

Systematic Persecution of Religious Minorities: Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract: *Minority people are facing challenges in Bangladesh for decades on the impacts of State's denial of rights to a section of people in the country. Rulers always use law to realize their dishonest intention. Bangladesh got such experience for several times. When State appears to be the best patron to the process of discrimination, injustice and violation, the targeted communities are deprived of their economic, political and cultural existence. In Bangladesh, because of the prevailing 'Constitutional equality and moderate Muslim democracy' propaganda, the agonies of vanishing minorities go unknown and unheard to international communities. Denying people's rights equality and democracy becomes meaningless, which ultimately benefits none. For a sustainable development State must embrace all including minorities, with due honor and respect.*

Keywords: *Group, persecution, religious minority, violation, vanishing minority.*

I. Introduction

Despite the country ceasing to be a secular state constitutionally, secularism has been practiced in the region of Bengal since ancient times. In fact, secularism in the region as a whole is in many ways different from that of Western versions that assert complete separation of church and state. The ethos of secularism in South Asia is fundamentally the freedom of individuals to practice the faith he or she desires without being subject to any form of state or communal discrimination in literally. But practically in Bangladesh the government publicly supported freedom of religion; however, attacks and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities continued during the reporting period. In general, government institutions and the courts protected religious freedom. Religious minorities are often at the bottom of the social hierarchy and, therefore, have the least political recourse. Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities experienced discrimination and sometimes violence from the Muslim majority. Harassment of Ahmadiyya also occurred. It is sad to note that some religious minorities, in particular Ahmadiyya and Hindus, have become victims of violence of certain element of fanatic forces within the country. In my view, Islam totally rejects such violence. It seems to be a serious misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam².

II. Religion and Politics: Bangladesh Perspective

Bangladesh rests on a set of primordial socio-cultural, linguistic and religious identities that have been distinctively shaped by the history of the Bengal delta. The socio-economic system around which modern civilization has grown up in Bengal is derived from a distinctive cultural-religious ideology. As a result, relatively flexible religious ideologies were mobilized around the mode of production and economic life of the people³.

Subsequent attempts to construct a unique linguistic or religious identity within Bangladesh have tended to ignore the multiple identities around issues of language, class and profession, and this has occasionally served to provoke confrontation and violence.

<i>Hindu Population across Bangladesh⁴</i>		<i>Population of Bangladesh⁵</i>			
District	Percentage (%)	Religious group	Population % 1975	Population % 1990	Population % 2010
Barisal	11.70	Muslim	84%	87%	89.5%
Chittagong	12.65	Hindu	15.6%	12.4%	9.5%
Dhaka	10.5	Christian	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
		Buddhist	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%

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² <http://www.thedailystar.net/law/2004/10/01/>

³ Kaniz Marzia, BSS, MSS (University of Dhaka, Bangladesh)

⁴ Census Report of Bangladesh

⁵ Ibid

Khulna	16.45	
Rajshahi	12.09	
Sylhet	17.80	
<i>Hindu Population across Bangladesh(Administration)⁶</i>		
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III. Definition of Minority

Sociologist Louis Wirth defined a minority group as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination⁷." Generally, the minority is thought of as the opposite of the majority. In democratic societies, it is based on the numerical ratio to the population as a whole in a particular place. But in international law the term "minority" is commonly used in more restricted sense. It has come to refer to a particular kind of group, which differs from the dominant group within the state.

IV. Features of Minorities

A minority group is an inferior social group. Its member's endure disadvantages consequential from prejudice and inequity. These may include separation and singling out.

- Having own physic, culture, dialect etc the members of a minority group treats as in low esteem by dominant group. The group usually has distinguished characteristics.
- There are existing group feelings of loyalty .They identify themselves different, as part of a group.
- Traditionally it follows or grows by birth but not voluntary that means birth of a child from a group treats a group member.
- Memberships of a minority group have strong bounds of brotherhood and generally believe in endogamy.
- They have tendency to preserve their language, culture, solidarity etc. They usually want to practice it. It matters that lower tendency is group faces extinction and higher tendency a group can be sustained in longer time.

