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Deaths and Atrocities in the Liberation War of Bangladesh: An Investigation on Genocidal Incident

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh achieved its independence after nine months of atrocious war against Pakistan. The Pakistani military, along with Bangladeshi collaborators, brutally killed and attacked East Pakistani civilians to repress the revolution for a sovereign state, which ultimately cost more than three million individuals' lives, lakhs of women's respect and millions of people's displacement from their homeland. The sufferings of the ordinary people were multidimensional, which included deaths and devastation, mass killing, rape, arson, attacks, torture, forced conversion, the decimation of human settlements, torching of houses, opening fire on fleeing civilians, etc. There were mass murders, deportation, and genocidal rape during the war. The soldiers of the Pakistan Army and their local cohorts kept Bengali women as sex slaves inside the Pakistan Army's camps. Around 10 million Bengali refugees fled to neighbouring India, and an estimated 30 million were internally displaced. Against this backdrop, the paper tries to investigate the massacre during the liberation of Bangladesh to establish the killings as a textbook example of genocide of the 20th century.

INTRODUCTION

“... Khoon ki dhabbe dhoolenge kitni barsato ki baad!”

How many monsoons will it take to wash away the blood stains? (Karim 2009, 198)

During the liberation war, the alien Pakistani force occupied the entire eastern part of the country, killing and destroying at random (Muhith 2016, 290). The occupied forces targeted members of the minority communities and the young people who were potentially freedom fighters. The war broke out at midnight on March 25, 1971, and the leader of the Bangladesh liberation struggle, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the constitutional politician believing in non-violent remonstrations, was arrested by the Pakistani juntas. Instead of constitutional manner and negotiation, the occupation Pakistani rulers were busy with the missions of death and destruction and ethnic cleansing in strength and broad daylight. Following a historical method and using primary, secondary, and empirical data, the present paper deals with the issues of genocide, torture, deaths and devastations, oppression of women, and refugee crisis during the liberation war. Bangladesh's genocide is not globally recognized yet. Why is the phenomenal crime (against humanity) committed by the Pakistani occupation forces in collaboration with the local collaborators is not still recognized by many of the world community is the primary research question of the present study. Investigating the genocidal incidents during the liberation war of Bangladesh, the paper finally tries to address the question in favour of recognizing the massacre as a textbook example of genocide in world history. The objective of the present study is to have a reappraisal on deaths, devastations and genocide of 1971 during the Bangladesh liberation war by reinvestigating the historical facts and figures.

THE ISSUE OF GENOCIDE

Genocide is the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular nation or ethnic group. Genocide is an intentional action to destroy a people (usually defined as an ethnic, national, racial, or religious group) in whole or in part. Genocide committed within the domestic jurisdiction of a state is a matter of international concern. Professor Gregory Stanton, a prominent American researcher on Genocide Studies, argues that the hybrid word ‘Genocide’ is a combination of the Greek word *genos* (race, people) and the Latin suffix *-cide* (act of killing). The United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group” (The Declaration of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948). The UN Convention sorts out the acts as genocide as killing members of the group, causing severe bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent

birth within the group and forcibly transferring children of one group to another group. Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Lemkin 1944, pp. 79-95).

It has been applied to the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide and many other mass killings, including the genocide of indigenous peoples in the Americas, the Greek genocide, the Indonesian killings of 1965-66, the Assyrian genocide, the Serbian genocide, the Holodomor, the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, the Cambodian genocide, the Guatemalan genocide, and, more recently, the Bosnian genocide, the Kurdish genocide, and the Rwandan genocide (Schabas 2000, p.25).

The atrocities and violation of human rights by the Burmese military-backed government, the 2017 Rohingya genocide in Myanmar, is a burning example of genocide in the contemporary world. The state-sponsored brutalities killed several thousand Rohingya children and women in Myanmar's Rakhine state, which the United Nations has called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" and has long acknowledged deportation, forced population transfers, and other abuses against Rohingyas.

In the history of genocide, the number of casualties was highest during World War II, which amounts to more than 60 million people, which was three times more than in WWI. According to one estimate by the University of Oxford, from 1956 to 2016, a total of forty-three genocides took place, which caused the death of about 50 million people, while an additional 50 million were resettled or displaced by such conflicts (Charles H. Anderton and Jurgen Brauer 2016). The number of casualties was estimated at 3.8 million in the Vietnam War (Rummel 1997). The United Nations uses the term 'atrocities crimes' to describe Genocide, crimes against humanity including ethnic cleansing, and war crimes with a single term that reveals the magnitude and nature of these offences transgressing fundamental human rights.

BACKGROUND OF THE 1971 GENOCIDE

The seed of a strong sense of nationalism amongst the Bengalis in the Eastern part of Pakistan was planted immediately after the partition of India in 1947. Since the creation of Pakistan, the East Bengal virtually became a colony of the Pakistani rulers. The people of the eastern part of Pakistan were being exploited politically, linguistically, and culturally. They had been excluded from exercising state power, and thus, the nationalist movement was fuelled by economic, cultural and political exploitation. This sense drove them to demand political

participation, autonomy and, ultimately, self-determination. There was hardly any representation of the Eastern Pakistanis in civil and military bureaucracy. Being oppressed and insulted, the people of East Pakistan finally revolted against their oppression and started fighting heroically. In the very first democratic national in the history of Pakistan, held in 1970, the Bengalis of the eastern wing secured a sweeping and landslide victory against the oldest political party- the Muslim League.

With the victory of the 1970 general election, the Awami League got control over the Eastern wing and the right to form a federal form of government in Pakistan. On 1 March 1971, General Yahya Khan announced the unconstitutional postponement of the National Assembly session. The army resorted to open fire on demonstrating crowds in different cities and towns in different places in East Pakistan (Rahman 1980).

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called upon a non-violent and non-cooperation civil disobedience movement, which was wholeheartedly responded to by the eastern Pakistanis, from common people to the entire administration of the east part compiled with the non-cooperation movement all over the country. Yahya planned political negotiations with the leaders of East Pakistani nationalist leaders. Sheikh Mujib responded by calling on Yahya and holding a talk with him, although there was tremendous pressure from many people inside and outside the Awami League. Mujib decided to join the talk of his will and demanded the immediate lifting of martial law and the transfer of power to elected representatives before considering attending the Assembly on 25 March, "to back out on this would be political suicide for him" (The Economist 1971).

The first meeting of Mujib-Yahya in Dhaka, in strict secrecy, to resolve the political crisis was held on 16 March 1971. Mujib urged the ordinary people and the government officials in eastern Pakistan to carry on their non-cooperation movement peacefully to restore democracy. The second round of the talk between Mujib and Yahya was held on 17 March but failed to offer any formula for resolving the constitutional crisis. Moreover, the already formed Inquiry Committee instituted by a Special Order of Tikka Khan was rejected by Sheikh Mujib. The provisions and reports framed by the martial law order and submitted to the authority were genuinely questionable. Regarding reference, they betrayed the intention of prejudging the most fundamental issue and shut out an inquiry into the real problem (The Dawn 1971). The report neither peacefully carried on their non-cooperation movement, addressed the demands of Sheikh Mujib's 7 March speech, nor contributed a bit to resolve the grave crisis the country was facing these days. Amid the political negotiations and talks,

Yahya flew thousands of armed forces from the West into East Pakistan. This was the consolidation of preparations for a potential military action. Meanwhile, the harassment of civilians by the army became a regular occurrence in the East. The then Vice-President Syed Nazrul Islam firmly asked several times for the authority to prevent the recurrence of such incidents (The Pakistan Observer 1971).

The military preparations were going on in full swing in East Pakistan at that time. Pakistani aircraft, Boeings, and planes started flying around the clock with their fighting men's cargo. The situation has been explained by a witness as follows-

Dhaka airport was virtually turned into a military camp bristling with machine gun nests and anti-aircraft batteries. Trenches were prepared and anti-aircraft guns were installed around the whole area. Tanks were brought in from outlying border districts of the province and converted to soft belts for use in cities... By 19 March quite a handful of Generals including General Abdul Hamid and the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, arrived in Dhaka. They were visiting all the cantonments of the province and held secret discussions... Hamid and the other four Generals visited Chittagong on 21 March... in Chittagong; these Generals held secret discussions only with Pakistani officers, although the commanding officer there was a Bengali (Bhiyan 2008, p. 185.).

A severe clash occurred between West Pakistani military men and the people of Gazipur (Joidevpur) on 19 March. The army opened fire, and 120 people died, and many were wounded. The Awami League leaders had protested the incident (The Pakistan Observer 1971). There was good progress in the Mujib-Yahya negotiations held on 20 March, where a tentative agreement was hammered out on some essential agendas. Mujib seemed much more optimistic since he claimed, "The only thing I can say is that there's some progress. We are progressing" (Times 1971, 20). When vigorous attempts were about to be made to seek possible formulas for transferring power, Bhutto arrived in Dhaka on 21 March. There are some versions of Mujib-Yahya-Bhutto talks. The White Paper on the Crisis of East Pakistan reveals that Yahya prevailed on Mujib to meet Bhutto despite Mujib's public refusal. Bhutto also claimed that he pleaded with Mujib to go along with the plan, and they were working on both permanent and interim arrangements for a permanent solution to the crisis (Bhutto 1971, p. 41).

The reality was that both Yahya and Bhutto had the ill motive to delay the power transfer to the hands of the people's representatives. Since the time was running out very fast on 24 March, the spokesperson of Awami League demanded that the proclamation be issued within 48 hours. In the evening of the same day, the Pakistani leaders tried to persuade Sheikh Mujib to effect a change in the situation. In the evening of the same day, the Pakistani leaders had further meetings with Awami league leaders, and they tried to persuade Sheikh Mujib to effect a change in the draft proclamation (The Daily Ittefaq 1971).

Outside the meeting place in the city of Dhaka, as well as in other parts of eastern Pakistan, the law and order situation is rapidly deteriorating. Despite Mujib's repeated calls for discipline and non-violence, the situation did not improve. Thus, the events ran out of his control. In a statement, Mujib regrettably said, "We have done our duty and contributed our utmost toward attaining the political situation" (Dawn 1971, 26 March). The Yahya regime had in mind a military solution to the political crisis.

THE 1971 GENOCIDE: METHOD, NATURE AND CASUALTIES

Yahya left Dhaka on 25 March evening for Karachi, leaving all necessary instructions to hawkish Tikka Khan to operate genocide. It was evident that the government, by this time, lost its grip on the administration. It was at midnight of 25 March that the heinous genocide was started with the army crackdown in Dhaka. The East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) headquarters, Police lines, and the Ansar headquarters were attacked. The Bengali EPR men were disarmed and arrested, and many of them were brutally killed (Hasanat 1974).

Pakistani forces attacked the Dhaka University halls of residence and the staff quarters at midnight with tanks and armoured vehicles and killed many teachers, students and officials. They also attacked the newspaper offices. Many people were burnt alive in the houses set on fire, and many buildings were battered with mortar shells. Hindu majority areas of old Dhaka such as Shankhari Patti and Tantibazar, came under mortar shells (Ferdousi 1997). It was estimated that hundreds of inmates were gunned down and more than 50,000 people were killed in big cities in Bangladesh within the first three days of the genocide beginning on 25 March 1971 with the operation searchlight.

The Pakistan army started an undeclared war against unarmed civilians and killed them indiscriminately. They also arson, raped and looted across Bangladesh. Millions of Bengalis left their home out of fear and took shelter in various refugee camps in India along the border areas (Quaderi 1972).

The local perpetrators Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams joined the army in killing and terrorising the people, including intellectuals of the country. Innocent people were tortured and brutally killed, bayonet charges and gunshots at the genocide camps. The genocide continued during the entire liberation war period. Pakistani regime had been on a mission to crush the aspiration of Bengalis by a horrendous military crackdown (Mascarenhas 1974).

The accounts of the genocide victims narrated that the Pakistani forces and their collaborators followed no specific type or method of killing and torture during the liberation war. At first, the Pakistani army used tanks and mortars to kill people in different places. They also so many people after taking them away from their houses by bayonets or burnt alive. They also slaughtered people like animals. In some cases, people were tortured for months until death saved them. According to research on the 1971 Genocide, many freedom fighters and women were “dragged on the streets pulled by army jeeps, which would only stop to confirm that their prey was dead” (Kabir 1999).

According to the genocide survival, in their testimony, the ways the Pakistani forces unleashed torture cannot be expressed in any language. Those who experienced or witnessed the repression said the cruelty of Pakistani forces was more even than that unleashed by the Nazis of Hitler during WWII (Kabir 1999).

Although no definite survey has yet been made to ascertain the exact number of people killed by the Pakistan army, the estimated number must be as high as three million. The genocide committed by the Pakistan army, along with their local collaborators, is one of the worst holocausts in world history (Banglapedia 2003). Official record of the Government of Bangladesh and many other international publications on genocide reveals that the killings that began on 25 March 1971 and sparked the liberation war of Bangladesh led to the deaths of as many as 3 million. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has claimed this on several occasions while he was the president of the country in the years between 1972 and 1975. Professor Rounaq Jahan writes,

Birth of Bangladesh in 1971 was a unique phenomenon in that it was the first nation-state to emerge after waging a successful liberation war against a postcolonial state. The nine-month-long liberation war in Bangladesh drew world attention because of the genocide committed by Pakistan, which resulted in the murder of approximately 3 million people and rape of a quarter million girls and women. Ten million Bengalis reportedly took refuge in India to avoid a

massacre by the Pakistani army, and thirty million people were displaced within the country (Jahan 1997).

Robert Payne, the famous British historian and author of more than 100 books on war and genocide, visited Bangladesh in spring 1972 once the liberation war of Bangladesh came to an end. His powerful account of the liberation war and genocide in Bangladesh entitled 'Massacre: The Tragedy at Bangladesh and Phenomenal of Mass Slaughter Throughout History' is considered an authentic source of the history of Bangladesh's genocide and has been widely quoted by subsequent historians. His often-quoted observation on the Bangladesh genocide is:

Yahya Khan expressed the theory behind the massacre during his military conference in February 1971. "Kill three million of them", he said, "and the rest will eat out of our hands." It did not matter which three million were killed. The figure of three million represented four per cent of the population (Payne 1973).

Payne further mentioned in his book that the Bengali genocide was planned much earlier than the non-cooperation movement. He writes that President Yahya Khan entrusted the overall command of the massacre to General Tikka Khan. As he was about to leave Dhaka by airplane for West Pakistan on March 25, Yahya Khan turned to Tikka Khan and said, "Now sort them out." For the next six months General Tikka Khan faithfully attempted to carry out his instructions... when Tikka Khan was asked shortly after the massacre began why he was killing so many people, he answered ambiguously:

I am not concerned with the people; I am concerned with the land. General Rao Farman Ali was concerned with the people. He was the principal organiser of the massacre in the Dhaka area throughout the entire nine months of the military occupation (Payne 1973).

When the genocide started, many foreign journalists in Dhaka came to cover the struggle for democracy and self-determination of the Bengali nationalist people. During the night of March 25, they were all in Hotel Intercontinental, the only five-star hotel in Dhaka. They witnessed the massacre of Dhaka from a close distance. One of them was Anthony Mascarenhas, who presented an eyewitness account of the first phase of the Bangladesh genocide published in a British newspaper on 13 June 1971. Quoting some military personals, he wrote:

Reacting to the almost successful breakaway of the province, which has more than half the country's population, General Yahya Khan's military Government is pushing through its own "final solution" for the East Bengal people... "We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession, even if it means killing of two million people and ruling the province as a colony for 30 years." I was repeatedly told by senior military and civil officers in Dacca and Comilla. 'The West Pakistani Army in East Bengal is doing exactly that with a terrifying thoroughness' (Mascarenhas, Genocide, Sunday Times 1971).

Sidney Schanberg, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, was in Bangladesh till June 1971 and was expelled by the Pakistani government on June 30 as the military occupation establishment was trying to hide the genocidal acts from the very beginning of their committing atrocities. After his return to New York, he wrote an extensive report on the Bangladesh genocide and resistance war of the Bengalis entitled, 'West Pakistan Pursues Subjugation of Bengalis'. Sidney wrote:

Army trucks roll through the half-deserted streets of the capital of East Pakistan these days, carrying "anti-state" prisoners to work sites for hard labour. Their heads are shaved and they wear no shoes or clothes except for shorts—all making escape difficult... Street designations are being changed to remove all Hindu names as well as those Bengali Moslems nationalists as part of a campaign to stamp out Bengali culture. Shankari Bazar Road in Dacca now Tikka Khan Road, after the lieutenant general governor of East Pakistan and whom most Bengalis call "the Butcher". Since the offensive began, the troops have killed countless thousands of Bengalis foreign diplomats, estimated at least 200,000 to 250,000- mainly in massacres. Although targets were Bengali Muslims and the 10 million Hindus at first, the army is now concentrating on Hindus in what foreign observers characterise as a holy war... Of the more than six million Bengalis who are believed to have fled to India to escape the army's terror, at least four million are Hindus. The troops are still killing Hindus and burning and looting their villages (Schanberg 1971).

