

Map 7.1 Bangladesh

CHAPTER 7

Genocide in Bangladesh

ROUNAQ JAHAN

Introduction

The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 was a unique phenomenon in that it was the first nation-state to emerge after waging a successful liberation war against a postcolonial state, Pakistan. The partition of India in 1947 on the basis of religion created a single, independent state of Pakistan, carved out of two primarily Muslim majority territories in the Western and Eastern parts of India, separated by 1,600k. However, over the years, disparities and divisions started emerging between the Eastern and Western parts of Pakistan (Jahan, 1972). The Muslims in East and West Pakistan were divided by language, ethnicity, and culture. Though the Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan comprised the majority of the population, their language and culture were threatened by the non-Bengali ruling elites who belonged to West Pakistan. The Bengalis were politically excluded as the country was ruled by either non-elected civilian leaders or military dictators from West Pakistan. East Pakistan was also economically exploited as resources were transferred from East to West Pakistan (Sobhan, 1962; Rahman, 1968).

In 1970 the Awami League (AL) led by the Bengali nationalist leader *Bangabandhu* Shiekh Mujibur Rahman (Sheikh Mujib), won an overwhelming victory in the Pakistan general election, the first free election held in the country. But the West Pakistan-based leadership refused to hand over power. Instead, on March 25, 1971, they arrested Shiekh Mujib and launched a military campaign throughout East Pakistan. This triggered the declaration of independence of Bangladesh on March 26, 1971, and the start of a national liberation war which received logistical support from India. The liberation war reached its culmination in a

full-scale conventional war between Pakistan and the joint forces of India and Bangladesh. Ultimately, Pakistan surrendered to the joint forces on December 16, 1971.

The nine-months-long liberation war in Bangladesh in 1971 drew world attention because of the genocide committed by the Pakistani armed forces, which, with the support of local militant groups, conducted widely documented massacres, tortures, rapes, disappearances, destruction of property, and forced displacements (Loshak, 1971; Mascarenhas 1971; Schanberg 1971; Coggin, Shepherd, & Greenway, 1971). Newspaper reports, testimonies before the U.S. Congress and other studies published during 1971 and afterwards describe in detail many of the atrocities. The declassified documents of the U.S. government show that the U.S. government officials serving in East Pakistan in 1971 used the term “genocide” to describe the events they had knowledge of at that time and/or were witnessing first-hand (Blood telegram, 1971, published in Gandhi, 2002).

The Pakistani military attacks targeted the Bengali nationalists with a particular focus on selected groups such as the students, intellectuals, and the Hindu community. Estimates of the number of victims vary. Bangladesh authorities claim that nearly three million people were killed; approximately 200,000 girls and women were raped; 10 million took refuge in India, and another 30 million were displaced within the country.

After independence, the new government in Bangladesh made attempts to bring the perpetrators of these atrocities to justice. But internal and international pressures prevented that from happening. However, the demand for justice and accountability were persistently raised by civil society groups within Bangladesh. Finally, in the 2008 parliamentary elections impunity became a major campaign issue and the AL, which won an overwhelming victory, promised to prosecute these crimes. In 2009 Bangladesh established an International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a domestic court with a mandate to prosecute Bangladeshi collaborators involved in the 1971 atrocities. The ICT is conducting an investigation and has begun to issue arrest warrants of alleged suspects. In 2010, four suspects were arrested. These recent actions of the Bangladesh government have received international support. At the same time, the government has been advised to ensure that this justice meets international standards (ICT Briefing, July 2010).

This chapter briefly addresses the following questions: What were the historical forces and trends that led to the genocide? How was the genocide committed? Who committed the genocide? What were the responses to the genocide? What has been the impact of the genocide? What are the contestations about the genocide? And, finally, why is the Bangladesh case important to understanding the complexities of genocide?

Historical Forces and Trends Leading to the Genocide

The Pakistan government's military action and genocide in Bangladesh caught outside observers as well as the Bengali nationalists by surprise. After all, the Bengali nationalists were not involved in any armed struggle prior to March 25, 1971. They were essentially waging a peaceful constitutional movement for democracy and autonomy. Their only crime, as U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy observed, appeared to have been to win an election (Malik, 1972).

A brief analysis of Pakistan's history from 1947 till 1971 illustrates the forces and trends that led to military action and genocide in Bangladesh. Soon after the creation of Pakistan, unelected civil–military bureaucratic elites from West Pakistan monopolized state power and started behaving like colonial masters toward the Bengalis in East Pakistan. The Pakistani rulers threatened the linguistic and cultural identity of the Bengalis. They thwarted all attempts of democratic rule to keep the Bengalis, who were the majority of the population, from gaining control of political decision-making positions (Jahan, 1972). The Bengalis had little representation in the Pakistani military as the British colonialists did not recruit Bengalis in the military, considering them as a “non-martial” race. The Pakistan military, composed of mainly Punjabis and Pathans, imbibed this British colonialist image of Bengalis as “non-martial,” a physically weak race not interested in serving or unable to serve in the army (Marshall, 1959). The following remarks of General Ayub Khan (1967), Pakistan's first military dictator (1958–1968), about the Bengalis in his memoirs reflect the typical attitude of the Pakistani ruling elites:

East Bengalis probably belong to the very original Indian races... They have been and still are under considerable Hindu cultural and linguistic influence.... They have all the inhibitions of down trodden races.... Their popular complexes, exclusiveness, suspicion and ... defensive aggressiveness ... emerge from this historical background. (p. 187)

The conflict between Bengalis in East Pakistan and West Pakistan-based non-Bengali rulers first started over the issue of Bengali language and culture. Though the Bengalis comprised 54% of Pakistan's population, in 1948 the ruling elites declared their intention to make Urdu, which was the language of only 7% of the population, the sole state language. Bengali students immediately protested the decision and launched a movement that continued for the next eight years, until the Pakistan Constitution, adopted in 1956, recognized both Bengali and Urdu as state languages (Ahmad, 1967).

The Bengalis had to defend not only the right to practice their own language, but other creative expressions of their culture such as literature, music, dance, and art. The Pakistani ruling elites looked upon Bengali language and culture as too “Hindu leaning” and made repeated attempts to “cleanse” it from Hindu influence (Umar, 1966; 1967; 1969). First, in the 1950s, attempts were made to force Bengalis to substitute Bengali words with Arabic and Urdu words. Then, in the 1960s, state-controlled media such as television and radio banned songs written by Rabindra Nath Tagore, a Bengali Hindu, who won the Nobel Prize in 1913 and whose poetry and songs were equally beloved by Bengali Hindus and Muslims. The attacks on their language and culture as “Hindu leaning” alienated the Bengalis from the state-sponsored Islamic ideology of Pakistan, and as a result the Bengalis started emphasizing a more secular ideology and outlook.

The Bengali nationalist movement was also fueled by a sense of economic exploitation. Though jute, the major export-earning commodity, was produced in East Pakistan, most of the economic investments took place in West Pakistan. A systematic transfer of resources took place from East to West Pakistan, creating a growing economic disparity and a feeling among the Bengalis that they were being treated as a colony by Pakistan (Sobhan, 1962; Rahman, 1968; Jahan, 1972).

In the 1950s and 1960s, a group of Bengali economists carefully documented the process of economic disparity and marshaled arguments in favor of establishing a “two-economy” system in Pakistan (Sobhan, 1970). The movement toward autonomy initiated in the 1950s culminated in the famous Six-Point Program of 1966, which not only rejected the central government’s right of taxation, but demanded that the power to tax and establish trade and commercial relations, including the establishment of separate accounts of foreign exchange earning, be placed in the hands of the two provincial governments of East and West Pakistan.