V. Minorities in Bangladesh

Bangladesh belongs to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual pluralistic society. Its people have variety of beliefs. Several languages are spoken in different parts of the country, especially in the tribal areas. And a good number of ethnic groups live in the north and northeastern part of the country. Beside this, a good number of Biharis (stranded Pakistanis) are also residing in different parts of Bangladesh. Therefore, the minorities in Bangladesh can be classified under four different heads⁸:

- Religious Minorities;
- Ethnic Minorities;
- Linguistic Minorities; and
- Other minorities

VI. Religious Minority

A group whose religious obligations result in patterns of behavior among its members that result in discriminatory treatment by the mainstream society. Persons belonging to religious minorities have a faith which is different from that held by the majority. Most countries of the world have religious minorities. However in many countries this freedom is constricted. For example in Egypt, a new system of identity cards ("The Situation of the Bahari Community of Egypt" and "Religion Today: Bahais' struggle for recognition reveals a less tolerant face of Egypt",)

Four Patterns:

⁶ supra

⁷ Barzilai, G. Communities and Law: Politics and Cultures of Legal Identities.. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press., Wirth, L: "The Problem of Minority Groups.", page 347 in Ralph Linton (ed.), Columbia University Press 1945.

⁸ Gobinda Chandra, Mandal Rights of Minorities: The Case of Bangladesh, Dept of law, University of Dhaka

- 1) Full Social Assimilation of the religious minority
- 2) Minority Group Extinction as a result of
- 3) Minority Group Isolation without assimilation
- 4) Partial Assimilation of the religious minority

VII. Minority Rights in Bangladesh

Religious pluralism is a golden thread running through the Constitution that was adopted on November 4, 1972⁹.

Rights guaranteed by Constitution ¹⁰	Rights by International Mechanism
<p>The concept of freedom of religion is further stipulated in Article 41 of the Constitution, which is as follows:</p> <p>"(1) Subject to law, public order and morality:</p> <p>(a) Every citizen has the right to profess, practice or propagate any religion;</p> <p>(b) Every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain, and manage its religious institutions</p> <p>(2) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship, if that instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than this own."Article 41 is founded upon on religious pluralism. In Bangladesh, people of various faiths are deeply religious, and the most devoutly religious people are also the staunchest defenders of religious pluralism.</p>	<p>The United Nation's concept and protection of minorities came to be incorporated in its Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 27 of the Covenant is specifically concerned with the situation of persons belonging to the minorities¹¹:On the basis of a logical and literal interpretation of the Article, the following certain positive rights have been conferred on the members of the minority groups:</p> <p>I. to enjoy their own culture, II. to profess and practice their own religion , or III. to use their own language</p> <p>In Article 18(2) of the Covenant The 1966 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political, it provides that "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice"</p> <p>"respect and ensure all individuals within its territory" (Article 2 of the Covenant)..</p> <p>"Religion or belief, for anyone who professes either, is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life and that freedom of religion or belief should be fully respected and guaranteed."(CEDAW¹²)</p> <p>In Article 2(2) of the UN Declaration it provides that "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice."</p>

VIII. The present nature of persecution on the minorities

The present nature of persecution on the minorities may be described as follows:

1. Grabbing of individual minority properties by interested individual or groups by force and threat.
2. Eviction of large scale poor minority families living in a village, over a Khash lands living there from generation to generation, some times in the name of development.
3. Eviction of Adibashis from their ancestral lands or forests in the name of making 'Avayaranya' (place of sanctuary), tourist resorts, place of holidaying.
4. Rape and sexual violation of women belonging to minority communities. Ill treatment meted with young tribal girls and women
5. Constant threat to minority communities
6. Places of worships are violated and sanctity of the temples, churches, mosques of Ahmeddiya

IX. Violation to Religious Rights

In 2002, 147attacks on Hindu religious institutions have been reported in the media. In several parts of the country, house deities, temples were destroyed, festivals were disrupted and debutter property seized¹³.

