Bangladesh 1971:
Addressing Claims of War Crimes, Genocide
And
Crimes Against Humanity
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Collected Eye Witness Stories from Various States
Collection II
By
Bangladesh Study Group, Kean University
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April 20, 1971: The Day of Humiliation
Dr. Abdul Momen, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United Nations, New York

Around 9 O’clock in the morning, the Pakistan army launched a campaign against the freedom fighters who organized the well known ‘Baitikorer Juddho’ (fight of Baitikor). It lasted for hours. When the fight was over, the Pakistani army arrested us and took us away. However, they released the old aged people including a local doctor who was nearly 80. They kept the young ones like us and started asking questions one after another. They brought us to a school near Ronikhail. They ordered me to get undressed and checked my penis as to ascertain whether I am a Muslim [as if, if you do not have circumcision then you are not a Muslim] and made sarcastic remarks. One young person was afraid and tried to run away but he was shot. As I wanted to help the person, they beat me mercilessly. We were kept on the roadside (Fulbari-Badeshor-Karimgonj road) in a kneel-down position for the whole night. It was cold and it was drizzling. But we had to endure the tortures, as we were Bengalis by birth!

The following morning, a young officer, Major Rob ordered us to march with them. They kept us in the front line and asked us to show them the Mukti (freedom fighters), Awami League and Hindu houses. Since I never lived there, I started to argue with them. However, it did not help. Instead, they got mad and cut my wrist with a bayonet. Those marks of tortures are my pride of liberation movement and they vividly remind me of my duty to my motherland.

We led five platoons of army, three on the main road, and two off the road. If there were any inhabited locality, the army fired their big guns to get a response. If there were no responses, then they proceeded onward. We had to do this for the whole day in wretched conditions with no shoes, no sandals, no food, and no water. As I objected, they beat me again and in the process, I lost consciousness. When I regained my consciousness, I found myself in front of Lt Col. Sarfaraz Malik, the commanding officer. He asked me a variety of questions. He commented that ‘You are an Awami Leaguer, a Mukti’. He said, he had my photograph among the demonstrators in Sylhet. I challenged him and explained to him that I was living in Rawalpindi during 1969 and 1970 and I just came to Sylhet only on March 24th. He asked many questions about my staying in Rawalpindi and miraculously, he found that I was close to his cousin who was a teacher at the Rawalpindi Women’s College. I knew the names of his nieces and nephews. Finally, he released me and said he would visit my parents.

They Killed My Father Inside the Hospital
Ziauddin Ahmed, M.D., Philadelphia

My father Dr. Shamsuddin Ahmed was chief and Professor of Surgery at Sylhet Medical College in 1971. He was always involved in many humanitarian activities and organizing medical profession throughout his life. When the Pakistani army started the Genocide on 25th march of 1971 the whole city was overwhelmed. The main medical college hospital was filled with people with bullet injuries. Panic stricken people including all the doctors of medical college started evacuating the town. My father decided to stay in the hospital with the wounded but sent his family including his old mother away to the village. My mother, the principal of the Women’s College decided to stay at home, so if needed she could go to the hospital in case of any the hospitalized patients required help.

One young physician, an ambulance driver and a male nurse also stayed with him in the hospital to take care of the causalities. The genocide and killing intensified in the city and more injured people started filling the hospital. My father and his team had to remain inside the hospital for continuous 3 days due to curfew. On April 9th the Pakistani army entered the hospital and shot my father point blank including the other members of the team and some patients inside the hospital. Next 3 days due to curfew nobody knew what had happened. During few hours of curfew break, my father’s uncle went in search of
him and found him and others dead inside the hospital compound. He with the help of some family members and friends hurriedly buried them inside the hospital compound. The life changed suddenly to my mother, my grandmother and five of my siblings. My father was the only son and my grief stricken grandmother died within a year. My mother became very sad and kept herself very busy with her college and raising us single handedly. She never talked about those days until very recently. My brother and sisters still find very painful to reminiscence any memory.

My Brother Was An Innocent Victim of the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh
Aminur Rashid, Pharmacist, New Jersey

Like any family in Bangladesh, when we grow up and take charge of our life, we always look forward to come to assistance to our parents. My brother Shahid Mansurur Rahman laid his life in the same way. Being a graduate in Agricultural Science, he was planning to pursue further studies. But for the sake of the family he took a job in a Tea Garden – which was owned by West Pakistani group. During the month of March of 1971, he was having a family vacation with us away from his job. But when he learned that the Pakistani manager had left the garden, he decided to go back to the garden to help the poor laborers. We could not stop his allegiance to the duties.

Once the Pakistani Army took over control of Chittagong (the port city of Bangladesh), they arrested him. Took him to custody, we had no knowledge of his whereabouts. They tortured him. For days and nights he was without food or water. They tried to get some information about the whereabouts of freedom fighters, which he had no idea of. The ruthless Pakistani Army finally shot him to death. My father tried in vain to rescue his body.

All we know, like any other Shahids (martyrs of our independence struggle) – his soul, his body and blood is a part of this new nation – which wants to thrive in its own culture, history and dignity.