However, it was the barriers erected by the powers that be that both prevented the Bengalis from participating in the political process and resulted in their exclusion from state power that gradually drove the Bengalis to demand autonomy, and finally to demand self-determination (Jahan, 1972). From the beginning, the Bengalis demanded democracy with free and regular elections, a parliamentary form of government, and freedom of political parties and the media. But the ruling elites in Pakistan hindered every attempt at instituting democracy in the country (Callard, 1957; Sayeed, 1967). In 1954 a democratically elected government in East Bengal was dismissed within 90 days of taking power. A constitution was adopted in 1956, after nine years of protracted negotiations, only to be abrogated within two years by a military coup. In 1958, just before the first nationally scheduled election, the military took direct

control of the government. This was out of fear that the Bengalis might dominate in a democratically elected federal government.

The decade of the 1960s saw the military rule of General Ayub Khan. It was eventually toppled in 1969 as a result of popular mass movements in both wings (East and West) of Pakistan. However, after the fall of Ayub, another military dictator, General Yahya Khan, who was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, took charge of the government. The Yahya regime acceded to a number of key demands of the Bengali nationalist movement, including the holding of a free democratic national election on the basis of one person, one vote. The first free democratic national elections held in Pakistan in 1970, two decades after the birth of the country, resulted in a sweeping victory for the Bengali nationalist party, the AL. The election results gave the AL not only total control over their own province, but also a majority nationally and a right to form the federal government.

Once again, the ruling elites in Pakistan took recourse to unconstitutional measures to prevent the Bengalis assuming state power. On March 1, 1971, General Yahya postponed indefinitely the scheduled March 3 session of parliament. This, in turn, threw the country into a constitutional crisis. The AL responded by launching an unprecedented non-violent, non-cooperation movement, which resulted in the entire administration of then East Pakistan coming to a virtual standstill. Even the Bengali civil and military officials complied with the non-cooperation movement. The movement demonstrated that the Bengali nationalists had total allegiance and support of the Bengali population.

The Yahya regime initiated political negotiations with the AL, but at the same time flew thousands of armed forces in from West to East Pakistan, thus preparing for military action. On March 25, 1971, General Yahya abruptly broke off the negotiations and unleashed a massive armed strike, which was named Operation Searchlight. In two days of uninterrupted military operations, in the capital city of Dhaka, hundreds of ordinary citizens were killed; houses and property were destroyed; and the leader of the AL, *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was arrested. The army also launched armed attacks in Chittagong, Comilla, Khulna, and other garrison cities. Simon Dring, a reporter with the *Daily Telegraph*, London, and Michel Laurent, an Associated Press photographer, escaped the Pakistani dragnet and roamed Dhaka and the countryside. On March 28 they reported that the loss of life had reached 15,000 in the countryside. On the Dhaka University campus, 17 professors and some 200 students were killed in cold blood (Loshak, 1971, pp. 88–126).

One of the main reasons behind the atrocities was to terrorize the population into submission. The Pakistani military regime calculated

that since the Bengalis had no previous experience in armed struggle, they would be frightened and crushed in the face of overwhelming fire power, mass killings, and destruction. Another factor that influenced the Pakistani military's action was their assumption, as previously noted, of racial superiority as a "martial race." Cleansing of Bengali Muslims from Hindu influence was a goal often repeated by the Pakistani military during the 1971 genocide.

The genocide in Bangladesh, which started with the Pakistani military operation against unarmed citizens on the night of March 25, continued unabated for nearly nine months until the Bengali nationalists, with the help of the Indian army, succeeded in liberating the country from Pakistani occupation forces on December 16, 1971. The atrocities committed by the Pakistani army were widely reported by the international press during 1971 (Loshak, 1971; Mascarenhas, 1971; Schanberg, 1971; Jenkins, Clifton, & Steele, 1971; Coggin et al., 1971).

From the eyewitness accounts documented during and immediately after the genocide in 1971, as well as those published over the last 40 years, it is possible to analyze the major features of the Bangladesh genocide—how it was committed and who was involved, both the perpetrators and the victims in the genocide.

How was the Genocide Committed?

On March 25, 1971, as the Pakistani government initiated military action in Bangladesh, a number of sites and groups of people were selected as targets of attack. In Dhaka, for example, the university campus, the headquarters of the police and the Bengali paramilitia, slums and squatter settlements, and Hindu-majority localities, all were selected as special targets. The Pakistani ruling elites believed that the leadership of the Bengali nationalist movement came from the intellectuals and students; that the Hindus and the urban *lumpenproletariat* were the main supporters; and that the Bengali police and army officials could be potential leaders in any armed struggle. In the first two days of army operations in Dhaka, hundreds of unarmed people were killed on the university campus, and in the slums and the old city where Hindus lived. Eyewitness accounts at the end of this chapter provide chilling insights into the killings on the Dhaka university campus.

The news of the Dhaka massacres immediately spread to the rest of the country. Instead of cowing the unarmed Bengalis into submission, which was ostensibly the intention of the Pakistani army in initiating the brutal killings, nationalist sentiments were inflamed. On March 26, 1971, within 24 hours of the armed crackdown in Dhaka, the independence of Bangladesh was declared over the radio from the city of

Chittagong on behalf of the AL and its leader, *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Spontaneous resistance was organized in all the cities and towns of the country. The AL politicians, Bengali civilian administration, police, army, students, and intellectuals constituted the leadership of the resistance. This first phase of the liberation war was, however, amateurish and uncoordinated and only lasted approximately six weeks. By the middle of May, the Pakistani army was successful in bringing the cities and towns under their control, though the villages remained largely “liberated” areas.

In occupying one city after another, the Pakistani army used the superiority of its fire and air power to its advantage. These operations also involved massive killings of civilians and wanton looting and destruction of property. The leadership of the resistance generally left the scene prior to the Pakistani army’s arrival. They took refuge either in India or in the villages. But, in any case, the Pakistani army engaged in killings and burnings in order to terrorize the civilian population. Again, Awami Leaguers, students and intellectuals, civilian and army officers, and Hindus were selected as targets of attack (Malik, 1972). The army’s campaign against the cities and towns not only led to massive civilian casualties; it also resulted in a large-scale dislocation of people. Nearly 10 million people—Hindus as well as Muslims—took refuge in neighboring India, and approximately 30 million people from the cities took refuge in the villages. Government offices, educational institutions, and factories were virtually closed.

The second phase of the liberation war (from mid-May to September) was a period of long-term planning for both the Bengali nationalists and the Pakistani government. The Bengali nationalists established a government-in-exile and undertook external publicity campaigns in support of their cause. They also recruited nearly 100,000 young men as freedom fighters who underwent military training and undertook guerrilla operations inside Bangladesh. The Pakistani army essentially dug into their own strongholds during this time, with periodic operations in rural areas to punish the villagers for harboring freedom fighters. The army also engaged in large-scale looting and raping of girls and women.

In fact, systematic and organized rape was the special weapon of war used by the Pakistani army during the second phase of the liberation struggle. During the first phase, young able-bodied males were targeted for death; during the second phase, girls and women became the targets of Pakistani aggression. During army operations, girls and women were raped in front of close family members in order to terrorize and inflict racial slander. Girls and women were also abducted and repeatedly raped and gang-raped in special camps run by the army near army

barracks. Many of the rape victims either were killed or committed suicide. Altogether, it is estimated that approximately 200,000 girls and women were raped during the 1971 genocide (Brownmiller, 1981). An eyewitness account of the rape camps organized by the Pakistani army is included in this chapter.

All through the liberation war, able-bodied young men were suspected of being actual or potential freedom fighters. Thousands were arrested, tortured, and killed. Eventually, cities and towns became bereft of young males who either took refuge in India or joined the liberation war. During the second phase, another group of Bengali men in the rural areas (those who were coerced or bribed to collaborate with the Pakistanis) fell victim to the attacks of Bengali freedom fighters.

The third phase of the liberation struggle (from October till mid-December) saw intensified guerrilla action and finally a brief conventional war between Pakistan and the combined Indian and Bangladeshi forces, which ended with the surrender of the Pakistani army on December 16, 1971 (Palit, 1972; Ayooob & Subrahmanyam, 1972). In the last week of the war, when their defeat was virtually certain, the Pakistani government engaged in its most brutal and premeditated genocidal campaign. In order to deprive the new nation of its most talented leadership, the Pakistani military decided to kill the most respected and influential intellectuals and professionals in each city and town. Between December 12 and 14, selected intellectuals and professionals were abducted from their houses and murdered. Many of their names were later found in the diary of Major-General Rao Forman Ali, advisor to the Martial Law Administrator and Governor of occupied Bangladesh (Malik, 1972).