⁹ Wednesday, July 20, 2011.Daily Star

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

¹¹ Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,1966

¹² Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

¹³ (36 Amena Mohsin, Rights of Minorities in Bangladesh, in Human Rights in Bangladesh-2002, Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka2003, P.229-230)

X. Loss of Land Rights

Religious minorities outside the CHT¹⁴ have also been displaced as a result of discrimination or communal violence. The Hindu community in particular lost much of its land due to the nationalist Vested Property Act of 1974. This act was repealed in 2001, but there has since been no restitution of land to minorities. Communal violence, particularly between 2001 and 2006 when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was in power, is believed to have affected many religious minorities including the Ahmadi Islamic sect. Elections in December 2008 brought a new government to power and its premier has promised a full implementation of the 1997 peace accord in the CHT and protection of religious minorities all over the country. The government must implement these pledges if the situation of internally displaced people is to improve.



Source: www.internal-displacement.org

In 2002, 56 cases of land grabbing has been reported in the media. Santhals, Khasias and Rakhains have been the victims of land grabbing, often at the behest of influential, political leaders both in position and opposition¹⁵.

XI. Violence against Women

“When the overall religious minorities in Bangladesh are considered as 'Infidel', it is easily understandable that the condition of the minority women, who are first infidel and then women, a double crime and they have to pay double the price. So the rate of rape of minority women is much higher in Bangladesh¹⁶.” Watch World Report says that: “...Attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh escalated dramatically...Scores of Hindu women and girls were raped. In some cases, they were gang raped in front of their male relatives. Hindus were also assaulted on the streets, in their homes, and at their workplaces. The government did little to prosecute or investigate the fact¹⁷”.

The patriarchal values of the society strengthen the hands of the dominant community and they find it easy to transgress the rights of the minority communities; at the same time patriarchy within the minorities make women even more vulnerable and marginalized. Cases of rape, acid throwing, harassment, torture and other brutal forms of violence are reported in the newspapers. The brutality of the violence may be assumed from the facts of the cases. Mother is being raped in front of her children; wife before the husband and sometimes mother and daughter are becoming the victims of gang rape.

XII. Torture and Extortion

Extortion has become a norm in the political and social fabric. The minorities are more vulnerable because of their vulnerability. Their refusal to meet unjust extortion demands exposes them to violence or threats. It is important to note that threats to leave the country are not made to the members of the majority

¹⁴ Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

¹⁵ (36 Amena Mohsin, Rights of Minorities in Bangladesh, in Human Rights in Bangladesh-2002, Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka 2003, P.229-230)

¹⁶ Asian Tribune, Vol. 11 No. 395

¹⁷ Human Watch World Report 2003

community. This suggests that the process of creating otherness amongst minorities has seeped into the sinews of the state and society.

XIII. Attacks on Life and Property

Attacks against the Hindu community continued, although numbers dropped significantly from the previous year. Hindu places of worship have been ransacked, villages destroyed and scores of Hindu women are reported to have been raped and injured. According to the Bangladesh Buddhist-Hindu-Christian Unity Council (BHBCOP), during the period from March 2009 to May 2010 there were at least 150 incidents of repression including land seizures, arson, rape, and at least three killings. Most of the land seizures took place in the districts of Natore, Pirojpur, Chittagong, Narsingdi, Bagerhat, Bariasl, Manikganj, Tangail, Satkhira, Pabna, Manikganj, and Munshiganj¹⁸.