Malnichara Tea Garden - A Genocide Committed By Pakistan Army in 1971.
Hassan Nawaz, Delaware and Ayesha Fazlullah, Philadelphia

Malnichara Tea Garden is just on the outskirt of Sylhet town in Bangladesh. Its lush green plantation canopyed by the giant rain trees is a sight to see from the roadside on the way to the Sylhet Airport. In 1971 April 6th it was no different, except the Pakistan army was moving into Sylhet town after taking control of the Airport. On their way they systematically killed people to occupy the land. The green tea plantation turned into a killing field with the blood of unarmed innocent Bengalis.

We do not know exactly what took place in those eventful hours but we came to know later that whoever was living in Malnichara Tea Garden that day was executed. The acting manager Shawkat Nawaz was in charge of the tea plantation when the management of the company evacuated a non Bengali manager from Malnichara for his safety. During the non-cooperation movement which started after 1st of March 1971, when the President of Pakistan Yahia Khan postponed the commencement of the newly elected National Assembly, Shah Nawaz along with two of his friends arrived at the garden for a visit from Dacca. All of them including the household helpers living in the bungalow were killed. We did not know about their whereabouts until sometimes in October of 1971 when our father, Noorul Hossain personally made a trip to Sylhet and came to know their fate, that they were all killed by the Pakistan Army. Before that we were even told that they may have taken shelter in India.

After the liberation of Bangladesh when I visited Malnichara Tea Garden along with our family, I saw remains of the bodies which I recognized by their worn-out garments, lying in a ditch inside the tea
garden. The shirts they were wearing still had dark patches on them with bullet holes. These brutal killings and murders by the Pakistan army were never put on trial. They were never punished for killing innocent unarmed civilians.

My brother Shawkat Nawaz was the friendliest person ever lived on the face of this earth. He could make friends with anyone in no time. He was a natural talent. He could pickup any musical Instrument and play just by observing someone playing. He never took any art class but he could draw or paint without any effort. The most tragic part was that he was engaged to be married and his wedding date was yet to be announced.

Everything changed on the night of 25th March, 1971 when Pakistan Army came down upon the innocent people of Bangladesh and killed them to occupy and rule violating all human rights. In his last letter to his youngest sister, Shawkat Nawaz wrote- "This is the defining moment for us Bengalis to be truly independent once for all". He did not see the independent Bangladesh, but he and thousands of Bengalis laid down their lives to become martyrs for an independent Bangladesh for us to live in free country.

The Killing of My Father, Serajuddin Hossain, News and Executive Editor of The Daily Ittefaq.
Fahim Reza Noor, Businessman, New York

10th December after midnight a gang of thugs knocked at our door. It was blackout, curfew. Around 1:30 after midnight we heard the first knocks at the door. My second eldest brother Shaheen, younger brother Saleem and one uncle were in the living room; they asked "who's there?" but no one answered. 10 to 15 minutes went by. Someone kept on knocking at the door and my brothers were kept inquiring “who was there” but still nobody replied! That caused panic all over the house! My father woke up and asked from his bedroom “who’s knocking at the door?” Soon after, my father and others came into the living room from their respective bedrooms. We turned the light on and tried to see outside through the window but we only saw total darkness. After waiting few more minutes my father decided to open the door to make sure what was really happening there! My mother and aunt told him not to do so, but my father convinced them that it may be someone in need of help. He opened the door and saw no one but a white street dog leaning on the door! We were relieved and went back to bed.

At 3:30 a.m. again we heard harder knocks at the door! We woke up and my brothers at the living room turned the light on again and asked the same question. My father woke up too and started calling us by our names to inquire what was really going on at the front door. This time my brothers in living room got a response from outside. They recognized it was our landlord, who asked to open the door. My brothers thought the landlord and his family was in danger, maybe my father could help them, so my brother decided to open the door. My brother just opened the door half way and at a lighting speed the barrel of a rifle got in, some one screamed "hands up". In thundering speed near about 10 armed men entered into the room. Most of them wore masks. Keeping the people in the living room at gunpoint they were asking the names of each one of us one by one in Urdu language. They then took them to the outside verandah, where the whole family of our landlord was standing at gunpoint. By that time I rushed to my father's door to let him know that the embodiment of death, the Pakistan army and Rajakars, Al Badrs were there.

We had a great confidence that if my father revealed who he was, then the Pakistani army and the collaborators would not do any harm to us! My father got up from his bed and rushed to get his Punjabi – the traditional Bengali outfit, during which time my mother opened the door to see what was happening to the screaming children, but alas! Armed Razakars, Al Badrs and army personnel entered the bedroom of my parents and rushed to my father and asked for his identity at gunpoint. My father only could say,
"Serajuddin Hossain, Executive editor of daily Itte…" A harsh voice screamed "hands up, Au o hamara saath' (Come along with us). My father could not wear his Punjabi, he was just wearing a Sando Genji (wife beater), and Lungi – the traditional Bengali casual dress, he was bare footed and holding a flashlight in his hand.

