Bangladesh 1971: Addressing Claims of war crimes, Genocide and Crime against Humanity

Targets of Genocide during 1971

General public, Young adults and People from any religion as targets

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Partition of British India

• Mistrust was created between the Hindu and Muslim community by early British policy and later followed by many ethnic conflicts made the partition of India inevitable.

• After the second world war,
• the last British viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, managed to negotiate a deal whereby northwestern and the far eastern sections of India became a Muslim state – Pakistan – and the remaining territory a Hindu one.

• Independence day for Pakistan came on August 14, 1947, and for India August 15, the day after.
Independence and population exchanges

Independence resulted in communal riots across India and Pakistan while millions of Muslims were migrating to Pakistan and millions of Hindus and Sikhs were migrating to India immediately following Partition.

Based on 1951 Census of displaced persons, 7,226,000 Muslims went to Pakistan from India while 7,249,000 Hindus and Sikhs moved to India from Pakistan immediately after partition.

About 11.2 million or 78% of the population transfer took place in the west.
• The governments were completely unequipped to deal with migrations of such magnitude, and massive violence and slaughter occurred on both sides of the border.

• Estimates of the number of deaths range around roughly 500,000, with low estimates at 200,000 and high estimates at 1,000,000.

• Disputes arose over several princely states including Kashmir and Jammu.

• This led to the First Kashmir War in 1948. The hatred continued to grow and led to war in 1965 and many other mistrusts.
East Pakistan’s Grievances grew

- In Pakistan; after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister, in 1951, political power began to be concentrated in the President of Pakistan, and eventually, the military.

- The nominal elected chief executive, the Prime Minister, was frequently sacked by the establishment, acting through the President.

- East Pakistanis noticed that whenever one of them, such as Khawaja Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali Bogra, or Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy were elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, they were swiftly deposed by the largely West Pakistani establishment.

- The military dictatorships of Ayub Khan (27 October 1958 – 25 March 1969) and

- Yahya Khan (25 March 1969 – 20 December 1971), both West Pakistanis, only heightened such feelings.
• **The Exploitation of East Pakistan by the West Pakistan**

• *Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75, Vol. I, published by the Planning commission of Pakistan*

• From 1948-60 East Pakistan's **export earnings had been 70%, but its share of import earnings was only 25%**.

• A sizable net transfer of resources had taken place from East to West Pakistan.
• The total transfer from East to West Pakistan over the period 1948/49-1968/69 was **2.6 thousand million dollars**.

• In 1948 there were 11 textile mills in the East and only 9 in the West.
• In 1971 there were 26 in the East as opposed to 150 in the West.

• **East Pakistan's economy transformed from a surplus one to a deficit one. The population in East was 54% of Pakistan**
### Pakistan Statistics

**EDUCATION: Progress in 20 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>West Pakistan</th>
<th>East Pakistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>1968-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>8,413</td>
<td>29,663</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>2,598</td>
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<td>Colleges-various Types</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>Medical/Engineering/ Agricultural colleges</td>
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<td>3</td>
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- Source: National Planning Commission, 20 Years of Pakistan, Central Bureau of Education, Department of Investment Promotion, Central Board of Revenue, Central Statistical Office
**Discrepancies in Jobs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West Pakistan</th>
<th>East Pakistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Civil Service</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Service</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Mission’s Head</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Army: Officers of General Rank (Numbers)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Technical</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy-non technical</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Pilots</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces (Numbers)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The Basic Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan announces its recommendations that
• Urdu should be the only state language.
• It sparks off a wide wave of resentment in East Bengal where the people spoke Bangla.

• As demonstrations and unrests seem to get out of control, the Government cracks down by imposing a curfew in Dhaka; a number of demonstrators are killed in front of the Dhaka Medical College over a period of one week (February 21-27, 1952).

• The relationship between the two Pakistan became progressively more neo-colonial, with the protest against the West's domination growing shriller by the day in the East.
• The situation reached a climax when in 1970 the Awami League, the largest East Pakistani political party, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the national elections.