Published In	Events
Times of India, on February 5, 2010,	A group of 30 to 35 men attacked an ancient Hindu temple in Sonargaon of Narayanganj District. The group vandalized the temple and four houses, injuring at least five persons and destroying six idols. The attack followed an altercation between a devotee and three youths from the village.
According to the New Age, a daily English newspaper, between March and May 2010	Individual allegedly attempting to seize land felled forty trees belonging to the Hindu community and occupied the Arpara Bazar Temple land in the Sadar upazila.
According to Naya Diganta, a daily Bengali newspaper, on April 20, 2010	A group of individuals attempting to seize land, backed by the local Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League party, occupied the Shree Shree Rajeshwari Temple in the village of Ambaria. The temple property was still in dispute, and the local Hindu community was unable to worship there.
According to the Daily Amar Desh of 21st of May, 2010	Powerful perpetrators grabbed cremation grounds and lands belonging to the Hindu Minority at Zia Nagar in Perojpur District. In addition, many Hindus have been unable to recover landholdings lost because of discrimination under the Vested Property Act. The Bangladesh Cabinet has approved the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Act 2009 for restoring property seized from minority groups, mainly from Hindus, during the united Pakistan era. ⁵ Leaders of different organizations
The Hindu, 3 November 2009	Bangladesh Cabinet approves law to return vested property to minorities.
Ramu Violence On 29 September 1012	On 29 September, at around 10 P.M. at night, some people staged a procession in Ramu in protest of the perceived blasphemous image uploaded to a Facebook account. Newspaper reports claimed that local Awami League leaders were initially seen mobilizing the mob emphasizing the sentimental religious issue to edge out the opposition. <i>The Daily Star</i> ¹⁹ , a widely circulated national daily at Bangladesh, reported that a motley group comprising local leaders of pro-Awami League organizations, BNP men, madrasa students and

¹⁸ Asian Tribune, Vol. 11 No. 395

¹⁹ The Daily Star

	<p>common people were allegedly behind the communal violence at Ramu on Saturday night²⁰. At a subsequent procession, the people demanded the arrest of Uttam Kumar Barua. At around 11:30 PM, a third procession marched towards Barua Parha, and some of the Buddhist houses were torched²¹. Subsequently, Buddhist temples, monasteries, and residences were also torched. Ten Buddhist villages were attacked as well with gunpowder, kerosene, and petrol, used for the purpose. The arson continued till 3 A.M. in the morning of 30 September²².</p> <p>On 30 September, in the evening, Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were attacked in Ukhiya Upazila in Cox's Bazar District²³. Two more Buddhist monasteries were burnt in Ukhiya early on Monday. At Marichya, the Dipankar Bouddha Bihar was torched while at Khairatipara the Panyamitra Bouddha Bihar was also torched. By Monday, a total of six monasteries and temples have been damaged in Ukhiya²⁴. The fanatics also burnt the Matri Mandir Hindu temple in Jelepara²⁵.</p> <p>The violence spread to Patiya Upazila in Chittagong District on Sunday. At noon, Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were attacked in Patiya. After the midnight past Sunday i.e. on the early morning of 1 October 500 workers of the Western Marine shipping company torched two Buddhist monasteries and one Hindu temple in Patiya. In Kalagaon, the Ratnankur Bouddha Bihar and the Nabarun Sangha Durgabari were torched as was the Abhay Bouddha Bihar in Lakhera.</p> <p>Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are suspected to be involved in the attacks. On Tuesday afternoon, 2 October, three Rohingyas was arrested by the police in Chakaria Upazila of Cox's Bazar District while they were trying to attack a Buddhist monastery in Manikpur.</p>
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XIV. Abduction and Forcible Eviction

Nine cases of abduction and fifty-four cases of forcible evictions of minority communities from their land and homestead have been reported in 2002. In some cases the evictions are caused in a mass scale. In March 2002, in Durgapur about 20 villages inhabited by minorities came under attack and about 500 inmates of those villages were evicted from their homes. In the same month, 32 families had to flee their village in Daganbhuiyan²⁶.

XV. Forceful Conversion to Islam

Though once it was very common, but not rare even these days. It happens now and then everywhere in different ways. Minority girls become the main targets. In most of the cases the perpetrators causes it applying

²⁰ Inam Ahmed, Julfikar Ali Manik (3 Oct 2012). "A hazy picture appears". The Daily Star. Retrieved 24 Oct 2012.

²¹ "Buddhist temples, homes burned, looted in Ramu". Bangladesh News 24. 30 Sep 2012. Retrieved 3 Oct 2012

²² "Ramu Violence: Home Minister points finger at MP". BDNEWS. 30 Sep 2012. Retrieved 3 Oct 2012.

²³ "166 nabbed for Ramu rampage". Daily Sun. 2 Oct 2012. Retrieved 2 Oct 2012.