They brought him out and hurriedly told us to go to inside of the room and shut the door, they threatened us not to look through windows or even try to follow them; they said they would shoot if we did not follow the instruction! My father at that point was only asking us to take the flashlight from his hand. One of my brothers went and took the flashlight. At one point, one of the armed persons asked for a piece of cloth and I handed over to him a gamchcha (towel). Then they walked away, under the severe December cold, and took my father barefoot. We did not see our beloved father again!

I cannot wipe out my father’s memory for a moment. I cannot go further; I cannot imagine what happened next, I wish my father could escape that inhuman torture and cruelty of Pakistan Army, Razakars and Al Badrs. I wish I had seen him again! Probably he had the same fate as thousand others. The killing fields of Rayer Bazar and Kata Shur revealed the aftermath of that such kidnapping. Innocent unarmed Bengali people's tragic fate in those killing fields exposed the brutality and tortures of the Pakistan army; such crime against humanity is evident all over Bangladesh.

I Witnessed Horrible Acts
Ratan Barua, New York.

On 25th March 1971, I was visiting my cousin, Swapan Chowdhury more known as Badal in the evening. Badal Da’ used to live at Chandanpura; the house was right opposite of Chittagong College. At about 11 pm, the peaceful still night of the port city Chittagong was suddenly shattered by the thundering cannon fire shots coming from the direction of the seaport, and failing to sleep or even lie down in bed and with spiraling tension, I came out of the house to join hundreds on the streets. I, among others, went straight to raid the Kotowali Police Station, collected some arms and weapons, and reached Madunaghat early in the morning the following day and registered myself with the Madunaghat freedom fighters’ temporary camp. Because I used to live in the nearby village, I was assigned the task of buying the food items from the village bazaars and cooking them for the freedom fighters living in the camp. I gathered few people from the village and dutifully carried over the assignment of preparing foods along other tasks assigned to me by the camp.

On 15 April 1971, the Pakistan Army attacked and took over the temporary camp in Madunaghat. In order to survive, I left the area. Because I was a freedom fighter, my family paid the price as the army could not find me where I used to be. The Pakistani soldiers first killed my older uncle Dr. Ramesh Barua by firing bullets at him as he lived near by the monastery. The soldiers captured my other uncle, Bankim Barua and took him to their temporary army camp at Madunaghat. After few days of brutal torture the soldiers killed my uncle by stabbing him with bayonets and threw his dead body into the nearby Halda River. While all these incidents took place, I was hiding myself inside a bush in the village. I came out of the bush at night went straight to my uncles’ house and with the help of a few neighbors; I buried the dead bodies of my uncle instead of cremating per Buddhist custom, and went into hiding again.

On 21 April, I went to another village to look for one of my friends. When I reached my friend’s house a man named Jalal accidentally tracked me down. He used to serve in Pakistan army during 1965. Jalal saw me entering my friend’s house. He went straight to the Madunaghat army camp and returned to the village with Pakistanis soldier riding on their jeep. The whole village panicked watching the Pakistani soldiers entering the village in their jeeps. I, along with my friend became aware of the situation and exited through the backdoor of the house. We hid ourselves under water of a small pond that was filled
with hyacinths, merely breathing by raising the tips of our noses above the water. When the Pakistani soldiers attacked the village, all but two women fled from their homes to safety. These women were a mother of about 55 years and her daughter who was between 19 to 21 years.

Today I am recapturing this horrible incident with immense pains in the heart. Those two women could not escape the heinous acts of the Pakistani soldiers. They gang-raped the two women one after another and left their bodies bathed in bloods. The Pakistani soldiers, failing to find us, tortured the two innocent women in the village and satisfied their physical lusts. When the soldiers left the village, we came out of the pond and at night we brought them over to the safer area and arranged for their treatment by a medical doctor.

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An Eyewitness of the Massacre in Barisal
Dr. Abdul Baten (Wounded Freedom Fighter), New York

During the March, 1971, I was a First year College Student in Barisal. After the barbaric attack on innocent civilian by Pakistani Army on night of March 25, the father of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the Independence on radio and formal war of liberation started. First week of April my friend Kutub and Eysin told me that they were leaving from our student hall (Dorm) for safety. They advised me to leave the dorm as well. April 16th we heard the news that Pakistani Army was moving toward Barisal. We prepared to move to our village home in Mehendigonj, 30-35 miles north of Barisal City.

On 17 of April around 1 p.m., we went to Barisal steamer ghat (pier) to catch a steamer to go to my village. Suddenly Pakistani Air Force fighter planes started bombing toward innocent people. People started to take shelter where ever they could. I took shelter in a near by tin shade building. Some time the sound of shell-fire was suppressed by the sound of bomb explosions. In few minutes Barisal steamer pier transformed into a bloody war field. I don’t have the words to express the bestiality and barbarity that was perpetrated on Barisal steamer (ghat) pier area and adjoining residential areas, for a period of 30 minutes. We gave up all hope for our life, and were waiting for death to come. I even thought that I was dead.

