Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions
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RESPONSE

1. Please provide any reports of violence directed against Hindus in the Khulna region since the State of Emergency in January 2007?

Few reports could be located which made specific reference to attacks on Hindu communities in this period in Khulna. RRT Research & Information provided the following background and queries to the post in Dhaka:

> **BACKGROUND**
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> The Tribunal is aware of reports which indicate that Hindus living in Khulna Division have suffered widespread episodes of violence, and/or mistreatment, in previous years. The Tribunal is unaware of any reports that would indicate that Hindus have faced similar problems in Khulna division since January 2007. A search of the Factiva news database and the Internet located reports of only two incidents which might be of relevance in this regard: reports of the rape and murder of a Hindu girl in Bagerhat district of Khulna Division in July/August 2007; and reports that the indigenous Munda community in Khulna Division's Satkhira District have been the victims of an attempted "land grab" in April 2007. Both incidents are noted on the Khulna news page of the website of the Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (see: http://hrcbmdfw.org/blogs/khulna_division_news/default.aspx – Accessed 25 October 2007).
>
> **…QUESTIONS**

The RRT would be grateful for the post's assistance in providing answers to the following (if possible, please also detail the nature of the sources consulted in forming this response):

1. Is the post aware of any reports in the local press, or of claims made by local human rights groups, that would indicate that Hindu communities in the Khulna Division have suffered episodes of violence, or mistreatment, since January 2007? If yes, please provide details.

2. Is the post able to consult with any local human rights groups with an interest in Bangladesh's Hindu minority, such as the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) or the Bangladesh Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM)? If so, can these groups provide as assessment of the current security situation (post January 2007) for Hindus in Khulna district, and an indication of whether they have any reason to think that the current security situation might change in the near future? (RRT Research & Information 2007, Email to DFAT: 'Country Information Request BGD32527', 10 December – Attachment 1).

On 5 February 2008 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided the following advice dated 4 February 2008.

Question 6A. Is DFAT aware of any reports in the local press, or of claims made by local human rights groups that would indicate that Hindu communities in the Khulna Division have suffered episodes of violence or mistreatment since January 2007? If yes, please provide details.

The Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) publishes on-line monthly bulletins on 'atrocities on minorities' (http://www.bhbcop.org/bulletin/atrocity.html). Of the 310 incidents reported in bulletin for the first half of 2007, forty-three were from the Khulna Division.

The Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM) provided a report on 'Violations of Human Rights in Bangladesh' for the year 2007. It included a summary chapter compiling news releases from various Bangladeshi daily papers of reports on the repression of minorities. Of the sixty-six incidents noted during the period July to September 2007, eight were from the Khulna Division.

It should be noted that incidents of violence against minorities were reported in a number of districts across Bangladesh, and were not confined to the Khulna Division alone.

Question 6B. Is DFAT able to consult with any local human rights groups with an interest in Bangladesh's Hindu minority, such as the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) or the Bangladesh; Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM)? If so, please seek these groups' assessments of the current security situation (since January 2007) for Hindus in Khulna district. Please provide an indication of whether these groups have any reason to think that the current security situation might change in the near future?

DFAT contacted the Secretary General of HRCBM who advised that the occurrences of violence and mistreatment against minority groups were comparatively lower now than compared to pre-January 2007. According to him, the community including security agencies, non-Hindus, lawmakers and other neighbourhood groups, had been less aggressive towards minorities due to the current emergency situation. However, he believed that the current situation might not be sustained were the State of Emergency to be lifted.

DFAT would note that any assessment of the security situation in a post-Emergency period should be treated with caution, as it is unclear as to when the State of Emergency might be

lifted, and under which circumstances this would take place (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report 764 – RRT Information Request BGD32527*, 4 February – Attachment 2).

Internet Sources**:**
Google http://www.google.com.au/

Databases**:**
FACTIVA (news database)
BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)
REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)
RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. RRT Research & Information 2007, Email to DFAT: 'Country Information Request BGD32527', 10 December.

2. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report 764 – RRT Information*