

***Bangladesh 1971: Addressing claims of War crimes,  
Genocide and Crimes against Humanity***

***Prepared by:***

***Bangladesh Genocide Study Group (BGSB)***

*Current Active committee members (by alphabetical order):*

*A.B.M Nasir, Ph.D.  
Arif Rahman  
Faruque Chowdhury  
Hank Kaplowitz, Ph.D.  
Ilaf Sattar  
Jamal Hassan  
Keith Nunes, Ph.D.  
Mohammad Rahman  
Mohiuddin M. Shafiqullah (Al-Amin)  
M.M.R. Jalal  
Reenat Hassan  
Sabbir Rahman Khan  
Solman Ahmed  
Susan Gronewold, Ph.D.  
Tasnuva Airen  
Wafi Sattar  
Zia Uddin Ahmed, M.D.*

**Event type: International Conference**

Tentative Event Date: Sunday, 20 September, 2009

Time: 11:00 am

Place: KEAN UNIVERSITY, Union, NJ

## *Executive Summary*

This report provides a description of the upcoming international conference on Bangladesh whose focus is the atrocities that took place during the events of 1971. The conference will address the claims of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. This conference is the second of its series. Details about the conference are set out in the description section.

The goal of the conference is to scrutinize the atrocities of 1971 from the observational standpoint of a citizen who identifies with the whole of humankind, free from parochial interests, partisan terms, and cultural biases, rather clarifying common, shared interests. Supplementary goals emphasize the common human interest in the international protection of human rights together with the interdependent basis that human rights are enjoyed by individuals as a function of what others can enjoy. The genuine worldwide consensus on the acceptable treatment and perspectives of human beings in the contemporary world is the international bill of human rights.

The conference focuses upon the scholar's responsibility of enlightenment as well as the decision-maker's responsibility of the consequences of his and her decisions and the right kinds of policy choices.

The conference considers that whether or not human beings live in dignity and justice is a function of human rights and that egregious abuses need to be addressed and individuals charged with crimes that violate universally recognized rights along with conciliatory purposes, as exemplified by a truth and reconciliation commission and Marshall plan.

This conference series will investigate critical issues regarding the atrocities of 1971 with interdisciplinary lenses. It will present eyewitness accounts of victims, family members and freedom fighters. To understand the violent interactions and institutional practices of the day, consideration will be given to the participation (individual, group, government, nongovernmental), perspectives (demands, identifications, and expectations), situations (geographic, temporal, institutional, and crisis), bases of power (authoritative, controlling), strategies (diplomatic, ideological, economic, military), and outcomes (shaping and sharing values) employed.

The conference will include panel discussions, question and answer sessions. Key discussants will include international lawyers to discuss various legal implications of the acts and omissions of atrocity and gross human rights deprivations along with the question of justice for the victims in the form of compensation, trial of (war) criminals and conciliation.

The massacre of 1971 has often been ignored for decades and with little if any discussion as an event of modern history. Facts of the atrocities have been denied, even misrepresented by the Government of Pakistan, and in some cases the international media. Today the post-Westphalian world is more consciously value-oriented and vocal about perspectives of human rights and what happens in one's communities with regard

to world public order problems of human dignity. The Bangladesh atrocities call out to be addressed not as a footnote or afterthought in the analysis of human rights deprivations, rather as a matter of policy judged on the basis of international justice and conciliation for the people of Bangladesh — if not also for all those other individuals located variously around the globe whose demands for human rights were never heard, never addressed, and whose voices were silenced by slaughter and shameful indifference. In this respect, the nation-states of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India as well as the international community (including non-governmental organizations) may wish to have recourse to the proceedings to implement a true personal security — one that is normative and value-oriented — for the victims.

The conference draws upon Kean's significant university resources: its Holocaust, genocide, and human rights scholars, the Diversity Council, the Holocaust Resource Center, Human Rights Institute, and the Bangladesh Genocide Study Committee.

The conference proceedings will be published and digitalized on You Tube. It will be utilized for the rigorous program at Kean University in Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Studies.

## *Description and Proceedings of the events*

### **Project Goal:**

This seminar is the second of its series. In December 2007 the first seminar was held at Kean University. Since then a committee has been formed to study the massacre of 1971 and gather resources. The committee was formed with dedicated Bangladeshi students, faculty, staff as well as Holocaust researchers from Kean University. This committee also includes various renowned Bangladeshi people from the community living in the United States. The primary goal of this committee is to review the claim of genocide, to revisit the extent of Bangladesh Massacre of 1971 so that a course can be developed at Kean University. The committee, with this project, promotes the trial of the war criminals and perpetrators and is hopeful that the outcome of this seminar will provide a guideline that will supplement the trial process currently being carried out by Bangladesh Government. To make the seminar successful the committee has been in search of scholars on Bangladesh Massacre in various states within the US as well as outside of United States.