After the air raid stopped, I saw with my own eyes 15-20 dead bodies around me, some of the people were still alive but wounded. The smoke and fire, the smell of gun powder and the stench of burning corps all transformed the area into a fiery hell. I was so terrified that I could not even think of what I should do. I tried to escape from that area, I crawled about 500 feet and then run to Sadar road. I saw Mr. Quddus also running toward Sadar road. I asked him for a safe place. He told me to go with him to his village Taltoli 4-5- miles away from Barisal city. We found a rickshaw escaping that area and moving fast towards Kawnia, Amanatgonj. We jumped to that moving rickshaw and asked the rickshaw puller to take us to Taltoli. When we reached in Taltoli around 3pm, and we heard the sound of shells burst and guns firing nearby. The rickshaw puller did not take any money. We took shelter and hid near a very old graveyard under a tree on the farthest side, about 1000 yards from the bank of the river Kitton Khola.

The Pakistani Navy gun boats started firing towards our location. From my hiding place I could see some Pakistani troops land on the bank from the gun boats with light machine guns and semi automatic rifles and surround the area. Just as fish are caught in a net, so too were the people of that area. The army forced everyone, including men and women and children to line up in an open field near the bank of the river Kitton Khola. At first young men between the ages of 20 and 30 were lined up separately and were shot to death on the spot. Then the Pakistani troops shot the rest of the people. From my hiding place I witnessed the mass murder that was taking place.
The gunfire lasted for 1 hour. Afterwards the army proceeded towards Barisal town. The smell of fresh gun powder was everywhere. The air became heavy. I heard some children crying. Later we escaped from the graveyard. There were piled up dead bodies on the open field, blood streamed into the river, it became a river of corpse. I tried helping the wounded as much as possible with Mr. Quddus and some other villagers. I was there until dark, and then Mr. Quddus showed me the way to go to my village and helped me to find a boatman to cross the river. Thereafter I started to walk to my village home. On the way home I also saw dead bodies floating in the river.

After walking for 2 days and 3 nights I reached my village. My family was happy to see me alive. I found my cousin Dr. Altaf and his family had escaped from Dhaka massacre and joined our family. He informed me that about 50,000 people were killed on 25th of March in Dhaka. He saw thousands of dead bodies floating down the river on the way home to Barisal too. On April 27th the Pakistani army came to our area Mehendigunj, burned many houses and looted numerous. I learned my high school friend Tofael Khondekar (Manik) was taken by Pakistani army and killed. Since I narrowly escaped my death, I decided to join the fight for liberation as a freedom fighter. To this day I still have the nightmares of Barisal massacre.

My Father: Rashidul Hasan
Suraiya Amina, Philadelphia

It has been almost thirty-eight years that Bangladesh has achieved her independence. An estimated three million people were killed during the birth of a new nation. Still we managed to emerge as an independent nation on December 16, 1971. With a heavy heart, I am saying that my father was also killed in this genocide. He was brutally killed - blindfolded along with the other intellectuals.

My father, Rashidul Hasan, was a faculty in the Department of English of Dhaka University. Although he was a teacher in English, he greatly appreciated our mother tongue Bengali and our Bengali culture. When my father died I was very young, so I borrowed all the memories of my father from my brother's and sister's stories. I also get a clear picture of my father from his diaries. One of his diaries is preserved in our National Museum. My father was a very simple and jolly person. He was a keen observer and a very good analyst of social and political changes. Even though he was never involved in active politics but was very politically aware. He openly supported the political parties and the movements of students against then Pakistani ruler.

On December 14, 1971, just two days before our independence, Al-Badar Bahini (the militia wing of local collaborators of the Pakistani Army) took my father away. After twenty-two days of disappearance his decomposed body was found in the Mirpur Killing ground along with the dead bodies of other intellectuals. My mother was asked to identify my father from the decomposed bodies. How hard was this for a young wife? My mother sacrificed all kinds of enjoyment and good things in her life for her beloved children. A thirty years young widow engaged herself in raising her three children. We were twelve, ten and one years old then. Does the nation even today recognize the hardship of such widows to raise a family when they lost their only earning member? Do they know the gruesome killings of these intellectuals? After thirty-eight years of independence, still there are not enough strong voices to ask for the justice of such heinous act against humanity.

In the end, I would like to acknowledge my sincere appreciation to the Director and all the staff of Human Rights Institute of Kean University to make an effort to highlight the Genocide of Bangladesh in 1971.
The Loss of Our Father, Dr. Shakhawat Hossain
Farhad Hossain

My father Dr. Shakhawat Hossain was a physician working at Jessore Hospital at the time of the liberation war of Bangladesh. My father and his colleagues were helping and secretly treating the injured freedom fighters. Someone notified the Pakistani Army about their activities. As result that the brutal Pakistan Army came and killed my father along with his 4 colleagues on 5th April 1971. We never found my father’s dead body. Among 5 sisters and 2 brothers I am the youngest one and I was only 2 years old at the time of this tragic event. My mother could not absorb the shock and became mentally unstable right after the killing of my father. My mother passed away in 1974. The tragic and premature death of my father was a devastating blow to our family. We not only became orphans but also lived like refugees. Our family life was torn apart from the hardship due to the loss of our father.

