



**Stateless People in Bangladesh Inc.
Houston, Texas, U.S.A.**

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This is one of the longest running human rights violations by Bangladesh and Pakistan.

In 1971, Pakistan split into two. A new nation, Bangladesh was born.

Thousands of non-Bengali Pakistanis were killed, maimed and left homeless and stateless.

**More than a quarter of a million lost the right of
CITIZENSHIP and became STATELESS.**


**Non-Bengali Pakistanis were left in internment camps
in Bangladesh.**

**34 years later, 250,000 still live a life of utter
deprivation in the camps.**

Another 100,000 live in Pakistan in fear, poverty and statelessness.

Neither Pakistan nor Bangladesh accept them as citizens.

They are on the most painful trek to extinction.

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Group Identification

- Bihari
 - Used mostly in Bangladesh
- Stranded Pakistani
 - Identity preferred by the group
- Urdu-Speaking
 - Ethnic Identity of the group
- Mehsooreen
 - “The Besieged” term used by Urdu language mass media
- **Legal Status: Stateless**

Size & Location of the Group

- 250,000 - 300,000 Stateless and poor in one of the poorest countries - Bangladesh.
- 50,000 - 100,000 Stateless in Pakistan often separated from their families.

The People



The People




The People



The People



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August 1947: Partition of India

- India gains independence from the British.
- Majority Muslim areas become the new state of Pakistan, with Two wings: East Pakistan & West Pakistan.



August 1947: Partition of India

- Great deal of violence on all sides
- Mass Transfer of Population
 - Muslims move to Pakistan
 - Hindus and Sikhs move to India
- Thousands of Muslims of Bihar move to East Pakistan

March 1971: Bengalis Rise for their rights

- Civil war breaks out in East Pakistan after the Government of Pakistan fails to hand-over reigns of power to the “Awami League” (Bengali political party which won majority seats in general elections).
- Bangla majority in East Pakistan favors independence.

1971: By-Standers become victims

- Urdu speaking minority favors united Pakistan, and is generally hated for their political views, cultural affinity (with West Pakistan) and relative prosperity.
- Urdu speaking suffer tremendous violence at the hands of nationalists (64,000 killed, no statistics on injured, Dozens of properties looted and torched) until the federal Government restored law and order.*

* Source: Government of Pakistan White Paper on Civil Disturbances in East Pakistan, August 1971.

December 1971: Civil War Turns in to a War

- India intervenes in the conflict on behalf of the Bengali Nationalists.
- After a short period of hostilities in East Pakistan, Pakistan Army surrenders to the Indian Army on Dec 16, 1971.
- The new state of Bangladesh is born.

1971: End Of War

- 90,000 Pakistani soldiers and civil servants become prisoners of War and are shipped to India.
- Urdu-speaking minority is left to fend for itself and they suffered once again.

1972: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

- To save them from complete annihilation, the Urdu speaking were gathered by ICRC in 66 camps all across Bangladesh.
- ICRC registered all camp residents. 535,000 individuals indicated their preference to return to Pakistan.*

* To see details of the violations of the International Humanitarian Law (Fourth Geneva Convention, Treatment of Civilian in time of War) by Bangladesh visit our website. Also see news reports, videos, excerpts from “Blood and Tears” and “Internment Camps of Bangladesh” presented at our website.

History



1972:
Camps of Bangladesh

ICRC Picture

History



1972:
Camp Residents

ICRC Picture

History



AFTERMATH of the tragic India-Pakistan war is more tragedy. A mother comforts her child dying of cholera that has broken out among Biharis at the Adamjee Jute Mills, ten miles south of Dacca. The Bihari minority sided with the Pakistani army at the price of reprisals from Bengalis in the newly independent Bangladesh.