The victims of the 1971 genocide were, thus, first and foremost Bengalis. Though Hindus were especially targeted, the majority of the victims were Bengali Muslims—ordinary villagers and slum dwellers—who were caught unprepared during the Pakistani army's spree of wanton killing, rape, and destruction. As previously mentioned, the Pakistani ruling elites identified certain groups as their special enemies—students and intellectuals, Awami Leaguers and their supporters, and Bengali members of the armed forces and the police. However, many members of these targeted groups went into hiding or into exile in India after the initial attack. As a result, the overwhelming majority of the victims were defenseless, ordinary poor people who stayed behind in their own houses and did not suspect that they would be killed, raped, taken to prison, and tortured simply for the crime of being born a Bengali.

The sheltered and protected life of women, provided by the Bengali Muslim cultural norm, was virtually shattered in 1971. Thousands of

women were suddenly left defenseless and forced to fend for themselves as widows and rape victims. The rape victims were particularly vulnerable. Though they were casualties of the war, many of them were discarded by their own families as a way for the latter to avoid shame and dishonor (Brownmiller, 1981; Jahan, 1973b).

Who Committed the Genocide?

The Pakistani government (the Yahya regime) was primarily responsible for the genocide. Not only did it prevent the AL and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from forming the federal government, but it opted for a military solution to a constitutional crisis. In doing so, it decided to unleash a brutal military operation in order to terrorize the Bengalis. Yahya's decision to put General Tikka Khan (who had earned the nickname of "Butcher of Baluchistan" for his earlier brutal suppression of Baluchi nationalists in the 1960s) in charge of the military operation in Bangladesh was an overt signal of the regime's intention to launch a genocide.

The Pakistani military leaders, however, were not the only culprits. The political parties (e.g., the Pakistan People's Party [PPP]) also played an important role in instigating the army to take military action in Bangladesh. The PPP and its leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, supported the army action all through 1971 (Bhutto, 1971; Jahan, 1973a).

There were also Bengalis who collaborated with the Pakistani regime. During the second phase of the liberation war, the Pakistani government deliberately recruited Bengali collaborators. Many of the Islamist political parties and groups such as the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), who were opposed to the AL, collaborated with the army. Peace committees were formed in different cities and localities and under their auspices *rajakars* (armed volunteers) were raised and given arms to counter the freedom fighters. Two armed vigilante groups (Al Badr and Al-Shams) were trained and took the lead in the arrest and killing of the intellectuals during December 12–14, 1971. Some Bengali intellectuals were also recruited to conduct propaganda in favor of the Pakistanis.

The non-Bengali residents of Bangladesh—the Biharis—were the other group of collaborators. Many of them acted as informants and participated in riots in Dhaka and Chittagong. Biharis, however, also became victims of acts of violence committed by Bengalis.

The Response to the Genocide

The response to the genocide can be analyzed at various levels. At the official level, world response toward the 1971 genocide was determined

by geopolitical interests and major power alignments. Officially, from the beginning, India took cognizance of the genocide and supported Bangladesh. The Soviet Union—India’s major superpower ally at the time—and other Eastern Bloc countries were also supportive of Bangladesh (Jackson, 1975).

Predictably, Pakistan launched a propaganda campaign denying that it had committed genocide. Pakistan’s allies, Islamic countries, and China supported Pakistan’s stance. The official policy of the United States was to “tilt in favor of Pakistan” because Pakistan was used as an intermediary to open the door to China (Jackson, 1975).

At the non-official level, however, there was a great outpouring of sympathy for the Bangladesh cause worldwide because of the genocide. The Western media—particularly that of the United States, Britain, France, and Australia—kept Bangladesh on the global agenda all through 1971. Well-known Western artists and intellectuals also came out in support of Bangladesh. George Harrison, the former Beatle, and Ravi Shankar, master of the sitar, held a concert to support Bangladesh. André Malraux, the noted French author, volunteered to go and fight with the Bengali freedom fighters. In the United States, citizen groups and individuals lobbied Congress successfully to halt military aid to Pakistan. Despite the Nixon Administration’s official support of the Pakistani government, influential senators and congressmen such as Frank Church and Edward Kennedy spoke out strongly against the genocide. Members of parliament in the United Kingdom and other Western countries were also highly critical of the Bangladesh genocide.

Both officially and unofficially, India played a critical role in mobilizing support for Bangladesh. The genocide and the resultant influx of 10 million refugees in West Bengal and neighboring states created spontaneous unofficial sympathy. The press, political parties, and voluntary organizations in India pressed Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to immediately intervene in Bangladesh when the Pakistani army cracked down in March 1971. The Indian government initially refused to intervene but gave moral and financial support to the Bangladesh government-in-exile as well as the freedom fighters. It also sponsored a systematic international campaign in favor of Bangladesh. Finally, in December 1971, when the ground was well prepared, Bangladesh was liberated as a result of direct Indian army intervention (Jackson, 1975).

The world’s sympathy for the Bangladesh people in the aftermath of the 1971 genocide was also demonstrated by the tremendous relief and rehabilitation efforts mounted by the United Nations and private voluntary organizations in Bangladesh. Even before the liberation of Bangladesh, large-scale relief efforts were undertaken by the world community to feed the refugees in the India-based camps. And during the first two

years of the new nation's existence, "as many as 72 foreign relief groups, including UN agencies, contributed to what observers considered the largest single and most successful emergency relief endeavor of our times" (O'Donnell, 1984, p. 112). Nearly \$1.3 billion of humanitarian aid was given to Bangladesh during that period.

However, despite the generous response of the international community in giving humanitarian aid, there was very little support for the war crime trials that Bangladesh proposed to hold. In the 1970s the world community was yet to embrace the human rights framework which became more universally acceptable in the 1990s. Hence Bangladesh's demands for holding war crimes trials did not receive international support. The Indian army quickly removed the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war (POW) from Bangladesh soil to India in order to prevent any reprisals against them. India and other friendly countries were supportive of a negotiated package deal as a way to settle all outstanding issues between Pakistan and Bangladesh, including trial of the war crimes. In 1972 Bangladesh requested that India turn over 195 Pakistani military and civilian officials out of 93,000 Pakistani POWs so they could be tried for their role in specific atrocities. In response Pakistan filed a claim against India in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), claiming that only Pakistan could try its citizens for breaches of the Genocide Convention. At the same time, Pakistan held some 250,000 Bengalis who were working and living in Pakistan, in internment camps. Known as "stranded East Pakistanis," their release was promised by Pakistan only in exchange for Pakistani POWs. After two years of persistent international pressure to drop the war crime trials, in early 1974 India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh signed a tripartite agreement which allowed the Pakistani POWs and "stranded East Pakistanis" to return to their respective homes. Pakistan withdrew its ICJ claim and promised to conduct its own trials. Pakistan also recognized the independence of Bangladesh.

Soon after the end of the liberation war, the Bangladeshi government also initiated actions to bring to trial alleged Bengali collaborators during the genocide. On January 24, 1972 the Bangladesh Collaborators (special Tribunals) Order (Collaborators Order) was promulgated by a Presidential Decree which provided for prosecution of "collaborators" before special tribunals for wide-ranging criminal acts including murder, rape, arson, and genocide. Between 1972 and 1974 some 37,400 people were arrested and investigations commenced. On July 20, 1973 the Bangladeshi parliament passed the International Crimes Tribunal Act (ICTA), which drew heavily on the International Military Tribunal (IMT) Charter used at Nuremberg. The ICTA was to serve as the basis for the establishment of a national tribunal and specialized investigation/prosecution unit to try people for genocide, crimes against humanity,

war crimes, and other crimes under international law. However, numerous clemency measures halted the plans to conduct the trials. In February 1973 the Bangladeshi government passed the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle (Indemnity) Order which granted freedom fighters immunity from prosecution for acts committed in connection with the liberation war. On May 16, 1973 clemency was granted to those who were convicted of petty offences under the Collaborators Order. On November 30, 1973 the Bangladeshi government announced a general amnesty for all collaborators, except those accused of murder, rape, arson, or genocide. As a result, 26,000 people detained under the Collaborator's Order were released; another 11,000 lower-level, local, alleged collaborators went on to face trial and approximately 750 were convicted (ICTJ Briefing, July 2010).

