

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Forum on Minority Issues
Geneva, 15-16 December 2008

Mr. Khalid Hussain
2008 OHCHR Minority Fellow
Al-Falah Bangladesh
9/16 Iqbal Road Mohammedpur
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: khalid.aygusc@gmail.com

Intervention for item VI of the provisional agenda

The Relationship between De-Segregation Strategies, Cultural Autonomy and Integration in the Quest for Social Cohesion

Language and culture are the most important components of traditional identity for every nation. Nobody lives without a language and language is the easiest means for obtaining education. Now we are fighting for our rights to education because we trust that “education is the backbone of a nation”. We need education whether we are a minority or a majority; we need to begin our education with our mother tongue even if we belong to a small minority among the majority.

We are Bihari Urdu speaking linguistic minority in Bangladesh. We have our own language and culture which is the only way to express our identity. However, the Urdu language and culture are forgotten in Bangladesh. There is no access to learn the language and to practice Urdu culture due to a constitutional barrier. The constitution of Bangladesh says in article 28(!)

“The State shall not discriminate against any citizen solely on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, or place of birth.”

The significant missing word in the above Article is “*language*.” Thus the Urdu speaking linguistic minority is not recognized by the constitution of Bangladesh.

Recommendations:

Ensure primary education in mother tongue.
Make a plan to protect minority languages.
Ensure equal access to education for minorities.
Increase the educational access for minority with gender parity.
Ensure the security of minority children while getting education.