Since 2007, this committee has been relentlessly working with the university administration to get support from the Human Rights Center, Diversity Council and Holocaust Resource Center of Kean University. As a result of the constant effort of the committee, the Human Rights Center of Kean University has agreed to sponsor the 2009 conference. Having the support from Human Rights Center has also drawn the attention of History Department as well as the Holocaust Resource Center on this project. The academic departments of History and Master of Arts and Holocaust & Genocide Studies have plans to explore more resources and draw a final outline of the course material as soon as the seminar takes place successfully. In recent times, the project has also drawn attention of the Holocaust Research Center by such a great extent that this topic is being considered to be discussed in 2010 in an international genocide awareness seminar at Kean University. Above all, the president of Kean University has shown great interest on this project since the 2007 seminar.

These progresses are encouraging steps toward larger objective of the Bangladesh War Crimes, Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, & Human Rights Study Group (*BSG*). The objectives are summarized below:

- organize the planned seminar (September) successfully and continue in future
- bring in expert researchers, eye witnesses and survivors from around the globe for the current conference and future conferences
- have the university curriculum committee accept the outline of the course on Bangladesh Massacre and include the topic in the Master of Holocaust and Genocide Study program.
- utilize the support from Holocaust Resource Center and Diversity Council to well disseminate the Bangladesh Massacre of 1971 in various states.
- reach out to NJ Holocaust Commission

- create an international focus on the trial issue from the academic point of view.
- help Holocaust Research center build repository of resources.

To successfully achieve these goals a number of activities need to be performed of which, the collection of oral history and translation of Bangla resources are the two most important ones. These are huge tasks and cannot be completed without the help of the community. The committee requests the people from the community to come together and take their time to start collecting and translating the documents so that they can be archived and used as resources toward the project as well as the course.

### **Community involvement in financing/carrying out the project:**

We also urge the community to financially support the project because conducting these seminars with holocaust researchers from around the world is costly. The university administration has been supporting this endeavor to its current extent and has promised to continue its support in future. However, conducting any activity such as oral history project with expert interviewer for a digital library (for at least the population here in the US) involves various expenses. A speaker of any seminar is usually reimbursed with at least the travel and accommodation cost. Producing of program literature, event brochure, website maintenance involves cost as well. Collecting resources including books, documents and meeting people from various corners of the world are substantially costly. Currently a number of activities are carried out at a personal expense of the Bangladesh genocide study group members. In order to institutionalize the whole process and make sure that in future the efforts do not come to a halt, the Bangladesh Genocide Study Group has set up an account with the Kean University Foundation. All donations to this account (of any amount) will be dedicated to Bangladesh genocide project. The sponsors will be acknowledged properly and thanked from both Kean University and Bangladesh Genocide Study Group.

To institutionalize the creation of the course and collection of research materials on the matter, BGSJ plans to utilize the same model that was used to have the Jewish holocaust recognized, archived and studied. The community support in terms of financing the project and gathering resources will be the key for the success of the project. The commitment of the community toward this matter will bring strength to the Bangladesh Genocide Study Group which is already negotiating with the university administration. The administration has agreed to finance a part of the conference cost. However, the rest of the funds need to be raised. We request Bangladeshi people to donate to this cause. The fund raised will be held under Kean University Human Right Center account (dedicated to Bangladesh genocide project). This fund will solely be used for organizing seminars on Bangladesh genocide, gathering resources as well as any future endeavor pertaining to Bangladesh Genocide Study project. Donations can be made through Kean University Foundation page ([www.keanfoundation.org](http://www.keanfoundation.org)) using “**Other Program**” with note “**Bangladesh Seminar**”. All donations are **Tax Deductible**.

### **University Involvement for funding the project:**

For the upcoming event the university has pledged to provide \$3000.00 as long as at least \$ 4000.00 is raised through donations from various people and organizations. Amid unprecedented budget crisis this pledged amount by the university shows the extent of its support to the cause. At least \$4000.00 from about hundreds and thousands of well off Bangladeshi people living in the US is not a huge amount. All it takes is the willingness to support and donate for the cause.

Previously the university Grant office worked with Bangladesh Genocide study group to write a grant proposal (in 2007-08) from The National Endowment of Humanities. In that proposal Bangladesh genocide study was mentioned as a part of the project.

Unfortunately the university was not endowed with the grant. However, the grant office has listed Bangladesh Genocide study as one of their future projects for the 2009 - 2010 fiscal year.

### **Planned program Structure:**

The upcoming event is currently being planned and speaker selection process is in progress. The draft structure of the program is listed below:

- I. Phase I: Eye Witness Accounts
  1. Sharing of accounts by participants, distributing booklet of accounts in English
- II. Phase II: Video presentation
  1. A short video will be played on the history of Bangladesh Massacre
- III. Phase III: Panel Discussion and Resolutions
  1. Invited scholars will be discussing various aspects of the atrocities
  2. Question and answer sessions from the audience to the panelists
  3. Possible outcome and resolution on the war criminal trial issue.

### **Resources needed:**

To carry out the project the following resources are needed:

1. Speakers/Panelists
2. Monetary resources
3. Volunteers for translating/collecting important documents.

The items are briefly described below:

1. **Speakers/Panelists:** A few names that are under consideration:
  - A B M Nasir, Ph.D.
  - Adam Jones, Ph.D., Canada
  - Ahmed Zia, Belgium
  - Ben Kiernan, Ph.D., USA

- Donald Beachler, Ph.D., USA
- Jahed Ahmed (www.muktomona.com)
- M. A. Hassan, M.D., Bangladesh
- M. Cherif Bassiouni, USA
- Representative from Liberation War Museum
- R. J. Rummel, Ph.D., USA
- Ruth Wedgewood, Ph.D., USA
- Rounak Jahan, Ph.D.
- Samuel Totten, Ph.D., USA
- Sayed Hassan, Ph.D., USA.
- Suhail Islam, Ph.D., USA
- Susan Brownmiller, USA
- Shahriar Kabir, Bangladesh
- Shelly Feldman, USA
- Ved Nanda, USA
- Winston Nagan, Ph.D., USA

BGSG plans to have **at least** three experts from the list above for each of the three panels. The following are the suggested panel speakers:

**Panel 1: Eye witnesses (5/6 witnesses.)**

Eye witnesses: Yet to be determined from large pool of interested people

**Panel 2: Targets:**

Panelists: A B M Nasir, Rounak Jahan, Donald Beachler, Adam Jones, Suhail Ahmed, Bernard Weinstein (moderator)

The panelists in this group will focus on who were the targets of the atrocities and massacre. The important time lines discussed should be the 25<sup>th</sup> March (the dark night), time through March to December (war time) and December 14-16 (targeted killing). The panelists will also discuss the issues regarding random and targeted killings, rapes, and tortures.

**Panel 3: Atrocities:**

Panelists: Dr. M. A. Hassan, Ben Kiernan, Faruqe Chowdhury, Susan Brownmiller, Shelly Feldman. Sue Gronewold (Moderator).

This panel will discuss the types and level of atrocities that were committed at various time frames, on various classes of people including women and children. The panel will focus on atrocities committed during the different phases of the war (First Phase: March to June, Second Phase: July to November, Third Phase: December).

**Panel 4: Suffering:**

Panelists: Dr. M. A Hassan, Dr. Zia Uddin Sadeq, Shahriar Kabir, Jahed Ahmed, Arif Rahman (Moderator)

This panel will discuss the sufferings (social, economical, psychological, and physical) that the people of Bangladesh went through during March to December. The discussion will also focus the eye witness accounts, and previous panel discussions. The panel will emphasize the sufferings of the university students, freedom fighters, family of victims (direct or indirect), women, children, and refugees.

**Panel 5: Constructive resolution:**

Panelists: Barrister Ahmed Zia, Ved Nanda, Ruth Wedgewood, Winston Nagan, Cherif Passioni, Keith Nunes (Moderator)

**Special guest:**

Bangladesh Consulate General, Ambassador & permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, and Family of Archer Blood.

This panel will discuss issues regarding the level of violation of human rights, the appropriateness of using the term genocide, proceedings needed to be introduced in both academic and government level to conduct further research to carry out the trial of the war criminals (nationally and internationally).

**b. Funds Requirement:**

To carry out the seminar the projected costs are as below:

Facility cost:	\$ 3000.00
Program Flyers and brochure/banner/booklets	\$ 500.00 (approx.)
Program Advertisement	\$ 0.00 (university provided)
Light Lunch (approx. 300 people)	\$ 500.00
Travel and accommodation allowance for researchers (up to 10 people)	\$ 5000.00
<b>Subtotal amount:</b>	<b>\$9000.00</b>
<b>Venue cost (University sponsored)</b>	<b>(\$3000.00)</b>
<b>Net fund requirement:</b>	<b>\$9000.00</b>

### **c. Volunteer requirement:**

A good number of volunteers are needed for the event to raise fund, help finding sponsors, resources, eye witness and survivors, speakers/panelists as well as to translate materials from Bangla to English. Volunteers are also required to collect eye witness story throughout the states as well as arrange display of massacre pictures on the event day.

## **Conclusion**

Kean University Human Rights Center has been very supportive of the effort that the Bangladesh Genocide study group has been putting together to bring the seminar to a success. University administration has been encouraging the organizers in every possible way. The committee has been meeting with various administrators and Holocaust researchers within and out side Kean University to organize the seminar successfully and to keep the course creation process stays on track. More administrators and faculty interest and involvement in this matter indicate a great achievement of the committee. The committee is also working with other student groups to promote and gain support in this matter.

The success of the seminar in 2007 was due to the contribution of Bangladeshi community. Devoted support from the community blessed the organizers in terms of gathering resources, providing refreshments, putting up an excellent heart touching display on the event day to make it successful. University President, Dr. Dawood Farahi, and Dean of graduate school, Dr. Kristie Reilly, both were overwhelmed and were proud to host such an event. A special "Thank You note" was sent to organizers by Dr. Kristie Reilly, Dean of Nathan Weiss Graduate College. BGSF hopes for similar or more support from the community once again to show the solidarity toward the common goal of introducing a research based course under the Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Kean University. The committee is confident that solidarity and love of the nation, commonness of interest and oneness in purpose will make the upcoming seminar an even greater success.

Eugene V. Debs said, *“Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results.”*