Bettmann / CORBIS Photo,
January 2, 1972

1971-72: Biharis in Bangladesh*

- Public executions of Pakistani nationalists through out Bangladesh
- Urdu speaking homes looted and burned
- Women raped and abducted
- Most were fired from their jobs public and private
- Government of Bangladesh passed a law to confiscate homes and businesses owned by this minority
- Children expelled from schools
- Bank accounts and pensions were forfeited

* Sources: "Law of Abandoned Properties in Bangladesh", M.I.Farooqui
"Internment Camps of Bangladesh", Loraine Mirza
"Blood and Tears", Q. Aziz.
"Biharis in Bangladesh", M. Rahman

History



A MUKTI BAHINI leader holds a cigarette before putting it to face of a young man at a public rally at Dacca. The youth and three others called “Razakars” or local militiamen under West Pakistani command were executed before 5,000 men and children.

Associated Press,
December 18, 1971

1971: Conspiracy of Silence

- Government of Pakistan blacked out all details of atrocities against the Urdu speaking from reaching West Pakistan in March-April 1971.
- Government of Pakistan also suppressed all details of atrocities against her own citizens after independence of Bangladesh.
- Pakistan refused to allow return of their own citizens in their worst hour of need.

1971-74: Post War Issues and Their Resolution

- 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war were returned to Pakistan
- Pakistan Recognized Bangladesh
- 180,000 Bengalis returned to Bangladesh
- Pakistani Government accepted back only central government employees and permanent residents of West Pakistan.
- All Urdu speaking people were left in the camps of Bangladesh. Both countries denied any responsibility towards them.

Legal Position of Pakistan Government

- A clear violation of the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951.
- All are equal before law; Regardless of occupation, religion, language, color, race or residence in a particular region of country, and whatever the basis of their citizenship.
- Return of Citizens to their own country is not subject to any numerical or time limitations.

Consequences of the Actions of the Govt. of Pakistan

- Rendered hundreds of thousands of people Stateless.
- This population was also denied citizenship of Bangladesh, they have been Stateless

1978: Illegal Amendment of Citizenship Law in Pakistan

- Stripped away nationality of the Stranded Pakistanis
- Amendment of Citizenship Act by Presidential Ordinance.
- Amendment made retroactive by 6 years
- No Rationale or Due Process

The Discriminatory Nature of the Amendment

- The amendment was targeted to an ethnic minority because it effected only this particular group.
- A specific territory was prescribed.
- There is no likely application for the amendment in the future.

1974-todate: Return of Citizens After Denial of Nationality

- Stranded Pakistani (especially divided families) who lost hope of ever being allowed to return to their homeland repatriated themselves and are not recognized as citizens.
- These number between 50,000 and 100,000 and continue to live in Pakistan in poverty and fear.

Violations of International Conventions

- Bangladesh is a signatory to the following:
 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Violations of International Conventions (continued)

- Pakistan is a signatory to the following:
 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Violations of International Conventions (continued)

- Both countries are in violation of many clauses of the above conventions on account of their treatment of this population.*
- All international human rights conventions prohibit arbitrary denial of nationality.



* Visit our website to see all conventions referred to in previous 2 slides.

Other International Norms of Behavior for State Parties:*

Following are additional conventions:

- Convention relating to Status of Stateless Persons
- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
- Right of Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

* All of the above conventions with identification of violations by both countries can be found at our website.

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Life of the Biharis in Bangladesh

- The first generation of Biharis in Bangladesh were turned into paupers overnight. In 35 years it has only gotten worse.

Consequences of Statelessness

Statelessness

- Can not enter or leave any country (no passports)
- No Amenities of Citizenship (education, medical care, employment, housing)
- No effective protection of law
- Open to exploitation

Consequences of Statelessness

Economic Conditions

- Poorest underclass in one of the poorest countries of the world.
- Child labor is not just common - it is required for survival.
- All members of the family have to work just for the bare necessities.
- Average earning 70 cents a day if they can find work. The lowest paid labor force in Bangladesh.
- Those in business have access neither to capital nor credit. They are easy targets of extortion.

Consequences of Statelessness



Health Conditions

- This population is denied access to health care.
- Three out of 5 babies won't make to age 5.
- Serious communicable diseases like Tuberculosis and Typhoid fever are common.
- Water borne diseases like Cholera, dysentery and skin rashes are rampant.
- Diseases which have been wiped out in many parts of the world are still thriving in this population such as Malaria and Polio.