A report on the Bangladesh genocide was published in a famous American newspaper 'Newsweek' quoting the New Jersey Congressman of the United States of America named Cornelius Gallagher. The report said,

New Jersey Congressman Cornelius Gallagher, who visited the Agartala hospital, says he came to India thinking the atrocity stories were exaggerated. But when he saw the wounded, he began to believe that, if anything, reports had been toned down. A much-decorated officer with Patton in Europe during World War II, Gallagher said, In the war, I saw the worst areas of France, killing grounds in Normandy, but I never saw anything like that. It took all of my strength to keep from breaking down and crying (Clifton 1971).

Pakistan army was either crazed by blood-lust or, more likely, carrying out a calculated policy of terror amounting to genocide against the Bengalis. The babies were being burned alive, girls sold into virtual slavery, and there were so many instances where the whole family happened to be murdered. Tikka Khan accomplished this brutal job very efficiently and ruthlessly. New York Times reported that,

The brutality inflicted by the West on the East in the last three months has made it certain that it will only be a matter of time before Pakistan becomes two countries. And those two countries will be irreparably split, at least until the last of today's maimed and brutalised children grow old and die with their memories of what happened when Yahya Khan decided to preserve their country (Times 1971).



Report on Bangladesh Genocide, *The Sunday Times*, 20 June 1971

Ben Kiernan, a History Professor and expert on genocide studies at Yale University, wrote an account of the Bangladesh genocide,

The killing began on March 25, 1971, when Tikka Khan mounted Operation Searchlight, a massive armed strike against the population of Dhaka, the capital city of East Bengal. With thousands of new West Pakistani reinforcements, the army started by targeting East Pakistani intellectuals and students, Bengali Hindus and those whom historian Rounaq Jahan calls “the urban lumpen proletariat.” According to Pakistani Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin, the commanding officer of the attack on Dhaka University, over-reaction and overkill by the troops under his command.” On March 28, Archer Blood, the US consul general in Dhaka, sent a cable to Washington headed “Selective Genocide.” He reported that the “authorities have a list of Awami League supporters who they are systematically eliminating by seeking them out in their homes and shooting them down” and that with army support, “non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor people’s quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus.” On 1 April, the chief secretary of the government of East Pakistan told officers of the US Agency for International Development that “the Hindu community in

East Pakistan had always conspired against Pakistan”
(Kiernan 2007).

OPPRESSION TO WOMEN

Rounaq Jahan argues on Pakistani oppression to the Bengali women in 1971,

Systematic and organised rape was the special weapon of war used by the Pakistan army during the Liberation Struggle... While during the first phase, young able-bodied males were the victims of indiscriminate killings, during the second phase, girls and women became the special targets of Pakistani aggression. During army operations, girls and women were raped in front of close family members. Girls and women were also abducted and repeatedly raped and gang-raped in special camps run by the army. Many of the rape victims were either killed or committed suicide. Altogether, it is estimated that approximately 2000,000 girls and women were raped during the 1971 genocide (Jahan, Bangladesh Politics: Problem and Issues 2002).

The incidents of repression of women were not recorded properly, although there were many witnesses. A victim of rape in this society doesn't want to disclose her tragedy due to social taboos and family barriers. In a comparative case study on the history of rape during four major wars of the 20th century (WWI, WWII, Vietnam War and Bangladesh Liberation War), the rape of Bangladesh is analysed in the following manner.

Bengal was a state of 75 million people, officially East Pakistan, when the Bangladesh government declared its independence in March of 1971 with the support of India. Troops from West Pakistan were flown to the East to put down the rebellion. During the nine-month terror, terminated by the two-week armed intervention of India, a possible three million persons lost their lives, ten million fled across the border to India, and 200,000-300,000 or possibly 400,000 women (three sets of statistics have been variously quoted) were raped. Eighty percent of the raped women were Moslems, reflecting the population of Bangladesh, but Hindu and Christian women were not exempt. As Moslems, most Bengali women were used to living in purdah, strict,

veiled isolation that includes separate, secluded shelter arrangement apart from men, even in their own homes. The Pakistanis were also Moslem, but there the similarity stopped. Despite a shared religious heritage, Punjabi Pakistanis are taller, lighter-skinned and “raw-boned” compared to dark, small-boned Bengalis. This racial difference would provide added anguish to those Bengali women who found themselves pregnant after their physical ordeal (Brownmiller 1976).

