

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: BGD33060
Country: Bangladesh
Date: 9 April 2008

Keywords: Bangladesh –DFAT advice – Non-believers – Internal relocation

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

- 1. Please obtain external advice with respect to the treatment of persons who no longer identify as Muslim and do not practice a religion.**
- 2. Are there any impediments to relocating to Dhaka or other large cities as a non-follower of religion?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please obtain external advice with respect to the treatment of persons who no longer identify as Muslim and do not practice a religion.**
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The following response was received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on 8 April 2008:

DFAT REPORT: 803

REPORT RELEASED TO THE MRT/RRT: 8 April 2008

RRT INFORMATION REQUEST: BGD33060

A. Please provide updated information on the treatment of persons who no longer identify as Muslim, and do not practice any form of religion in Bangladesh (the applicant has been living in an inter-racial/religious de facto relationship in Australia and has a child from that relationship).

Bangladesh is primarily a secular country, although Islam is the state religion and Muslims comprise approximately 90 percent of its population. The dominance of Islam in Bangladesh

may place members of minority religious groups at a disadvantage, most notably in smaller rural communities. However it is government policy that citizens are free to practice the religion of their choice. There are occasional reports of violence directed against religious minorities. However, post could not find any documentation about violence in Bangladesh against an atheist or non-believer.

Bangladesh is for the most part quite a conservative country though the younger generation tends to be more accepting of liberal norms and values, especially in Dhaka or other major cities. Post understands that the applicant could, however, face some social alienation on his return to Bangladesh as a result of his atheism, coupled with the fact that he is also in a de facto relationship. This would be especially true if he actively promoted his situation. Generally, however, atheists would not face any direct violent threat from their community especially if they did not make their non-belief an issue for those around them. Post notes that proselytizing of Muslims in Bangladesh is avoided by cultural practice; therefore the applicant could attract attention if he tried to impose his beliefs on others.

Please refer to the US State department's International Religious Freedom report (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90226.htm>) for an overview of religious practices in Bangladesh.

B. Please provide an update to DFAT report 641 of 2006 regarding relocation to Dhaka – would someone with the abovementioned profile still face serious harm if living in a larger city such as Dhaka?

Post notes that the information in 641 of 2006 is still relevant and has nothing further to add (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT REPORT: 803 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request: BGD30660*, 8 April – Attachment 1).

The RRT information request which elicited this response appears as Attachment 2 (RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to DFAT: 'RRT Country Information Request: BGD33060', 4 March – Attachment 2).

List of Sources Consulted

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

List of Attachments

1. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT REPORT: 803 – Bangladesh: RRT Information Request: BGD30660*, 8 April.
2. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to DFAT: 'RRT Country Information Request: