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Irene Khan visits Rajshahi Bangladesh

MEDIA UPDATE

A high-level Amnesty International delegation, led by Secretary-General Irene Khan, visited Tangail and Rajshahi on Sunday 6th and Monday 7th January, before returning to Dhaka.

The delegation visited a village micro-finance meeting, human rights class, ante-natal clinic, primary school and legal aid clinic, all run by BRAC, to look at the significance of economic and social rights and to see how empowerment and active participation can help address socio-economic problems.

The group also met victims of violence carried out by Islamist group, Jama'atul Mujahideen or JMB. Although action had already been taken against some leaders, people who met Amnesty International explained that they had not received any compensation, couldn't return to their homes, which in some cases had been destroyed, and that they continue to fear for their safety claiming that JMB cadres are still freely moving in the area and that officials who were known to have colluded with them had not had any action taken against them.

The delegation also met with Rajshahi University professors, who were prosecuted, convicted and then pardoned by the President following their arrest last August on charges of inciting students to protest against the government. From Amnesty International's assessment it appears that the prosecutions were politically motivated on the basis of insufficient and inadequate evidence. The individuals have said they will appeal, claiming the pardon is not sufficient.

Should these individuals appeal, Amnesty International calls on the government not to oppose the appeal. An acquittal would be the fairest outcome.