Geoffrey Davis, a Red Cross Physician, came with his team from Australia, travelled across Bangladesh during the liberation war in 1971, and helped the oppressed women medically. According to Dr. Davis, the number of women raped was more than 400,000. The *Banglar Bani* newspaper published an article on Dr. Davis in 1972. Excerpts follows,

A large number of women raped by the Pakistanis are suffering from infertility or sexually transmitted disease. Sydney's Dr. Geoffrey Davis recently said in London that these women were mainly suffering from syphilis or *gonorrhoea* or both, and most had abortions, which could lead to infertility or can suffer from the diseases for the rest of their lives. Dr. Davis, who arrived in Dhaka when the victims were at least 18 weeks pregnant, said 170,000 women took the help of quacks or village doctors with no educational background for abortion before international help arrived either because they were forced to do so or were victims of social conditions. Some girls suffered immensely because they were too young to have sex, and even if they could afford a doctor, “it will be difficult to find a man to marry them”, he said. Doctors working at a government clinic to help the tortured women estimated their number at about 200,000. But, Dr. Davis rejected the figure and said it was over 400,000, and of them, 170,00 had been aborted. Many of the 30,000 out of the 200,000 government estimate committed suicide, and some kept their babies. Dr Davis reasoned to clarify his stand on the figure by saying, on average, two women were reported missing daily, which put the number at 200,000 as the Pakistani troops controlled 480 police stations for 270 days. No count of women was raped in villages as the occupation forces moved from one

village to another, and they kept many of them in their camps to meet their sexual demands. Many of these women were thrown out of the camps or killed when they got pregnant or were infected with the disease. In some areas, girls as young as 12 or 13 were repeatedly raped and kept naked always so that they did not flee. Some of them hanged themselves when they got the chance to wear a sari, the traditional Bengali dress, while others jumped into rivers, tying themselves with heavy stones. Dr. Davis said those who survived were rejected by their families as untouched “unclean” as they were raped and pregnant, which was indeed very sad (BanglarBani 1972).

Many of the Europeans and Americans adopted most of the war babies born in 1972. Neelima Ibrahim, who was involved with the government rehabilitation programme after the liberation war, wrote a book entitled *Ami Berangana Bolchhi* (I am the Heroic Woman speaking) and interviewed many *Berangana*. In one of the interviews, a *Berangana* explains:

We are not allowed to wear a sari or scarf, as one woman had committed suicide by hanging herself with her sari. We only wore blouses and petty coats. Those were dirty and torn. Those were thrown at us after being taken from shops. The style was like giving something to a beggar during the Eid. Our eyes would fill with tears... The next day, a girl died. She was pregnant. The bleeding continued since morning. The girls had shouted from the other side of the closed door. However, none turned up. Her name was Moyna. She was only 15 years old. She was first screaming and later became frozen. Her face was looking blue. Elderly Sufia’s mother covered the body with a blanket. There was no bed cover as it was not provided. They took away the body in the evening (Ibrahim 1998).

In her book, Neelima Ibrahim claims that Bangabandhu wanted the everyday life of the *Beranganas* and had asked to destroy the list because he understood that our society would not accept the *Beranganas* if their names were disclosed (Kabir 1999).

Archer K. Blood, the then consul general of the US at Dhaka, writes on the oppression to women by the Pakistani army during the Bangladesh Liberation War,

Fire was started at Rokeya Hall (girls' dormitory at Dhaka University) and, when the students tried to escape, the military started firing... On 10 November 1971 some armed criminals attacked Rokeya Hall and kept 30 girls confined for two hours. They also attacked Provost House. In 1971 there were two strong military establishments near Rokeya hall, it was impossible to attack university Girls' Hostel without their knowledge for two hours (Blood 2002).

The famous expert on 'Bangladesh Genocide 1971' Kalyan Chaudhury writes on repression towards women in 1971,

... on 7 October at about 8 pm. Major Aslam and his men raided the hostel. The soldiers broke open the doors, dragged the girls out and stripped them before raping and torturing them in front of the helpless superintendent. The entire thing was done so openly without any provocation, that even the Karachi-based newspaper, Dawn, had to publish the story, violating censorship by the military authorities. In seven days after liberation about 300 girls were recovered from different places around Dacca where they had been taken away and kept confined by the Pakistani army men. On 26 December altogether 55 emaciated and half-dead girls on the verge of mental derangement were recovered by the Red Cross with the help of the Mukti Bahini and the allied forces from various hideouts of the Pakistani army in Narayanganj, Dacca Cantonment and other small towns on the periphery of Dacca city (Chaudhuri 1972).