My Father, Rowshan Ali Khan: A Victim of Genocide
Hamid Reza Khan, Merrick, New York

It was May, 1971. Things were getting quieter in Chittagong. I just returned home from my hiding place. My father decided to quit his job and took the family to our ancestral village in Tangail which was still considered safe place. He withdrew some money from his provident fund, tried to get airline or steamer tickets for all of us. Since my father worked at the Railway, and was easily identifiable, he thought it imprudent to travel by train. Also, the train lines and bridges were being destroyed by “Mukti Fouij” (liberation army). Every morning dead bodies were found by the roadside. It was mainly the work of armed “Biharis” (Urdu speaking immigrants from India) - a para militia group created by the Pakistani army to terrorize the Bengalis. The group members were chosen from the Bihari community because they spoke Urdu. These para militia Biharis were informing the military about the young Bengali people who hurled homemade Molotov cocktails at the Army convoy and fed the defending Bengali military during the initial stage of the uprising. The Para-militia members helped the Pakistani Army to find for Bengali women (for sexual pleasure) and engaged in looting and killing. Fear blanketed the whole Bengali population in the city.

The fateful day of May 31, 1971 had then come. Earlier that day my father was outside of our house. A military patrol stopped, cursed “dirty Bengalis,” and ordered him, at gun point, to remove a dead, rotten dog from the road side. ’My father felt much indignation from this. He went to work and upon returning that afternoon, informed us that he would be able to get the steamer tickets for next week. He wanted us to prepare in secret and laid out an escape plan. After lunch he was resting in his bed when we heard a knock at the door and a grieving plea from our next door neighbor. The day before, his twenty-three year old son went out to buy cigarettes and never returned. Our neighbor begged my father to accompany him in search of his son, even if that led to finding his son’s dead body. My father well known in the community and the grieving neighbor thought that no ill would befall if my father went along with him.

Being a compassionate man, my father could not refuse. We tried to advise him not to take the risk because such things were happening every day with predictable results. Despite our protests, he put on his Panjabi (traditional Bengali outfit) and stepped out of the house, uttering the words, “Allah Vorosha” (I seek refuge in God). As the two middle-aged men started out, another two good Samaritans joined them. They argued amongst themselves saying, “Didn’t the Biharis in the neighborhood know us? They call us ‘Brother’ and ‘Uncle.’ How could they possibly harm us?”
From the time they left we anxiously looked through the window and kept praying to suppress our fears. Hour after hour had passed and night fell at the foot of the Batali Hill, where we lived. That night my two-month old baby sister started crying. I went to the kitchen to fetch her milk. The bottle fell from my hand and broke. My mother sensed a bad omen from this and cried aloud.

My father and our neighbors did not return that night. They never returned at all. We never knew what happened to them, nor did we hear anything about the boy for whom these four men took the mission. They all just vanished from the earth without any trace. We left Chittagong and went into hiding in our village in Tangail where my father was supposed to take us. During the next nine months of the war our family of eleven had to endure tremendous hardship just to survive in a basic manner. After my father was killed, my mother never came out of the shock she suffered and made herself distant in family affairs. In order to continue my university education, I had to work the nightshift at a newspaper. My seventeen year old brother had to abandon his college studies and took a clerical job to keep the family together. The struggle continued for the next couple of years.

After the end of the liberation war, killing fields were found in cesspools and dugout wells. In and around our neighborhood, there were bones and skulls, shoes and pieces of clothes, scattered with feces and darts.

As for the Biharis and the killers, they are still in a camp, fed and otherwise taken care of by the United Nations. No one was brought to trial for committing this atrocity and killing. No attempts were made to document these atrocities. My father, like other millions of Shahids (martyrs), just became a number.

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**No One Left Alive to Tell the Story**

Susmita Guha Roy, Philadelphia

The detail of the story is faded but face of my most favorite cousin Protul Karmakar is always vivid in my heart. His nick name was Keshto Da. In 1971, a recent graduate in Psychology from Dhaka University Keshto Da decided to go back to village of Barisal and serve the underprivileged people. Keshto Da was kind, gentle and selfless, that’s why he had different kind of dreams. No one could stop him from going to the remote village when every young and ambitious man was coming towards the big cities. During the early month of April in 1971 the Pakistani army continued their indiscriminate killings to the smaller town and villages, when Keshto Da decided to take his older parents and younger brother to a safer place. He and the members of his family were in the boat in the middle of the river, when the Pakistani army came and killed the whole family. I did not want to know whether the Pakistani army killed our favorite Keshto Da and his family by firing at the boat or took them out of the boat and then shot them point blank or tortured them before killing. I just still wonder what was their fault? Was it because they were trying to go to a safer place, or they were mere Bengali or they were Hindus. It doesn't matter any more to me. The pain makes me stop to think anything more. Today, there is no one alive from his family to tell the story to the world. So, I decided to open my wound. The same wound that stunned us when we heard the news 38 years ago: *Why should a dog, a horse a rat have life and thou no breath at all? Thou'lt came no more, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER.(King Lear)*
The Price My Father Paid for Being a Freedom Fighter
Salim Reza Pathen