²⁴ Juberee, Abdullah; Atikuzzaman, A.K.M. (2 Oct 2012). "Mobs torch two more monasteries in Cox's Bazar". New Age. Retrieved 2 Oct 2012

²⁵ "24 Buddhist and Hindu temples burnt in Bangladesh - India and UN urged to intervene" (Press release). Asian Centre for Human Rights. 1 Oct 2012. Retrieved 4 Oct 2012.

²⁶ Amena Mohsin, Rights of Minorities in Bangladesh, in Human Rights in Bangladesh-2002, Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka2003, P.229-230

force, fear and inducement. In some cases, the minority girls are kidnapped, with the active support of the local mastans. Local administration and politicians and religious leaders play important roles to make that.

XVI. Vanishing Minority Population

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre highlights the significant rise in Hindus escaping to India as a result of the “increasing communalization of politics in Bangladesh”. However, the IDMC observes that this is not a first option for many Hindus in Bangladesh who simply accept internal displacement as a “way of coping with contemporary political realities”²⁷

Declining Hindu population in Bangladesh region

Year	Percentage (%)
1941	28.0
1951	22.0
1961	18.5
1974	13.5
1981	12.13
1991	11.62
2001	9.2

Source: Census of India 1941, Census of East Pakistan, Bangladesh Government Census

XVII. Attacks on Ahmadiyas

Attacks on institutions of the Ahmadiya Muslim Community and isolated instances of harassment were reported. There are approximately 100,000 Ahmadis concentrated in Dhaka and several other locales. A series of attacks between June 17 and August 8, 2010, left 20 members of the Ahmadi community in the Ghatal upazila injured and severely damaged homes and religious institutions. Ahmadi community leaders reported the attacks to the police, but there were no arrests²⁸.

XVIII. How are religious minorities, notably Hindus, treated in Bangladesh?

In general, minorities in Bangladesh have been consistently mistreated by the government and Islamist extremists. Specific discrimination against the Hindu minority intensified immediately following the 2001 national elections when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) gained victory with its four-party coalition government, including two Islamic parties. According to several sources, attacks against Hindus continue to occur. Similar atrocities against the Hindu minorities were also reported throughout 2006 (‘Election time in Bangladesh: Minorities face risks of more rights violations’ 2006, Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)

Other Violence²⁹:

Name of violence	Number of affected
Torture	8
Suicide	1
Rape	111
Gang Rape	44
Rape followed Murder	14

Human rights violation at Hill Tracks³⁰:

Incident	Number of occurrences
Murdered	18
Kidnapped	17
Injured	63
Arrested	36

²⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council 2005, ‘Profile of Internal Displacement: Bangladesh’, Global IDP Project website, 25 February, p.15

²⁸ Amena Mohsin, Rights of Minorities in Bangladesh, in Human Rights in Bangladesh-2002, Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka2003, P.229-230

²⁹ Source: Right, Prep Trust and News papers.

³⁰ supra

Overwhelming 98.68% of the rape victims are minority, and rapists happen to be the cadres of the ruling parties. (*The Daily Jankantha*, Feb. 17, 2002). Nearly "200 Hindu women were gang raped" in Char Fashion, Bhola, in one night at a single spot. (*The Daily Star*, Nov. 16, 2001). The police do not allow the minorities to press charges against the rapists, and if they insist they are given a run around for a few days so the evidence of rape disappear, and then the police officers themselves persecute them. On 10 December 2001, *The Washington Times* published an article describing the influx of Awami League supporters to India, "the great majority of them Hindus who complain of murder, rape and looting at the hands of fundamentalist backing the newly elected party" (Rahman. S.A. 2001, 'Indian parties plead Hindu refugees' cause', *The Washington Times*, 10 December). On 24 October 2001, *The Hindu* states that "supporters of the Awami League and Hindus, considered the party's vote-bank, are being subjected to persecution in Bangladesh, consequent to the elections" ('Hindu families fleeing Bangladesh' 2001, *The Hindu*, 24 October – Attachment 8). On 22 October 2001, *The Hindu* reported that "Hindus were targeted on the charge of supporting a particular political concept" ('Hindu fleeing Bangladesh' 2001, *The Hindu*, 22 October) . The same types of violence have been repeatedly taking places during the transition periods of government.