There are debates over the accepted figure for the mass rapes in 1971. Studies suggest that the number might have been between 200,000 and 400,000, although 'these numbers are seriously inflated' (Islam 2012). Many of the misguided Pakistani religious leaders gave a fatwa in Pakistan, declaring that the Bengali women could be taken as the 'booty of war' (*gonimoter maal*) and they supported the rape. Thus, huge number of women were tortured, raped and killed during the war. The rapes gave birth to thousands of war babies. Susan Brownmiller in his studies refers,

Khadiga, thirteen years old, was interviewed by a photojournalist in Dacca. She was walking to school with four other girls when a gang of Pakistani soldiers kidnapped them. All five were put in a military brothel in

Mohammadpur and held captive for six months until the end of the war (Forbes and Tirman 2009).

Malcolm W. Browne reported in the *New York Times*,

One tale that is widely believed and seems to come from many different sources is that 563 women picked up by the army in March and April and held in military brothels are not being released because they are pregnant beyond the point at which abortions are possible. The licentious attitude of the soldiers, although generally supported by their superiors, alarmed the regional high command of the Pakistani Army (Browne 1971).

Anthony Mascarenhas writes,

First, it was the massacre of the non-Bengalis in a savage outburst of Bengali hatred. Now it was a massacre deliberately carried out by the West Pakistan army.... The West Pakistani soldiers are not the only ones who have been killed in East Bengal, of course. On the night of March 25... the Bengali troops and paramilitary units stationed in East Pakistan mutinied and attacked non-Bengalis with atrocious savagery. Thousands of families of unfortunate Muslims, many of them refugees from Bihar who chose Pakistan at the time of the partition riots in 1947, were mercilessly wiped out. Women were raped, or had their breasts torn out with specially-fashioned knives. Children did not escape the horror; the lucky ones were killed with their parents (Mascarenhas, Genocide 1971).

Australian physician Geoffrey Davis, who was brought to Bangladesh by the UNO writes,

“They’d keep the infantry back and put artillery ahead, and they would shell the hospitals and schools. And that caused absolute chaos in the town. And then, the infantry would go in and begin to segregate the women. Apart from little children, all those who were sexually mature would be segregated. And then the women would be put in the compound under guard and made available to the

troops...Some of the stories they told were appalling. Being raped again and again and again, a lot of them died in those (rape) camps. There was an air of disbelief about the whole thing. Nobody could credit that it happened” (Forbes 2016).

Oppression of women by occupation forces is nothing new in world history. Repressions of women by Nazis of Germany, Fascists of Italy and soldiers of Japan during the Second World War are some of the significant evidence. The brutal ways of repressing women by Pakistanis in 1971 is a unique example of brutality against women. They raped more than 200,000 women (Rahman, Documents of the Liberation War of Bangladesh 1982). As the women could not bear the pain of repression, many of them committed suicide. The sadist Pakistanis also killed many women meeting their instinct of rape. 200,000 rape victims are the official figure of the Bangladesh Government as recorded in 1972. However, the unofficial figure is more than 400,000, as Dr Geoffrey Davis claimed while visiting Bangladesh at a crucial time (Bani 1972). Muntasir Mamoon, a genocide researcher, claims that the figure of 1971’s rape victims is more than 500,000 (Mamoon 2013). British Historian Christian Gerlach states that “a systematic collection of statistical data was aborted, possibly because the data did not substantiate the claim that three million had died and at least 200,000 women had been raped” (Gerlach 2010, p. 262).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1971, Bangladesh experienced one of the most horrific genocide in history. The Genocide took place during the liberation war of Bangladesh and was one of the most brutal, well-planned, and widespread genocides of the 20th century since WWII. Genocide 1971 is a mass killing of the people in East Pakistan by the then-Pakistan occupation army and their collaborators during the war of liberation. This was a well-planned atrocity that included terror, murder, and destruction of innocent Bengalis. The official figures put, within less than nine months of the occupation period, the estimated number of slaughtered people at 3 million, refugee figuring almost 10 million, and rape victims numbering 200,000. According to the United Nations Genocide Convention in 1948, what the Pakistan civilian and military leadership performed was “an international crime.”

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