

PUBLIC

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Fear for

BANGLADESH Religious minorities

Since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won a large majority in the general election on 1 October, its supporters have allegedly been attacking Hindus and other religious minorities because of their perceived support for the rival Awami League party. Police have apparently taken no action.

Groups closely linked to the BNP have reportedly driven hundreds of people off their land, and burned their houses. The victims allegedly include women who have been gang-raped. The police have apparently done nothing to stop the attacks or protect the victims.

According to Bangladeshi news reports, the guard of a Hindu temple at Deobhogh has been kidnapped by armed men, who fired shots as they left. Several Hindu doctors from Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Mitford Hospital were also attacked.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The BNP, formerly Bangladesh's main opposition party, formed an alliance with three other parties and won more than two thirds of the seats in the 1 October election. BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia was sworn in as Prime Minister on 10 October. In the run-up to the elections there were violent clashes between supporters of Khaleda Zia and her main rival, Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina. About 150 people were killed and thousands were injured.

The population of Bangladesh is approximately 87 percent Muslim. The rest are predominantly Hindu.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Hindus and other religious minorities have been violently attacked since the general election, allegedly by supporters of the BNP;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to stop any attacks on religious minorities, and to provide the victims of these attacks with adequate and durable protection;
- urging the Inspector General of Police to ensure that his officers take appropriate action on complaints against the alleged attackers;
- asking the Prime Minister to set up an impartial and independent commission of enquiry to investigate the alleged attacks, identify the attackers and any police officers who have failed in their duty to stop them, and bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia
Office of the Prime Minister
Gona Bhaban
Sher-e Bangla Nagar
Dhaka
Bangladesh

Telegrams: Prime Minister Zia, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: + 880 2 811 3243

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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Mr. Nurul Huda
Inspector-General of Police
Police Headquarter
Fulbaria
Dhaka
Bangladesh

Telegrams: Inspector-General Huda, Fulbaria, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Fax: + 880 2 956 3362

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

to diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 November 2001.