XIX. Tensions that boiled over into violence

On 10th February 2012, the Tensions that boiled over into violence originated on 9th February morning, following rumors that a mosque had been attacked. Allegations have it that houses of Hindus in the area were also attacked, according to the media reports on 10th February 2012, morning, temples in the area were vandalized and shops owned by Hindus were torched and looted after local students in the area gathered following an announcement through a PA system, according to the media reports. Finally local police clamped Section 144³¹ banning public gathering at Hathazari amid mounting tensions after several Hindu temples were vandalized and torched.

XX. Searching Safe Place for Religious Minority

There exists no definitive information to state that someone who is Hindu would be safer in one area or another. Many Hindus fled to India after the coalition took power in 2001 in order to escape attacks by sections of the majority. One report by *The South Asian* states that "at least 10,000 people of the minority community from Barisal District had left their homes following attacks by activists of the fundamentalist religious party and had taken shelter in neighboring Gopalganj District, the electorate of the former Prime Minister. Many others fled to the Indian states of Tripura and West Bengal" ('Bangla Hindu Influx into Northeast India; Dhaka's disclaimer and New Delhi's tacit approval' 2003, *The South Asian*, and 23 December).

XXI. Consequences of Such Persecution Religious Minorities

Violence directed against religious minority communities continues to result in the loss of lives and property, but the motives--religious animosity, criminal intent, or property disputes--are often unclear. Religious minorities are vulnerable due to their relatively limited influence with political elites. Like many citizens, they are often reluctant to seek recourse from a corrupt and ineffective criminal justice system. Police are often ineffective in upholding law and order and are sometimes slow to assist religious minorities. This promotes an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence against them. religion becomes a modus operandi to gain political interest then the true sense of democracy turns into a mere rhetoric or more or less goes back into the primordial concept of 'Papacy' or 'Papal Authority' as propounded by Plato's nationhood under the 'Philosopher King'.

XXII. Recommendations

1. Ensure fair and neutral justice to the Minorities from the Judiciary and Administrative Authority.
2. Completely Repeal the Vested (Enemy) Property Act and put into practice it immediately.
3. Implement the Peace Treaty between Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
4. Renovate Secularism in the meaning of tolerance in the Bangladesh Constitution³² and the laws of the lands. Guarantee that the laws of the land and those of a free autonomous society are enforced.
5. Make available reparation to the minority sufferers including women and children of all aggression, including those of 2001 and recover them fairly and equitably.
6. Reconstruct all damaged temples and places of worship that were subject matter of violence and loathing, and bring to an end any prospect attacks on places of worships irrespective of trust and religion.
7. Prevent inequity against religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous people of Bangladesh in all levels of government and non-government jobs, including the armed military and law enforcement department.

³¹ Bangladesh Code of Criminal procedure 1898

³² Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

8. Make sure just share of positions for the ethno-religious minorities in the military, overseas service, paramilitary, police and civil services.
9. Guarantee security of life and property of the minority communities in Bangladesh. And uphold basic human rights of all citizens enshrined in the Constitution of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
10. Permit NGO and rights advocacy organizations to work freely in the courts. And Stop land grabbing and forced eviction of Minorities of Bangladesh.

XXIII. Conclusion

To practice religion in peaceful environment is considered to be one of the fundamental elements of life of human beings. Human beings do not live only for material necessities. There is a strong need for spiritual nourishment for every human being. The respect for freedom of religion is the foundation of justice, peace and freedom in civilized society. This right is an inalienable right and cannot be derogated or diminished under any circumstances. Therefore, the non-derogable right of freedom of religion must be considered as one of those rights that must be guaranteed to all persons within a State, including in Bangladesh. Religious minorities are vulnerable to discrimination and violence due to their limited police influence and as a result of the corrupt and ineffective criminal justice system³³.

³³ US Department of State 2009, International Religious Freedom Report for 2009 – Bangladesh, October.