
progress was not the result of a  
systematic or unadmitted reaction  
to an attack. The progress was  
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result of a systematic or unadmitted  
reaction to an attack.

The article "Genocide" written by Anthony Mascarenhas, published on 13 June 1971 in the UK's *Sunday Times*, exposing the brutality of Pakistan's suppression of the Bangladeshis.  
Photo: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16207201>



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The memorial erected in memory of the 1971 martyred intellectuals at Rayerbazar in Mohammadpur, Dhaka.  
Photo: Syed Zakir Hossain/*Dhaka Tribune*.