After the military coup and assassination of Sheikh Mujib in August 1975, the new regime adopted a policy of seeking political support from the Islamist parties and groups to counter the AL. As a result, the state policy toward the collaborators was reversed. The new government repealed the Collaborators Order, disbanded the tribunals set up under it and pardoned and released all those detained and convicted. The government also passed an Indemnity Ordinance that gave those involved in Sheikh Mujib's assassination immunity from legal action. The ICTA, however, was never repealed.

The policy aimed at rehabilitating and rewarding the collaborators continued all through the rule of two military dictators, Ziaur Rahman (1975–1981) and H.M. Ershad (1982–1990). These policies were pursued even after the restoration of democracy in 1991, when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), founded by the military ruler Ziaur Rahman, formed the government with the support of the Jamaat-i-Islami. It was then left to civil society actors to undertake transitional justice initiatives.

In 1992 an unofficial People's Tribunal was constituted in Dhaka that conducted a mock trial of several suspected Bangladeshi collaborators and convicted and sentenced them to death in absentia. Organizations such as Gathak Dalal Nirmul Committee and Liberation War Museum began private efforts to collect documentation of the atrocities, carry out public education, memorialize mass graves, and organize national and international conferences. The issue of the trial for the perpetrators of the genocide gained a boost when the former Sector Commanders of the liberation war started a nationwide campaign during 2007–2008 to undertake such trials. The AL finally included it as one of its election pledges before the 2008 parliamentary elections.

Following the AL's landslide electoral victory in March 2009, the Bangladeshi government again announced various steps to prosecute Bangladeshi collaborators, after a silence of nearly 33 years. In late 2009

an amendment to the 1973 ICTA was passed, promising the independence of the tribunal in the exercise of its judicial function and fair trials. Three judges were appointed to the tribunal and a team of prosecutors began investigations. Funds were allocated to conduct the various activities for the preparation of the trials. On July 27, 2010, the ICT issued arrest warrants for four suspects who were all senior leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The government promised that indictments and trials would proceed as of 2011.

While the recent developments in Bangladesh constitute a rare example of a national search for accountability, international observers have raised various concerns about the planned trials, including, for example, the following: the legality of the death penalty under the ICT; judicial independence during the course of the trials; the possibility of victimizing in various ways the political opposition; the potential limits placed on the rights of suspects and the accused; and the lack of specialized experience in investigation and prosecution of mass crimes committed nearly 40 years ago (ICTJ Briefing, July 2010).

The Impact of the Genocide

A major impact of the genocide was the introduction of violence in Bangladesh society, politics, and culture. Prior to 1971, Bengalis were a relatively peaceful and homogeneous community with a low level of violent crimes. They were highly faction-ridden and politicized, but differences and disputes were generally settled through negotiations, litigation, and peaceful mass movements. After the Pakistani armed attack, Bengalis took up arms and for the first time engaged in armed struggle. The genocide, looting, burning, and rapes brutalized the Bangladeshi society. After witnessing so much violence, the people seem to have developed a higher degree of tolerance toward wanton violence. A qualitative change has taken place in regard to people's attitudes towards conflict resolution. Armed violence has now become much more prevalent in Bangladesh.

The role of the Bengali collaborators in perpetrating the genocide has created deep division and mistrust in the otherwise homogeneous Bengali social fabric. In addition, the failure to hold the collaborators accountable for their atrocities because of political expediency created a culture of impunity which impeded the development of rule of law in the country. Protection and rewards given to the individuals, against whom there were allegations of committing war crimes, by post-1975 military governments and the BNP-led governments signaled that crimes would go unpunished if criminals pledge political support to the regime in power.

Additionally, the genocide has had several long-term impacts on different target groups. First, after 1971 many members of the Hindu community felt unsafe and decided not to return to Bangladesh. Furthermore, there has been a steady migration of young Hindus to India even after Bangladesh was liberated, particularly after the 1975 change of regime when the state's commitment towards secularism was abandoned and the government adopted a more Islamist stance. Second, students and youth, who became familiar with the use of arms, did not give them up after 1971. They started using sophisticated weapons in settling political scores. Continuous armed conflicts between rival student groups have resulted in destroying the academic atmosphere and the standard of educational institutions. Finally, the status of women was altered as a result of the genocide. Following the ravage of war, thousands of destitute women, for the first time, entered a variety of paid employment outside their homes, such as public works programs, rural extension work, civil administration, police work, and employment in garment industries. Surprisingly, women's participation in paid economic work did not result in commensurate empowerment of women. Violence against women has not diminished. It has become widespread and common.

Contestations about the genocide

Contestations about the genocide and the issue of Bangladeshi collaborators started soon after 1971. As noted earlier, the Pakistan government steadfastly refused to accept that acts of genocide had been committed in 1971. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission (1972), established by the government of Pakistan, acknowledged that atrocities took place but refers to a smaller number of casualties in its report. Though civil society organizations in Pakistan recognized the genocide and offered apologies to the people of Bangladesh, the Pakistan government never offered a formal apology. In 2002, on an official visit to Bangladesh, the president of Pakistan regretted the "excesses" committed by the Pakistani soldiers but the statement fell short of expressing apologies for the 1971 genocide.

In the last 40 years there has been very little academic debate about the 1971 genocide. No scholar has questioned whether the atrocities have taken place, though recently one Indian academic (Bose, 2005) posited that the number of victims were much less than what Bangladesh has claimed. Her research methodology and findings, however, have been critiqued as flawed and biased by others (Mookherjee, 2006).

Though there is widespread acceptance that massive atrocities were committed in 1971, the issue of justice for the victims and accountability

for the perpetrators became contested even within Bangladesh as a result of regime change. After the 1975 army coup and the overthrow of the AL government, many of the collaborators who had been opposed to the Awami League joined the political parties floated by the two military dictators, Ziaur Rahman and H.M. Ershad. The military dictators chose to emphasize the country's Islamic ideology, allowed religion-based parties to function, and appointed a few well-known collaborators to their cabinets. All of this was done to broaden support for their undemocratic rule.

The gradual ascendance of the Islamist forces in the country became evident when democracy was restored in 1991. After the 1991 election, the BNP, founded by Ziaur Rahman, succeeded in forming the government with the support of the Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, a party which opposed the independence of Bangladesh and actively collaborated with Pakistan. However, the growing political influence of the collaborators of the 1971 genocide enraged the victims of the genocide. Several civil society groups started mass campaigns demanding that the alleged collaborators be tried in a court of law. The genocide and the collaborators' issue, which had been marginalized during the military rule (1975–1990), were again brought back to center stage of the political arena following the return of democratically elected governments in the 1990s.

During the 1996 election campaign, the AL pursued a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it kept Jamaat-i-Islami from forming an electoral alliance with the BNP; on the other, it successfully utilized the anti-Jamaat campaign launched by the NGOs and cultural organizations whose work with education and women's empowerment had come under attack by Jamaat. In the 1996 election, the AL was returned to power after 21 years. The ruling BNP contested the election without the support of the Jamaat and lost, while the Jamaat experienced a massive loss of seats. During the four years of the AL government (1996–2000), textbooks used in public schools and programs in state-sponsored media began to specifically refer to the genocide committed by the Pakistanis (in previous decades, reference was often made to the genocide without specifying the name of Pakistan). However, the AL did little to initiate the war crimes trials during its tenure.