• The party won 167 of the 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan, and thus a majority of the 313 seats in the National Assembly.

• This gave the Awami League the constitutional right to form a government. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (a Sindhi), the leader of the Pakistan People Party, refused to allow Rahman to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan.
Genocide

- On February 22, 1971 the generals in West Pakistan took a decision to crush the Awami League and its supporters.
- It was recognized from the first that a campaign of genocide would be necessary to eradicate the threat: "Kill three million of them," said President Yahya Khan at the February conference, "and the rest will eat out of our hands." (Robert Payne, Massacre [1972], p. 50.)

- On March 25 the genocide was launched. The university in Dacca was attacked and students exterminated in their hundreds. Death squads roamed the streets of Dacca, killing some 7,000 people in a single night. It was only the beginning. "Within a week, half the population of Dacca had fled, and at least 30,000 people had been killed." (Payne, Massacre, p. 48.)
Operation Searchlight

- A planned military pacification carried out by the Pakistan Army — codenamed *Operation Searchlight* — started on 25 March by taking control of the major cities on 26 March, and then eliminating all opposition, political or military, within one month.

- Before the beginning of the operation, all foreign journalists were systematically deported from East Pakistan. The main phase of Operation Searchlight ended with the fall of the last major town in Bengali hands in mid-May.

- The operation also began the 1971 Bangladesh atrocities. These systematic killings served only to enrage the Bengalis, which ultimately resulted in the secession of East Pakistan later in 16th December 1971.

- The international media and reference books in English have published casualty figures which vary greatly, from 5,000–35,000 in Dhaka, and 200,000–3,000,000 for Bangladesh as a whole.
Archer Blood, a US diplomat based in Dhaka sent a telegram (March 27, 1971), Blood wrote about American observations at Dhaka under the subject heading "Selective genocide":

1. Here in Decca we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pakistani Military. Evidence continues to mount that the MLA authorities have list of AWAMI League supporters whom they are systematically eliminating by seeking them out in their homes and shooting them down.

2. Among those marked for extinction in addition to the A.L. hierarchy are student leaders and university faculty. In this second category we have reports that Fazlur Rahman head of the philosophy department and a Hindu, M. Abedin, head of the department of history, have been killed. Razzak of the political science department is rumored dead. Also on the list are the bulk of MNA's elect and number of MPA's.

3. Moreover, with the support of the Pakistani Military, non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor people's quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus.
• “For month after month in all the regions of East Pakistan the massacres went on,” writes Robert Payne. “They were not the small casual killings of young officers who wanted to demonstrate their efficiency, but organized massacres conducted by sophisticated staff officers, who knew exactly what they were doing.

• Muslim soldiers, sent out to kill Muslim peasants, went about their work mechanically and efficiently, until killing defenseless people became a habit like smoking cigarettes or drinking wine. … Not since Hitler invaded Russia had there been so vast a massacre.” (Payne, Massacre, p. 29.)
• **Targets of Genocide during 1971**

• Students as Target

• Politicians as targets

• Intellectuals as targets

• Women as targets

• General public targets
  Young adults as target

• People from any religion as targets *(including those helped freedom fighters)*

• I will try focus on the genocide of the last 3 groups who were slaughtered and investigate the issue why they were just killed for no reason.
• Bengali man and boys massacred by the West Pakistani regime.

• Younger men and adolescent boys, of whatever social class, were equally targets.
• According to Prof. Rounaq Jahan,

• “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.”

• R.J. Rummel wrote “the Pakistan army [sought] out those especially likely to join the resistance — young boys. Sweeps were conducted of young men who were never seen again.

• Bodies of youths would be found in fields, floating down rivers, or near army camps. As can be imagined, this terrorized all young men and their families within reach of the army. Most between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five began to flee from one village to another and toward India.

• Many of those reluctant to leave their homes were forced to flee by mothers and sisters concerned for their safety.” (Death By Government, p. 329.)
The war against the Bengali population proceeded in classic gendercidal fashion. According to Anthony Mascarenhas, "There is no doubt whatsoever about the targets of the genocide":

They were:

1. **The Bengali militarymen** of the East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles, police and para-military Ansars and Mujahids.