My father Mr. Golam Kibria Pathen was working in Bata Shoe factory at Tongi, adjacent to Dhaka City in 1971. We are from Brahman Baaria of greater Comilla area. Since the beginning of the liberation war my father actively involved himself in the march towards freedom. He helped the freedom fighters and allied force, sheltered them in our house and later he turned to freedom fighter and fought against Pakistani army. Almost at the end of the liberation war- on 4th December, around noon time, a Pakistani Army Major came to the Bata Shoe factory and shot my father point blank in front of his British Manager and killed my beloved father. I was only 7 years old at that time and I was the eldest son of the family. With the wink of an eye we became orphan! Without having our father we had to struggle all through our life to survive. We could not recover from that loss. Later, one of the freedom Fighters Mr. Masud, who was known to us, found my father’s dead body at the bank of the Bhirab River.

The Story of My Brother in Dhaka University
Syed Hasan Mamun Ph.D., Boston, Massachusetts

Thirty-eight years ago, on a morning of March 26, 1971; some of the bravest and most enlightened sons of Bangladesh made their supreme sacrifice for the cause of dignity and freedom. Teachers, student, professionals, were picked up from their residences, blindfolded and taken in front of Iqbal Hall and British Council, Dhaka University. They were tortured and slaughtered. Selective killing went on side by side with mass killing. The history of Bangladesh has been made by the brave people who sacrificed their lives in 1971. The mass killing at Dhaka University Teachers Quarter, apartment 12 F, is one of the thousands "My Lai Massacres" in Bangladesh.

My elder brother Shaheed Syed Shahidul Hasan, who was 28 years old and was an organizer of liberation movement in greater Dhaka, along with another young University lecturer was brutally shot to death by Pakistani Military in side the teachers’ apartment while they were having breakfast. Later Pakistani Army took the martyrs’ bodies in front of British Council and finally to Iqbal hall premises where the dead bodies of students and teachers were laid side by side. The martyrs’ bodies lay for two days until the curfew was withdrawn for few hours on 27th March. The bodies were then recovered and identified by the relatives and friends. My brother, Shahidul Hasan, was laid to rest forever in a near by graveyard.

The mass and indiscriminate killing of the people of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) started on the night of March 25, 1971. My brother was a victim of that mass killing.

1971 – The Terrible Experiences of Three Days in the Death-Cave of the Pakistani Army
Saleh Mustafa Jamil

In 1970 I was the cultural secretary of Chhatra League at Dhaka College. Our house was the center for the publicity of Awami League during the election of 1970. My other brother was the general secretary of Narinda-Gopibagh union Awami League. When the war of liberation started In March 1971, I was hiding in Boxo Nagar (NawabGang) across the river. After I returned from Boxo Nagar, I came in contact with Ashraf - my college friend. They lived behind the Rampura TV Station. My participation in the war of liberation began after having a little training at his place.
We named our camp as Sheikher Para. Everybody knew in Bangladesh who the Sheikh was. My assignment in Dhaka was to give publicity about the liberation movement, to maintain the contact and to collect food for freedom fighters. As for the publicity about the war, I delivered leaflets (both in Bengali and in English) to the American Consulate and I sent letters and white winding-sheet to the chairman of Peace committee in old town of Dhaka. I also collected a sufficient quantity of warm clothes, medicines and money. On 19th November I also escorted Mr. Fate Ali Chowdhury (the younger brother to the editor of Bichitra, Sahadat Chowdhury) with all the food and money to Kanchpur (across Narayanganj) to his camp.

It was 21st November, and the time was around 1 pm in the afternoon. The notorious Pakistani army raided our house. There were over 50 soldiers. They broke into our house and were looking for my third brother. They messed up the entire house. A Pakistani soldier made 10 to 11 people of our house to line up on the compound of the house. One of his fingers was on the trigger of the automatic gun. He was about to shoot us and was just waiting for the order. Then they took my brother for interrogation. Our mother fainted after our brother’s capture. We started to live in our third sister’s (Mrs. Mahfuza Khanam, who was the then ex VP of DUCSU (1967-68)) house, in Purana Paltan with our mother. From next day, we started the process of getting our brother free. On 22nd November at noon I suddenly saw a number of soldiers came in a jeep. They had already captured my father and were looking for me. I thought that it was the end of my life. I went with them, got on the jeep after biding farewell to my mother.

I was taken to a three storied building of Tejgaon Dram factory (PM hostel). Major Salek had his office on the ground floor. The torture chamber was at the first floor. The captives were taken to the third floor. I was put in a kitchen with my brother, Kalu mia- the owner of the tea-stall of our area, a textile-businessman of New Market, a chakma (a tribal man) and a child freedom fighter.