The AL lost the 2001 election when the BNP was successful in forming an electoral coalition with the Jamaat and the other Islamist parties to pool anti-AL votes to win a majority in the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system. Thirty years after opposing the birth of Bangladesh and collaborating with Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami succeeded in gaining a share in state power as a partner in the BNP-led coalition. Two well-known collaborators became cabinet ministers.

Jammat's share in state power further fueled demands for the trial of the collaborators. As noted earlier, during 2007–2008, the Sector Commander's Forum, a civil society initiative of former Sector Commanders of the liberation war, initiated a nationwide campaign to press for trials. The issue acquired a level of political potency and the AL picked up on the issue in its election campaign. The party's massive electoral victory was in some measure served by the pledge. The government has finally begun the process of trying the collaborators. However, these efforts have been criticized by the opposition political parties, the BNP and the Jamaat, who claim that the government is using the trials to victimize the opposition. As of today (mid-2011), there is no consensus between the two main political parties, the AL and the BNP, about the trial of the collaborators.

Why the Bangladesh Case is Important to Understanding the Complexities of Genocide

An analysis of the Bangladesh case is important to understanding the complexities of genocide for several reasons. First, it showcases how the world's response to genocide is often determined by geopolitical interests. Super and regional powers generally recognize or ignore acts of genocide through the prism of their own national interests. In the case of Bangladesh, India and her allies recognized the Bangladesh genocide while Pakistan and her allies, Islamic bloc countries, China, and the United States refused to recognize the atrocities as acts of genocide.

Second, the Bangladesh case exemplifies the difficulties of sustaining world attention on specific cases of genocide for a prolonged period. Though the genocide received widespread international media attention during 1971, very soon after the media turned to other issues and Bangladesh became an almost forgotten case.

Third, the Bangladesh case underscores how once atrocities are started by one group, resistance is organized by the victims, who can, in turn, also commit atrocities. Atrocities committed by one group often lead to retaliatory atrocities by the other groups. The Pakistani military started killing Bengalis; the latter then initiated counter mobilization and the counter attacks were not only aimed at the Pakistani military but also against the alleged collaborators of the Pakistanis, both Bengalis and Biharis.

Finally, the Bangladesh case illustrates the complexities of instituting justice for the victims and accountability for the perpetrators of genocide. Internal as well as external pressures can be created to halt the process of justice. Changes in international and domestic political circumstances and expediency can also impede accountability, as had happened in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh case also shows how the denial of justice and accountability can haunt generations for decades and create deep schisms in society. Despite the fact that after the military takeover of state power in 1975 there was official neglect and denial of war crimes, this could not erase the memory of the genocide and demands for accountability and justice. Civil society groups kept alive the memory of the atrocities through documentation, films, public education, and other forms of memorialization. Demands for justice and accountability were persistently raised by non-state actors. It was argued that democracy and the rule of law could not be established in the country so long as the perpetrators of atrocities of 1971 enjoyed impunity for their crimes. Sadly and tellingly, war crimes and collaborator issues continue to create deep social and political divides in the country.

Eyewitness Accounts

The following eyewitness accounts of the 1971 genocide depict different incidents. The first two eyewitness accounts describe the mass murders committed on March 25 on the Dhaka University campus. The first account is by a survivor of the killings in one of the student dormitories (Jagannath Hall) where Hindu students lived. The second account is by a university professor who witnessed and videotaped the massacres on the Dhaka University campus. The third and fourth eyewitness testimonies describe the mass rape of women by the Pakistanis. The fifth testimony describes the killings in the village of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the nationalist movement. The last account describes the atrocities of the non-Bengali Biharis who collaborated with the Pakistan army.

The testimonies are taken from two sources. One is a Bengali book entitled *1971: Bhayabaha Abhignata (Terrible Experiences)* (1996), which was edited by Rashid Haider and is a collection of eyewitness accounts. Sohela Nazneen translated the accounts from Bengali to English. The other source, *The Year of the Vulture* (1972), is Indian journalist Amita Malik's account of the genocide. In Malik's book Dhaka is spelled "Dacca," which was the spelling used in 1972.

Account 1: Massacre at Jagannath Hall

This testimony is from Kali Ranjansheel's "Jagannath Hall e-Chilam" ("I was at Jagannath Hall"). In *1971: Bhayabaha Abhignata* (1989, p. 5). Reprinted with permission.

I was a student at the Dhaka University. I used to live in room number 235 (South Block) in Jagannath Hall. On the night of 25th of March, I

woke up from sleep by the terrifying sound of gunfire. Sometimes the sound of gunfire would be suppressed by the sound of bomb explosions and shell-fire. I was so terrified that I could not even think of what I should do! After a while I thought about going to Shusil, assistant general secretary of the student's union. I crawled up the stairs very slowly to the third floor. I found out that some students had already taken refuge in Shusil's room, but he was not there. The students told me to go to the roof of the building where many other students had taken shelter but I decided (rather selfishly) to stay by myself. I crawled to the toilettes at the northern end of the third floor and took refuge in there. I could see the east, the south and the west from the window. I could see that the soldiers were searching for students with flashlights from room to room, were taking them near the *Shahid Minar* [Martyr's memorial] and then shooting them. Only the sound of gunfire and pleas of mercy filled the air. Sometimes the Pakistanis used mortars and were shelling the building. The tin sheds in front of Assembly and some of the rooms in North Block were set on fire....

After some time, about 40 to 50 Pakistani soldiers came to the South Block and broke down the door of the dining room. The lights were turned on and they were firing at the students who took shelter in that room.... When the soldiers came out they had Priyanath [the caretaker of the student dormitory] at gunpoint, and forced him to show the way through all the floors of the dormitory. During this time I was not able to see them as I left the toilette by climbing up the open window and took shelter on the sunshed of the third floor. But I could hear the cracking sounds of bullets, the students pleading for mercy and the sound of the soldiers rummaging and throwing things about in search of valuables. The soldiers did not see me on the sunshed....

After they left, I again took refuge in the washroom. I peeked through the window and saw that the other students' dormitory, Salimullah Hall, was on fire. The northern and the eastern parts of the city were on fire too as the north and east horizon had turned red. The whole night, the Pakistani soldiers continued their massacre and destruction.... Finally I heard the call for the morning prayer....

The curfew was announced at dawn and I thought that this merciless killing would stop. But it continued. The soldiers started killing those who had escaped their notice during the night before....

It was morning and I heard the voices of some students. I came out of the toilette, and saw that the students were carrying a body downstairs while soldiers with machine guns were accompanying them. It was the dead body of Priyanath. I was ordered to help the students and I complied. We carried bodies from the dormitory rooms and

piled them up in the field outside. There were a few of us there—students, gardeners, two sons of the gateskeeper and the rest were janitors. The janitors requested the Pakistanis to let them go since they were not Bengalis. After a while the army separated the janitors from us. . . .

All the time the soldiers were cursing and swearing at us. The soldiers said, “We will see how you get free Bangladesh! Why don’t you shout ‘*Joy Bangla*’ [Victory to Bengal]!” The soldiers also kicked us around. After we had finished carrying the bodies, we were divided into groups. They then took my group to one of the university quarters and searched almost every room on the fourth floor and looted the valuables. Downstairs we saw dead bodies piled up, obviously victims from the night before. They also brought down the flag of Bangladesh. . . .

After we came back, we were again ordered to carry the dead bodies to the *Shahid Minar*. The soldiers had already piled up the bodies of their victims and we added other bodies to the piles. If we felt tired and slowed down, the soldiers threatened to kill us. . . .

As my companions and I were carrying the body of Sunil (our dormitory guard), we heard screams in female voices. We found that the women from the nearby slums were screaming as the soldiers were shooting at the janitors (the husbands of the women). I realized that our turn would come too as the Pakistanis started lining up those students who were before us, and were firing at them. My companion and I barely carried the dead body of Sunil toward a pile where I saw the dead body of Dr. Dev [professor of philosophy]. I cannot explain why I did what I did next. Maybe from pure fatigue or maybe from a desperate hope to survive!

