

AFTER VIOLENCE BREAK OUT--

ESSENTIAL MEASURES FOR RESOLUTION, PROTECTION AND SECURITY

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The challenges of responding to violence against minorities once it has broken out mainly depends on the policy of the ruling party and government's attitude towards rights and dignity of the minorities be it

religious or ethnic or linguistic or so on. If the policy of the ruling party is sectarian, prejudiced to a particular faith, ethnicity or language halting violence is quite difficult until a strong civil society and political resistance does not prevail. If non state actors, basically fundamentalist and sectarian parties and groups are responsible for such violence it is not very difficult to halt it at the national level

In Bangladesh we have experienced both state and non state actors sponsored violence against minorities. When extreme fundamentalist party like Jamat-e Islami was sharing power with right winger BNP from 2001 to 2006 we have seen unprecedented persecution on religious and ethnic minorities, as the policy of Jamat is totally against non-Muslims, women, free thinkers and basic principle ensured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During those dark period government denied the facts about ongoing minority persecution from day one. All such news published in the print and electronic media according to government were 'false' and 'fabricated'. Human rights defenders, political leaders belong to opposition and leaders of the civil society, those protested against ongoing atrocities also became subject of killing, imprisonment and various kinds of torture and intimidation. So the violence against hapless minorities continued for days, months and even years until strong pressure and protest from UN bodies, internationally recognized human rights forums, foreign media and neighboring country **was** visualized. During the first phases of violence more than three hundred Hindus were forced to leave their home country and took shelter in India.

In 2009 a new coalition government headed by Sheikh Hasina assumed power after a landslide victory in the 9th parliamentary election. Sheikh Hasina's party Awami League led the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 and adopted a magnificent constitution that enshrined secularism and democracy as the basic principles of the republic. It's a misfortune of the history of Bangladesh that most of the time the country was ruled by anti-democracy anti-secular sectarian parties those tried to Islamize the politics and society since the brutal assassination of Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibar Rahman, the founding father of the republic in 1975. Secularism was removed and Islam introduced as state religion by two military generals Zia and Ershad thus relegated religious minorities to second class citizens.

In order to convert Bangladesh into a monolithic Muslim country and overthrow the secular democratic government led by Sheikh Hasina, Jamat and BNP targeted the marginalized religious minorities once again. During the last couple of years violence against religious minorities perpetrated by Jamat-BNP goons increased alarmingly. Present government never denied any incident of such violence tried to prevent with administrative measures but also failed on a few occasions and that is mainly for Jamat's influence on local police and administration, in some areas Jamat successfully manipulated local leaders of Awami League who also joined hand with the criminals.

Viewing such incidents as short term-measures we suggested--

- 1) List of the victims along with quantum of damages of lives and properties should be prepared immediately so that relief and rehabilitation action could be taken without any delay.
- 2) Exemplary punishment must be given to the culprits by trying them in the speedy trial court.

- 3) A list of the officials of the administration who either directly or indirectly took side with the criminals should be prepared and proper action should be taken against them.
- 4) If any leader or worker of the ruling party at any level is found involved in the atrocities he should be expelled from the party and handed over to law enforcing agencies.
- 5) Permanent police outposts should be setup in the vulnerable areas.
- 6) Civil defense force should be formed at the grass-root level with the members of civil society.
- 7) Provocative and misleading information about different faiths, ethnicities should be removed from text books and strong law should be enacted to punish hate-campaigners.

There are more mid-term and long-term policies and program need to be adopted by the government, NGOs and civil society bodies in order to stop any kind of violence and discrimination against the minorities. Vigilance of UN bodies also needed to be more visible.

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