2. **The Hindus** -- "We are only killing the men; the women and children go free. We are soldiers not cowards to kill them ..." I was to hear in Comilla [site of a major military base] [Comments R.J. Rummel: (Death By Government, p. 323)]

3. **The Awami Leaguers** -- all office bearers and volunteers down to the lowest link in the chain of command.

4. **The students** -- college and university boys and some of the more militant girls.

5. **Bengali intellectuals** such as professors and teachers whenever damned by the army as "militant." (Anthony Mascarenhas, The Rape of Bangla Desh [Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972(?)], pp. 116-17.)
• Why indiscriminate Killings its own people who had won the election?

• In West Pakistan, the language movement was seen as a sectional uprising against Pakistani national interests and the founding ideology of Pakistan, the Two-Nation Theory. West Pakistani politicians considered Urdu a product of Indian Islamic culture, as Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan said, as late as in 1967, "East Bengalis... still are under considerable Hindu culture and influence."

• The racist Pakistani mindset chose to demean the predominantly Bengali Muslim population with insinuations of being lesser Muslims or Hindu converts when it cried out against oppression and demanded freedom.

• Bengalis were often compared with monkeys and chickens. Said Pakistan General Niazi, ‘It was a low lying land of low lying people.’

• With the false plea of ‘Islam being in grave danger’, the murder machine employed local lackeys and collaborators to further their evil design – and by the time it all ended nine gruesome months later on the 16th of December 1971, 3 millions of Bengali were murdered.
Why Killing ordinary people?

British High Commission, Rawalpindi.
12 February, 1969

RADICAL WING IN EAST PAKISTAN POLITICS
A.A. Halliley


In many ways the emergence of the radical element is an entirely new feature in post-independence East Pakistan politics. Nevertheless it looks as though this movement has come to stay and despite such internal divisions...

Broadly speaking, the radical wing has three components:

(a) Students
(b) Workers
(c) Peasants
• Whereas in the past most university students came from upper and upper middle-class families now come from lower-middle or working class families.

• Today's student population in Dacca has, therefore, close ties with the urban proletariat and peasantry, while its links with the upper middle-class are tenuous and may be tinged with suspicion.

• With these new links it has been easy and natural for the students to find support, and to achieve popularity, among -
  - (a) White-collar urban workers,
  - (b) The urban proletariat,
  - (c) The peasants.

• This popularity has in the last three weeks or so exceeded the students' own expectations the immense crowds that came out in the streets after a student was killed on 20 January. Students expected about 200,000; in the event there may have been something of the order of 500,000.

• It is estimated that some 30,000 villagers joined the demonstration and that processions during the week 20-25 January were joined by numbers of white collar workers and trade unionists.

General public became politically conscious & actively participated in all the anti-government movements in East Pakistan including landslide victory of Awami league in 1970 election.
Violence against minorities

The minorities of Bangladesh, especially the Hindus, were specific targets of the Pakistan army. There was widespread killing of Hindu males, and rapes of women. More than 60% of the Bengali refugees who fled to India were Hindus.

Question is why killing Hindu minorities who were harmless

All the major anti Pakistani Movement since birth of Pakistan were orchestrated & carried out by Bengali Muslim leadership and general public with more than 80% muslim bengali population

In the December 1970 general election in Pakistan, Awami League won 167 of 169 seats and over 80 per cent of the popular vote in East Pakistan when Hindu vote was maximum of @16%.

Hindu population in brutal Pakistani rule in East Pakistan were mostly silent and subdued.

Could the Pakistani army stop the popular uprising in a Muslim majority country by suppressing only minorities?
During the partition of India, communal violence happened in the west.

1968 Pakistan government had arrested the most ardent voice of Bengali cause Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and thirty-five other Bengalis for allegedly wanted to separate East Pakistan and establish an independent Bengal, with Indian assistance in Agartola conspiracy case.