I lay down beside the dead body of Dr. Dev while still holding onto the corpse of Sunil. I kept waiting for the soldiers to shoot me. I even thought that I had died. After a long time, I heard women and children crying. I opened my eyes and saw that the army had left and the dead bodies were still lying around and women were crying. Some of the people were still alive but wounded. All I wanted to do was to get away from the field and survive.

I crawled towards the slums. First I went to the house of the electrician. I asked for water but when I asked for shelter his wife started crying aloud and I then left and took refuge in a toilette. Suddenly I heard the voice of Idu who used to sell old books. He said, “Don’t be afraid. I heard you are alive. I shall escort you to safety.” I went to old Dhaka city. Then I crossed the river. The boatman did not take any money. From there, I first went to Shimulia, then, Nawabganj and finally I reached my village in Barishal in the middle of April.

Account 2: Horror Documentary

This testimony is from Amita Malik's *The Year of the Vulture* (1972, pp. 79–83).

At the professors' funeral, Professor Rafiq-ul-Islam of the Bengali Department whispered to me, "At the television station you will find that there is a film record of the massacre of professors and students at Jagannath Hall. Ask them to show it to you."

This sounded so incredible that I did not really believe it. However, I wasted no time in asking Mr. Jamil Chowdhury, the station manager of TV, whether he did, indeed, have such a film with him: "Oh yes," he said, "but we have not shown it yet because it might have dreadful repercussions." He was, of course, referring to the fact that the Pakistani army was still very much in Dacca in Prisoner-of-War (POW) camps in the Cantonment, and it would have been dangerous to show them gunning down professors and students at Dacca University. The people of Dacca had shown tremendous restraint so far, but this would have been going a bit too far. However, I had it confirmed that NBC VISNEWS and other international networks had already obtained and projected the film.

"But who shot the film?" I asked in wonder.

"A professor at the University of Engineering, who had a video tape recorder and whose flat overlooks the grounds of Jagannath Hall," said Mr. Chowdhury.

It was therefore by kind courtesy of Dacca TV that I sat in their small projection room on January 5 and saw for the first time what must be a unique actuality film, something for the permanent archives of world history.

The film, lasting about 20 minutes, first shows small distant figures emerging from the hall carrying the corpses of what must be the students and professors massacred in Jagannath Hall. These are clearly civilian figures in lighter clothes and, at their back, seen strutting arrogantly even at that distance, are darker clad figures, the hoodlums of the Pakistan army. The bodies are laid down in neat, orderly rows by those forced to carry them at gunpoint. Then the same procession troops back to the Hall. All this time, with no other sound, one hears innocent bird-song and a lazy cow is seen grazing on the university lawns. The same civilians come out again and the pile of bodies grows.

But after the third grisly trip, the action changes. After the corpses are laid on the ground, the people carrying them are lined up. One of them probably has a pathetic inkling of what is going to happen. He falls on his knees and clings to the legs of the nearest soldier, obviously pleading for mercy. But there is no mercy. One sees guns being pointed, one hears the crackle of gunfire and the lined up figures fall one by one, like the

proverbial house of cards or, if you prefer, puppets in a children's film. At this stage, the bird-song suddenly stops. The lazy cow, with calf, careers wildly across the lawn and is joined by a whole herd of cows fleeing in panic.

But the last man is still clinging pathetically to the jackboot of the soldier at the end of the row. The soldier then lifts his shoulder at an angle, so that the gun points almost perpendicularly downwards to the man at his feet, and shoots him. The pleading hands unlink from the soldier's legs and another corpse joins the slumped bodies in a row, some piled on top of the very corpses they had to carry out at gunpoint, their own colleagues and friends. The soldiers prod each body with their rifles or bayonets to make sure that they are dead. A few who are still wriggling in their death agony are shot twice until they stop wriggling.

At this stage, there is a gap because Professor Nurul Ullah's film probably ran out and he had to load a new one. But by the time he starts filming again, nothing much has changed except that there is a fresh pile of bodies on the left. No doubt some other students and professors had been forced at gunpoint to carry them out and then were executed in turn. Insofar as one can count the bodies, or guess roughly at their number in what is really a continuous long-shot amateur film, there are about 50 bodies by this time. And enough, one should think.

Professor Nurul Ullah's world scoop indicated that he was a remarkable individual who through his presence of mind, the instinctive reaction of a man of science, had succeeded in shooting a film with invaluable documentary evidence regardless of the risk to his life.

I immediately arranged to track him down and he very kindly asked me to come round to his flat. Professor Nurul Ullah is a professor of electricity at the University of Engineering in Dacca. I found him to be a quiet, scholarly, soft-spoken, and surprisingly young man with a charming wife. He is normally engrossed in his teaching and students. But he happened to be the proud possessor of a video tape recorder which he bought in Japan on his way back from a year at an American university. He is perhaps the only man alive who saw the massacre on the lawns of Dacca University on the first day of the Pakistani army crack-down.

It was fascinating to sit down in Professor Nurul Ullah's sitting room and see the film, twice, with him, the second time after he had shown me the bedroom window at the back of his flat which overlooked both the street along which the soldiers drove to the university and the university campus. When he realized what was happening, he slipped his microphone outside [through] the window to record the sounds of firing. The film was shot from a long distance and under impossible conditions. Professor Nurul Ullah's description of how he shot the film was as dramatic and stirring as the film itself:

On March 25, 1971, the day of the Pakistani crack-down, although I knew nothing about it at the time, my wife and I had just had breakfast and I was looking out of my back windows in the professors' block of flats in which I and my colleagues from the Engineering University live with our families. Our back windows overlook a street across which are the grounds of Jagannath Hall, one of the most famous halls of Dacca University. I saw an unusual sight, soldiers driving past my flat and going along the street which overlooks it, towards the entrance to the University. As curfew was on, they made announcements on loudspeakers from a jeep that people coming out on the streets would be shot. After a few minutes, I saw some people carrying out what were obviously dead bodies from Jagannath Hall. I immediately took out my loaded video tape recorder and decided to shoot a film through the glass of the window. It was not an ideal way to do it, but I was not sure what it was all about, and what with the curfew and all the tension, we were all being very cautious. As I started shooting the film, the people carrying out the dead bodies laid them down on the grass under the supervision of Pakistani soldiers who are distinguishable in the film, because of their dark clothes, the weapons they are carrying and the way they are strutting about contrasted with the civilians in lighter clothes who are equally obviously drooping with fright.

As soon as firing started, I carefully opened the bedroom window wide enough for me to slip my small microphone just outside the window so that I could record the sound as well. But it was not very satisfactorily done, as it was very risky. My wife now tells me that she warned me at the time: "Are you mad, do you want to get shot too? One flash from your camera and they will kill us too." But I don't remember her telling me, I must have been very absorbed in my shooting, and she says I took no notice of what she said.

It so happened that a few days earlier, from the same window I had shot some footage of student demonstrators on their way to the university. I little thought it would end this way.

Anyway, this macabre procession of students carrying out bodies and laying them down on the ground was repeated until we realized with horror that the same students were themselves being lined up to be shot.

After recording this dreadful sight on my video tape recorder, I shut it off thinking it was all over—only to realize that a fresh batch of university people were again carrying out bodies from inside. By the time I got my video tape recorder going again, I

had missed this new grisly procession but you will notice in the film that the pile of bodies is higher.

I now want to show my film all over the world, because although their faces are not identifiable from that distance in what is my amateur film, one can certainly see the difference between the soldiers and their victims, one can see the shooting and hear it, one can see on film what my wife and I actually saw with our own eyes. And that is documentary evidence of the brutality of the Pak army and their massacre of the intellectuals.

Account 3: Our Mothers and Sisters

The following testimony is from M. Akhtaurzzaman Mondol's "Ama-derMa Bon" ("Our Mothers and Sisters") in *1971: Bhayabaha Abhignata* (1996, p. 197). It was translated by Sohela Nazneen. Reprinted with permission.