I was interrogated in the afternoon. I had nothing to hide from the Pakistany Army. They knew about my activities, they knew everything. In the evening I was taken to Rampura with the many soldiers who were in about 5 to 6 trucks. Ashraf and all other people of our camp were sitting in the saloon, which was on the entrance of a lane. When they saw me with the soldiers, they disappeared from there. The soldiers searched the house for the weapons. The soldiers could not find any weapon; they did not find Ashraf or any other of the group. Nobody else was at home except three women. The soldiers took me to the neighboring mosque to identify Ashraf’s father. I had an eye contact with Ashraf’s father; however, I told the soldiers that I could not find him there. He was not there. The soldiers searched the place but could not find anything there.

After returning to the camp they ordered me to write down everything I knew. I wrote down what they already knew. At night I was taken once again to the major. I was told to tell everything that I knew. As I told the major that I was unable to say anything else, I was sent to 1st floor. I was ordered to put my feet on the grill of window, to have my face down on the floor while pressing my hands on the floor. I followed the order and immediately somebody started to beat me on my back and on my waist with a thick leather belt. I was beaten by iron and wooden sticks also. After a few blow I lost my consciousness. After a while I regained my consciousness. Those who supervised the torture looked very strange. They were very tall and they were black in complexion. At night they made me stand on a high voltage current. This was the way they continued their torture on me day and night. I had nothing more to tell them. On 23rd I was taken to Rampura again. Nothing new was found. Ashraf and his family had already left their house.

Interrogation and the similar kind of torture were going on for the three days I spent in that camp. On 27th November My father, my eldest brother (Saleh Mustafa Kamal) and the youngest brother-in-law (Barrister Shafique Ahmed, now the Minister of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh) was somehow able to free me and my brother. Only three of us were rescued alive from that death-cave. I still feel the torture on me. The pain on my waist is permanent now. I have to carry it for the rest of my life.

**The Disappearance of My Beloved Father**  
**Mrs. Sabina Ahmed, New Jersey, USA**

My father Mr. Tarikul Alam was a traffic officer of Bangladesh Biman in the district of Jassore. He was picked up by Pakistani forces from his office on April 27th, 1971, and then he was taken to a remote area and shot to death. They put my father’s body in hurriedly dug out hole and left him there. My mother was looking for him for three days. She then learned from local villagers of a dead body found in a hole. My mother identified my father’s body. He then received a proper Islamic burial on April 30th. I was 9 years old and my younger brother was 7 years old at the time when our father was killed. We grew up without the love and care of our father and my mother took on the burden of raising her two children without her loving husband.

**They Took Away My Dad**  
**Mrs. Nawrin Kadir, New Jersey, USA**

My father Mr. Syeed Raisul Kadir was the District Adjutant of ANSAR (military security force) in the district of Jhinaidah. He was picked up by Pakistani forces from our residence in the first week of December, 1971. My mother and other family members searched for him everywhere. Even till today we have not found his dead body or his grave, and we do not know what happened to him.

I was 11 months old and my younger brother was 29 days old when our father was killed. We grew up without the love and care of our father and my mother took on the burden of raising her 4 daughters and one son without her loving husband.

**And Then He Was Gone**  
**Maroof Jahangir, North Carolina, USA**

On March 30th 1971, my father left our house and never came back. My father Colonel Jahangir was a physician and was the commanding officer (CO) of 40th Field ambulance. Among his other responsibility he was also the Chief Martial Law Administrator for Zone B which included Chittagong, Noakhali, and Sylhet area.

He was a forbearing person, respected by his colleagues and loved by everyone that knew him.

In the late afternoon of 29th of March 1971, I heard heavy gunfire that went on for approximately an hour. It was just horrible to me, and I still do not have the words to express that moment. My father left for his office, but a few moments later he came back and told us to pack up so that we can leave for safety. We dressed up in some rugged clothes, packed extra canned milk for my 14 months old sister and moved from our house to another house that was on the bottom of the hill, closer to the main road and the escape route.
But alas later on that evening, our house was surrounded by the army. The cantonment parea of the cities of Comilla and Brahmanbaria were being bombed, as a result we were not able to go anywhere. We slept in our traveling clothes.

Next morning our neighbor who was also the Commanding Officer of Comilla Military Hospital sent a vehicle for my father along with escorts to take him back to the hospital “for help”. By that morning all the soldiers of 40th Field Ambulance and the remaining soldiers of 4th Bengal had been slaughtered. My father was in the operating room, when he was again called away on the pretext of having to preside over an important judicial issue.

Col, Yahiya, the OC of Punjab Regiment, who later served as the Brigade Commander for Comilla came and took my father from the operating room. He had my father confined and the next morning got him executed along with twenty-eight other Bengali officers. The charge against my father was “sympathizing with the enemy ‘India’.” We the family members were all rounded up and imprisoned at the local School where we kept until about the middle of May 1971, I had the occasion to see Col Yahiya around that time, and I enquired of him of my father, He Told me “He has been sent to West Pakistan” for official business, I said” but he has none of his daily necessities with him”, He said “Don’t worry the Army provides everything, but you can get a Bag ready for him and I will send it to him at the appropriate opportunity.” In reality, my father had been killed way before that time.