Pakistani fatwa of Bengali Muslims being Hindu was a common remarks to suppress Bengali demand, which was used to brain wash their ordinary soldiers to encourage killing of all Bengalis during the war. Many soldiers were surprised to see Muslim’s Holy Quran in the houses.

This widespread violence against Hindus was motivated by a policy to purge East Pakistan of what was seen as Hindu and Indian influences. The West Pakistani rulers identified the Bengali culture with Hindu and Indian culture,

It is not exactly known what percentage of the people killed by the Pakistan army were Hindus, but it is safe to say it was disproportionately high.
Pakistani army wanted to kill the Bengalis indiscriminately to suppress the dream of freedom. Religion apparently was used to justify the mean.

But confusions are creating in post war Bangladesh.

- Extremist Islamic party is claiming that no war crime was perpetrated and some Hindu’s are claiming the war was predominantly a Hindu genocide.
- Few Hindus claimed that:
- 2.4 MILLION HINDUS WERE KILLED IN EAST PAKISTAN
- Since the 80 percent of the refugees in 1971 were Hindus, a similar proportion of the dead are likely to be Hindus also.
- The official Bangladesh government estimate puts the number of Bengalis killed at 3 million.
- 80 percent of 3 million put the number of Hindus killed at 2.4 million which is close to the number of Hindus missing from the calculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Hindu Population</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Hindus Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>4.12(1947-58)</td>
<td>0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>1.11(1964-70)</td>
<td>2.477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Brief History of Illegal Immigration in Assam
Friday 11 February 2005

• The Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact was drawn in April 1950
• Most of the Muslim settlers who left for Pakistan due to outbreak of communal disturbances came back to Assam

• Most of them were settled in Assam posing themselves as Indian nationals. Successive communal riots in East Pakistan had resulted in heavy outflow of Hindus, a large number of which found its way to Assam.
• After liberation of Bangladesh, the situation became much worse. During the struggle for liberation of Bangladesh 12 lakhs people crossed over to Assam and Meghalaya for shelter.
• Some of them stayed in the refugee camps while others stayed with their relatives and friends outside the camps.
• After liberation of Bangladesh most of them managed to get themselves absorbed in the region. Further, a large number of Bangladeshi immigrants entered Assam mainly to seek employment.

• ...it is emerging as a serious threat to the very identity of the Assamese people leading to the security of the country.
Unwelcome now

The Bangladesh war formed the watershed because those who came, and are still coming unabated after 1972, are no longer called "refugees". Labelled "infiltrators", these late migrants are streaming in to survive. Poverty-enmeshed Bangladesh has driven them to such desperation that Muslim Bangladeshis do not even mind travelling to Shiv Sena-infested Mumbai to eke out a living.

Since 1972, most of these immigrants have settled in North and South 24 Parganas, Nadia, North and South Dinajpur, Siliguri, Murshidabad, Malda and Calcutta, and already 12 million seem to have made West Bengal their home. The annual inflow is three lakhs.

Fences are being built along the border which would cover 1,200 km; detention centres will detain infiltrators on the spot and the Border Security Force (BSF) has been advised to push them back. But still they come, these marginal men - as infiltrators and not as refugees.

SUBHORANJAN DASGUPTA
The writer is Senior Fellow, School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta.
• Minorities on the other side: The Biharis

• Originally from India’s Bihar State, the Urdu-speaking Biharis moved to then East Pakistan in 1947, at the time of India’s partition.
• They had suffered through communal riots in 1947 for the idea of the state of Pakistan, and they had antipathy and deep suspicion towards the state of India.

• Believing the Pakistan army’s propaganda that Mujib was ‘plotting with the Indians to break up Pakistan’, their sympathies went against the Bangali liberation war.

• The Pakistan army exploited this weakness to recruit Biharis to join the death squads. During the liberation war of Bangladesh many Bihari had formed Razakars and Al Shams Islamist militias in support of the Pakistani Army causing the genocide,

• During the war several places in Dhaka city were strongholds of Biharis especially the Mirpur area which is known for a famous mass murder site known as the Jalladkhana (butchers’ den)
• Not all Biharis joined the act of murder, many remained silent spectators of the conflict.