We started our fight to liberate Vurungamari from the Pakistani occupation forces on November 11, 1971. We started attacking from West, North and East, simultaneously. The Indian air forces bombed the Pakistani stronghold on November 11 morning. On November 13 we came near the outskirts of Vurungamari, and the Indian air force intensified their air attack. On November 14 morning the guns from the Pakistani side fell silent and we entered Vurungamari with shouts of "*Joy Bangla*" [Victory to Bengal]. The whole town was quiet. We captured 50 to 60 Pakistani soldiers. They had no ammunition left. We found the captain of the Pakistan forces, Captain Ataullah Khan, dead in the bunker. He still had his arms around a woman—both died in the bomb attack in the bunker. The woman had marks of torture all over her body. We put her in a grave.

But I still did not anticipate the terrible scene I was going to witness as we were heading toward east of Vurungamari to take up our positions. I was informed by wireless to go to the Circle Officer's office. After we reached the office, we caught glimpses of several young women through the windows of the second floor. The doors were locked, so we had to break them down. After breaking down the door of the room, where the women were kept, we were dumbfounded. We found four naked young women, who had been physically tortured, raped, and battered by the Pakistani soldiers. We immediately came out of the room and threw in four *lungis* [dresses] and four bed sheets for them to cover themselves. We tried to talk to them, but all of them were still in shock. One of them was six to seven months pregnant. One was a college student from Mymensingh. They were taken to India for medical

treatment in a car owned by the Indian army. We found many dead bodies and skeletons in the bushes along the road. Many of the skeletons had long hair and had on torn saris and bangles on their hands. We found 16 other women locked up in a room at Vurungamari High School. These women were brought in for the Pakistani soldiers from nearby villages. We found evidence in the rooms of the Circle Officer's office which showed that these women were tied to the window bars and were repeatedly raped by the Pakistani soldiers. The whole floor was covered with blood, torn pieces of clothing, and strands of long hair....

Account 4: The Officer's Wife

This testimony is from Amita Malik's *The Year of the Vulture* (1972, pp. 141–142).

Another pathetic case is that of a woman of about 25. Her husband was a government officer in a subdivision and she has three children. They first took away the husband, although she cried and pleaded with them. Then they returned him half-dead, after brutal torture. Then another lot of soldiers came in at 8 or 9 A.M. and raped her in front of her husband and children. They tied up the husband and hit the children when they cried.

Then another lot of soldiers came at 2.30 P.M. and took her away. They kept her in a bunker and used to rape her every night until she became senseless. When she returned after three months, she was pregnant. The villagers were very sympathetic about her but the husband refused to take her back. When the villagers kept on pressing him to take her back, he hanged himself. She is now in an advanced stage of pregnancy and we are doing all that we can do to help her. But she is inconsolable. She keeps on asking, "But why, why did they do it? It would have been better if we had both died."

Account 5: The Maulvi's Story

This testimony appears in Amita Malik's *The Year of the Vulture* (1972, pp. 102–104).

On April 19, 1971, about 35 soldiers came to our village in a launch at about 8 A.M. A couple of days earlier, I had asked the Sheikh's father and mother to leave the village, but they refused. They said, "This is our home and we shall not go away."

Soon after I heard the sound of the launch, a soldier came running and said, "Here Maulvi, stop, in which house are the father and mother of the Sheikh?" So first, I brought out his father. We placed a chair for

him but they made him sit on the ground. Then Sheikh Sahib's *amma* [mother] was brought out. She took hold of my hand and I made her sit on the chair. The soldiers then held a sten-gun against the back of the Sheikh's *abba* [father] and a rifle against mine. "We will kill you in 10 minutes," said a soldier looking at his watch.

Then they picked up a diary from the Sheikh's house and some medicine bottles and asked me for the keys of the house. I gave them the bunch of keys but they were so rough in trying to open the locks that the keys would not turn. So they kicked open the trunks. There was nothing much inside except five teaspoons, which they took. They saw a framed photograph and asked me whose it was. When I said it was Sheikh Sahib's, they took it down. I tried to get up at this stage but they hit me with their rifle butts and I fell down against the chair. Finally, they picked up a very old suitcase and a small wooden box and made a servant carry them to the launch.

Then they dragged me up to where the Sheikh's father was sitting and repeated, "We shall shoot you in 10 minutes."

Pointing to the Sheikh's father, I asked: "What's the point of shooting him? He's an old man and a government pensioner."

The soldiers replied, "*Is liye, keonki wohne shaitan paida kiya hai*" ["Because he has produced a devil."].

"Why shoot me, the *imam* of the mosque?" I asked.

"*Aap kiska imam hai? Aap vote dehte hai*" ["What sort of an *imam* are you? You vote."], they replied.

I said, "The party was not banned, we were allowed to vote for it. We are not leaders, we are *janasadharan* [the masses]. Why don't you ask the leaders?"

The captain intervened to say that eight minutes were over and we would be shot in another two minutes. Just then a major came running from the launch and said we were to be let alone and not shot.

I immediately went towards the *masjid* [mosque] and saw about 50 villagers inside. Three boys had already been dragged out and shot. The soldiers asked me about a boy who, I said, was a *krishak* [cultivator]. They looked at the mud on his legs and hands and let him go. Khan Sahib, the Sheikh's uncle, had a boy servant called Ershad. They asked me about him. I said he was a servant. But a *Razakar maulvi*, who had come with them from another village, said he was the Sheikh's relative, which was a lie. The boy Ershad was taken to the lineup. He asked for water but it was refused.

Another young boy had come from Dacca, where he was employed in a mill, to enquire about his father. He produced his identity card, but they shot him all the same. They shot Ershad right in front of his mother. Ershad moved a little after falling down so they shot him again. Finally,

the boy who had carried the boxes to the launch was shot. With the three shot earlier, a total of six innocent boys were shot by the Pakistani army without any provocation. They were all good-looking and therefore suspected to be relatives of the Sheikh.

After this, the Sheikh's father and mother were brought out of the house. *Amma* was almost fainting. And the house was set on fire and burnt down in front of our eyes until all that remained was the frame of the doorway which you can still see.

Altonissa, the lady with the bloodstained clothes of her son, is the mother of Tomb Yad Ali who was shot. They did not allow her to remove her son's body for burial, because they wanted the bodies to be exposed to public view to terrorize the villagers.

They also shot Mithu, the 10-year-old son of this widowed lady. She had brought him up with the greatest difficulty—they never had anything to eat except *saag-bhaat* [spinach and rice]. They shot little Mithu because he had helped the *Mukti Bahini*. You can now ask the ladies about their narrow escape.

Shaheeda Sheikh, Sheikh Mujib's niece, then added that fortunately all the women were taken away to safety across the river to a neighbouring village three days before the Pakistani soldiers came. For months they had lived in constant terror of *Razakars* pouncing on them from bushes by the village pond. Beli Begum, Mujib's niece, a strikingly lovely woman, told me how she had fled from the village when seven months pregnant and walked 25 miles to safety. Pari, a girl cousin, escaped with a temperature of 104 degrees. Otherwise they would all have been killed.

Account 6: Massacre at Foy's Lake

This testimony is from Abdul Gofran's "Foy's Lake—Gonohataya" ("Massacre at Faiz Lake"), which first appeared in *1971: Bhayabaha Abhignata* (1996). It was translated by Sohela Nazneen.

I own a shop near Akbar Shah mosque in Pahartali. On November 10th, 1971, at 6 A.M. about 40 to 50 Biharis came to my shop and forced me to accompany them. I had to comply as any form of resistance would have been useless against such a large number of people.