Consequences of Statelessness



When it comes to disease children are the most vulnerable group



Educational Conditions

- A whole generation born or raised since 1971 has been locked out of education and therefore has no marketable skills.
- Most parents can't put kids in to school not only because they can't afford school fees, they can't afford school uniform and transportation either.
- Their children are denied admission to schools.

Consequences of Statelessness

Housing Conditions

- Cramped, crowded living conditions:
 - Take Mohammadpur Camp near Dhaka as an example — over 22,000 people have been living on a lot the size of a football field for over 34 years.
 - An average family of 6 to 9 (grand parents, parents and children) live in a 10'X10' hut.
 - Routinely subject to harassment by commercial interest groups trying to evict them.
 - They can't move out of camps on account of poverty.

Consequences of Statelessness



Three walls with a tin or plastic sheet above qualifies as protection against monsoon rains and December chills.

Consequences of Statelessness



Another so called home.

Consequences of Statelessness



Dozens of huts like these burn down every year in suspicious fires, killing the occupants and burning their meager possessions.

Consequences of Statelessness





Play space for children is unheard of. Most residents can't even afford to buy a few sheets of iron to repair their shelters.

Consequences of Statelessness

A Recent Development in Bangladesh

- Dhaka High Court decision accepted camp residents as Bangladeshi citizens.
- Bangladesh Government has not taken any administrative, restorative, or rehabilitative steps that might make a difference in the lives of the Stateless.
- 3 years later, suffering of the Stateless continues.

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Solution in Bangladesh:

- Bangladesh Government should formally announce acceptance of her Stateless population (living in her borders) as her citizens.
- Direct all of its employees, departments, institutions, agencies and consulates to treat the Stateless as equal citizens of Bangladesh
- In consultation with community representatives, national and international charitable and humanitarian organizations - consider such measures as may be necessary and desirable for uplifting of this population from disenfranchisement of the last 35 years.

Solution in Pakistan:

- The Government of Pakistan should distribute temporary ID cards which were prepared for the Stranded Pakistanis in 1992 and are in safekeeping of the Rabita office in Dhaka.
- Many will relocate themselves, others will be helped to relocate by relatives and charitable organizations. This can all be accomplished in just a few months at no or little cost to the Government of Pakistan
- The Government of Pakistan must recognize the citizenship of all within her borders.
- Take all such steps as may be necessary and desirable to rehabilitate the returning citizens. Use currently available funds and raise more if required.

Conclusions

- This population must have citizenship of a State based on self-determination.
- Bangladesh must grant her citizenship to all in her borders who want to become Bangladeshis.
- Pakistan must grant her citizenship to all those who still want to return to Pakistan, and recognize nationality of all within her borders.

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Who we are?:



- We are a non-profit, non-political human rights organization to provide legal advocacy to the stateless people in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- We are registered under the laws of the State of Texas, USA as a non-profit corporation.
- Directors of the organization receive no financial or material compensation for their work.
- We believe in non-violent struggle, peaceful co-existence and respect of law.

Mission:

- Inform about the stateless people in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Assist them in gaining their basic human rights.
- Keep abreast of developments around the world as it effects stateless people in the two countries.
- Give voice to the Stateless.
- Advocacy on behalf of stateless.
- Create repository of historical information and legal evidence about persecution of this minority.

Projects:

- Create a world class web site as a virtual meeting point for all those interested in the welfare of this population (completed).
- Take action in National and international venues for the restoration of the rights of this group.
- Create a documentary for public education and fund raising purposes.

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Call For Action

- Learn more about the issue
- Visit our web site
- Talk to or e-mail everyone in your address book to learn more about this tragedy
- Volunteer your time and talent
- Help us accomplish our mission by donating money.

We are a 501(c)3, tax exempt organization, your donations are tax deductible.

Contact Information

- E-mail: Info@statelesspeopleinbangladesh.net
- Address: 3615 Brier Gardens Drive
Houston, Texas 77082 U.S.A.
- Daytime: 713-690-6300
- Evening: 281-496-7292
- Cell: 832-884-9473
- Fax: 443-581-2332
- Toll Free: 877-454-6914



Thank you for allowing us to tell you an important story



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