• They did not join the refugees crossing the borders, or take up arms against the Arm.

• After the defeat of the Pakistani forces, Bangladeshi nationalist forces exacted revenge on those Biharis, whom had formed Razakars and Al Shams Islamist militias in support of the Pakistani Army.

• Unknown numbers of Biharis were killed by Mukti Bahini soldiers, while hundreds of thousands were placed in refugee camps where they languished for many years.

• In December 1971, 535,000 of them registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross and expressed a desire to relocate to Pakistan. However, the Pakistani government accepted the return of only 173,000 and was reluctant to accept the rest or recognize their citizenship, making them effectively a stateless people.
War trial: Some obstacles

• Immediately after the war, the topic of putting the war criminals to trial arose. Just as the war ended, Bangladeshi prime minister Tajuddin Ahmed admitted to Professor Anisuzzaman that the trial of the alleged Pakistani military personnel may not be possible because of pressures from the US and that neither India nor the Soviet Union were interested in seeing a trial.

• On December 24 1971 Home minister of Bangladesh A. H. M. Qamaruzzaman said, "war criminals will not survive from the hands of law. Pakistani military personnel who were involved with killing and raping have to face tribunal." In a joint statement after a meeting between Sheikh Mujib and Indira Gandhi, Indian government assured of giving all the assistance for bringing war criminals into justice. By July 1972, Bangladeshi government reduced the number of alleged war criminals from 400 to 195.

• In his book Liberation and Beyond, JN Dixit wrote that the Bangladeshi government was not interested about gathering evidence about the handful amount of war criminals. He was uncertain about the reason behind this approach and figured it as a result of a possible negotiation between the Bangladeshi and Pakistani governments. He thought that Sheikh Mujib did not want to do anything that would stop Pakistan and other Muslim states from giving Bangladesh official recognition. Worldwide support in favor of war trial faded after the 3 nation agreement.
• Further, as a gesture of goodwill, nearly 200 soldiers who were sought for war crimes by Bengalis were also pardoned by India. The accord also gave back more than 13,000 km² of land that Indian troops had seized in West Pakistan during the war, though India retained a few strategic areas; most notably Kargil. This was done as a measure of promoting "lasting peace" and was acknowledged by many observers as a sign of maturity by India.

• But some in India felt that the treaty had been too lenient to Bhutto, who had pleaded for leniency, arguing that the fragile democracy in Pakistan would crumble if the accord was perceived as being overly harsh by Pakistanis.
But Time is right Now: Even Pakistani groups are offering apology.

- The War Inquiry Commission headed by then Chief Justice of Pakistan, Hamoodur Rahman, said widespread atrocities, other abuses of power by Pakistani generals and a complete failure in civilian and martial-law leadership responsible for the loss of East Pakistan. The report dwells on a range of sins: killing of thousands of Bangladeshis—both civilians and “Bengali” soldiers—rape, pan smuggling, looting of banks in East Pakistan, drunkenness by officers, even an instance of a Brigadier “entertaining” women while his troops were being shelled by Indian troops. The Commission examined nearly 300 witnesses and hundreds of classified army signals between East and West Pakistan. The final report was submitted on October 23, 1974, detailing political, administrative, military and moral failings of then Pakistan.
• **1971, In Retrospective.**

By Jamash May 12th, 2008 @ 9:44 PM Life in Karachi

The events of 1971 were a part of the history long before I was born but even years later in the mid 80s as a primary school child I could smell the stench of the vicious broth we had cooked to suppress, degrade, demoralize, dominate and disgrace our very own people, the people of Bangladesh.

I had always been ashamed to meet the eyes with any Bengali, although I was not a part of the brutality which was unleashed upon the innocent people to favor just a handful few but still I feel the guilt.

For these Crimes and incidents I do not blame the army, I do not blame the foreign elements, I don’t blame anyone else but my self. Me, and the people who took advantage of them, who never stood-up for them, who never raised their voice against the unjust. We never talked to our children about it, we never told the stories we should have been telling. Was this not our responsibility?
Thanks