They took me to Foy's Lake. As we passed through the gates of Foy's Lake I saw that hundreds of non-Bengalis had assembled near the Pumphouse and wireless colony. The Bengalis who had been brought in were tied up. They were huddled by the side of the lake, which was at the north side of the Pumphouse. Many of the Biharis were carrying knives, swords and other sharp instruments. The Biharis were first kicking and beating up the Bengalis brutally and then were shoving their victims

towards those carrying weapons. This other group of armed Biharis were jabbing their victims in the stomach and then severing their heads with the swords. I witnessed several groups of Bengalis being killed in such a manner. . . . When the Biharis came for me, one of them took away my sweater. I then punched him and jumped into the lake. . . . I swam to the other side and hid among the bushes. . . . The Biharis came to look for me but I was fortunate and barely escaped their notice. From my hiding place I witnessed the mass murder that was taking place. Many Bengalis were killed in the manner which had been described earlier.

The massacre went on till about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. After they had disposed of the last Bengali victim, the Biharis brought in a group of ten to twelve Bengali men. It was evident from their gestures that they were asking the Bengalis to dig a grave for the bodies lying around. I also understood from their gestures that the Biharis were promising the group that if they completed the task they would be allowed to go free. The group complied to their wish. After the group had finished burying the bodies, they were also killed, and the Biharis went away rejoicing. There were still many dead bodies thrown around the place.

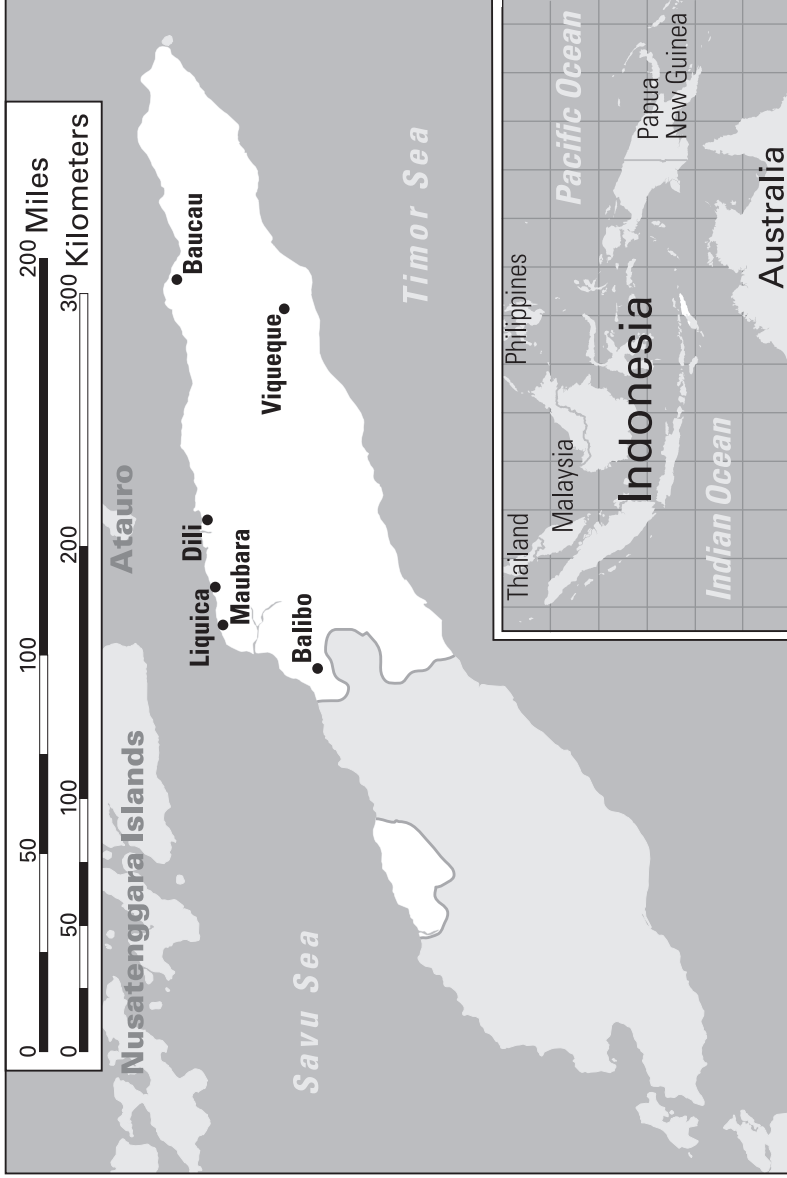
In the afternoon many Biharis and [the] Pakistani army went along that road. But the Pakistani soldiers showed no sign of remorse. They seemed rather happy and did nothing to bury the dead.

When night fell I came back to my shop but left Chittagong the next day.

References

- Ahmad, Kamruddin (1967). *A social history of East Pakistan*. Dhaka: Crescent Book Store.
- Ayoob, Mohammad, & Subrahmanyam, K. (1972). *The liberation war*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Company.
- Bhutto, Zulfikar All (1971). *The great tragedy!* Karachi: Pakistan Peoples Party.
- Blood, Archer (2002). *The cruel birth of Bangladesh: Memories of an American diplomat*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- Bose, Sharmila (2005, October 8). Anatomy of violence: Analysis of civil war in east Pakistan in 1971. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 4463–4470.
- Brownmiller, Susan (1981). *Against our will: Men, women, and rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Callard, Keith (1957). *Pakistan: A political study*. New York: Macmillan.
- Coggin, Dan, Shepherd, James, & Greenway, David (1971, August 2). Pakistan: The ravaging of golden Bengal. *Time*, pp. 24–29.
- Gandhi, Sajit (2002). The tilt: The U.S. and the South Asian crisis of 1971. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 79. December 16, 2002. Retrieved from: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79.
- Haider, Rashid (Ed.) (1996). *Bhayabaha Abhignata*, Shahitya Prakash. Dhaka: no publisher.
- Hamoodur Rahman Commission (1972). *Hamoodur Rahman Commission report*. Retrieved December 28, 2010, from: www.pppusa.org/Acrobat/Hamoodur%20Commission%Report.pdf.
- Jackson, Robert (1975). *South Asia crisis: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. London: Chatto and Windus.

- Jahan, Rounaq (1972). *Pakistan: Failure in national integration*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jahan, Rounaq (1973a). Elite in crisis: The failure of Mujib–Yahya–Bhutto Negotiations. *Orbis*, 17(21), 575–597.
- Jahan, Rounaq (1973b). Women in Bangladesh. In Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt (Ed.) *Women cross culturally: Change and challenge* (pp. 5–30). The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- Jenkins, Loren, Clifton, Tony, & Steele, Richard (1971, August 2). Bengal: The murder of a people. *Newsweek*, pp. 26–30.
- Khan, Ayooob (1967). *Friends not masters*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Loshak, David (1971). *Pakistan crisis*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Malik, Amita (1972). *The year of the vulture*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Marshall, Charles B. (1959). Reflections on a revolution in Pakistan. *Foreign Affairs*, 37(2), 247–256.
- Mascarenhas, Anthony (1971). *The rape of Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Vikas Publication.
- Mookherjee, Nayanika (2006). Skewing the history of rape in 1971: A prescription for reconciliation? *Forum*, 1(2): n.p.
- O'Donnell, Charles Peter (1984). *Bangladesh*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Palit, D.K. (1972). *The Lightning Campaign: Indo-Pakistan War*. New York: Compton Press.
- Rahman, Anisur (1968). *East and west Pakistan: A problem in the political economy of regional planning*. Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University.
- Sayeed, K.B. (1967). *The political system of Pakistan*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Schanberg, Sidney (1971). Pakistan divided. *Foreign Affairs*, 50(1), 125–135.
- Sobhan, Rehman (1962). The Problem of regional imbalance in the economic development of Pakistan. *Asian Survey*, 2(5), 31–37.
- Sobhan, Rehman (1970, December 12). Coming to terms with Six Points. *Forum*, n.p.
- Umar, Badruddin (1966). *Sampradaikata [Communalism]*. Dhaka: Janamaitri Publications.
- Umar, Badruddin (1967). *Sanskriti Sankat [Crisis in culture]*. Dhaka: Granthana.
- Umar, Badruddin (1969). *Sanskritite Sampradaikata [Communalism in culture]*. Dhaka: Granthana.



Map 8.1 East Timor