‘1971’… at times it seems that this is something which occurred a long time ago. Other times I can visualize as if the events happened just yesterday. I can recall the days of horror, and pain and mental anguish, not knowing what was going to happen next, Hoping against all odds and reality, that after all this will be over, my father will come back home and our family will be whole again.

We all have a story to tell, of those horrific days and time, one is more tragic and compelling than the other. At that time I was 13, my brother 9 and my sister was only 14 months old. With My mother’s fortitude, and the help of my Uncles and Aunts we were able to pull together through those tough times. Each and every one of our extended family pitched in and helped us; they all tried to minimize the loss of a “Father”. Unless one has experienced such a tragedy and the loss of a parent, one can never fully realize the extent of emptiness in one’s life, which can never be made up, especially more so in the case of young ones.

But today after thirty eight years, I do not ask anymore why it happened, but all I wonder is if I will ever see justice done! As a society we need to stand up voice our condemnation, seek justice and prevent repetition of history. In 1971 a group of people on a preplanned basis carried out atrocities, they have yet to be formally charged, let alone suffer the consequences. The magnitude of their crime, in a nine month period estimated around three million killed and untold numbers tortured mutilated and raped is a huge one!

Today my appeal to all of you is to please help us to catalog these people and label them for the crimes and atrocities they are responsible for and bring them to trial for the crimes committed.

I believe that this is the very least we can do for those whose lives were cut short by the heinous acts of these cold-blooded inhumane beings.
It was May, 1971. Things were getting quieter in Chittagong. I had just returned home from my hiding place. My father had decided to quit his job and take the family to our ancestral village in Tangail which was still then considered safe. He withdrew some money from his provident fund, trying to get air or steamer tickets for all of us. Since my father worked at the Railway, and would easily be identified, he thought it imprudent to travel by train. Also, the train lines and bridges were being destroyed by “Mukti Fouj” (liberation army). Every morning dead bodies were found by the roadside. It was mainly the work of armed “Biharis” (Urdu speaking immigrants from India), a para militia group created and supplied by the Pakistani army to terrorize the Bengalis. These groups were chosen from the Bihari community because they spoke in same language as Pakistanis. It was easy to spread fear among the Biharis about the possibility of a Bengali ruled state and manipulate them to take a stand against us. These para militia Biharis were informing the military about the young men who hurled homemade Molotov cocktails at the Army convoy and fed the defending Bengali military during the initial stage of the uprising. They were helping the Pakistani Army Patrol look for Bengali women and engaged in looting and killing. Fear blanketed the whole Bengali population in the city.

Then that fateful day of May 31st came. Earlier that day my father was outside of our house, and a military patrol stopped, cursed the “dirty Bengalis,” and ordered him, at gun point, to remove a dead, rotten dog from the road side. My father felt much indignation from this. He went to work and upon returning that afternoon, informed us that he would be able to get the steamer tickets for next week. He wanted us to prepare in secret and laid out a plan of escape. He ate a late lunch and was resting in his bed when we heard a knock at the door and a grieving plea from our next door neighbor. The day before, his twenty-three year old son went out to buy cigarettes and never returned. Our neighbor begged my father to accompany him to search for his son, even if that led to finding his dead body. My father had a good standing in the community and the grieving neighbor thought that no ill would befall if my father went along with him. Being a compassionate man, my father could not refuse. We tried to advise him not to take the risk because these things were happening every day with predictable results. Despite our protests, he put on his Panjabi (traditional Bengali outfit) and stepped out of the house, uttering the words, “Allah Vorosha” (I seek refuge in God). As the two middle-aged men started out, another two good Samaritans joined them. They argued amongst themselves saying, “Didn’t the Biharis in the neighborhood know us? They call us ‘Brother’ and ‘Uncle.’ How could they possibly harm us?”

From the time they left we anxiously looked through the window and kept praying to suppress our fears. Hour after hour had passed and night fell at the foot of the Batali Hill, where we lived. That night my two-month old baby sister started crying. I went to the kitchen to fetch her milk. The bottle fell from my hand and broke. My mother sensed a bad omen from this and cried aloud.

My father and our neighbors did not return that night. They never returned again. We never knew what happened to them, nor did we hear anything about the son for whom these four men took the mission. They all just vanished from the earth without any trace.
We left Chittagong and went into hiding in our village in Tangail where my father was supposed to take us. During the next nine months of the war our family of eleven had to endure tremendous hardship just to survive in a basic manner. After my father was killed, my mother never came out of the shock she suffered and made herself distant in family affairs. In order to continue my university education, I had to work the nightshift at a newspaper. My seventeen year old brother had to abandon his college studies and took a clerical job to keep the family together. The struggle continued for the next couple of years.

After the end of the liberation war, we found killing fields in cesspools and dugout wells. In and around our neighborhood were bones and skulls, shoes and pieces of clothes, scattered with feces and darts.

As for the Biharis and the killers among them, they are still in a camp, fed and otherwise taken care of by the United Nations. No one was brought to trial for committing this genocide. No attempts were made to document these atrocities. My father, like other millions of Shahids (martyrs), just became a number.