

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please update on the situation for Catholics in Dhaka.**
- 2. Are there any reports to suggest that Christians (or Catholics) tend to support or be associated with the BNP or AL generally, or whether this might depend on local conditions?**
- 3. Are there any reports of a Catholic community in Lalpur (village) or Sonapur (local area) of Noakhali; in particular, their size and whether they are long-established?**
- 4. If so, is there any material to indicate their mistreatment or serious incidents?**
- 5. Please update on the treatment of BNP ‘field workers’ or supporters following the election of the AL Government. Any specific references to Dhaka or Noakhali would be useful.**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please update on the situation for Catholics in Dhaka.**

Question 2 of recent RRT *Research Response BGD34378* of 17 February 2009 refers to source information on the situation of Catholics in Dhaka. Question 1 of the same response provides a survey of source material on the recent situation of Catholics and Christians in Bangladesh more generally (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response BGD34378*, 17 February – Attachment 1).

- 2. Are there any reports to suggest that Christians (or Catholics) tend to support or be associated with the BNP or AL generally, or whether this might depend on local conditions?**

An article published by the United States Institute of Peace in August 2006 characterises the Awami League as “avowedly secular”, in contrast to the BNP, which is described as having

“has no stated commitment to secularism”, and as being “more accommodating of Islamist sentiment”:

The BNP, widely perceived as being more pro-Pakistani, has no stated commitment to secularism and is more accommodating of Islamist sentiment. Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of the former military dictator, General Ziaur Rahman, is the leader of the BNP. The Awami League is perceived to be more pro-Indian, is avowedly secular, and remains associated with the 1971 creation of Bangladesh. The AL is led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the daughter of the assassinated Sheikh Mujibur Rehman (Ganguly, Sumit 2006, ‘Bangladesh at the Crossroads’, United States Institute of Peace Special Report No. 171, Columbia International Affairs Online website, August -<http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/usip013/usip013.pdf> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 2).

Reports were located indicating that after the 2001 Bangladesh parliamentary election, won by the BNP-led alliance which included the Islamist *Jamaat-e-Islami*, attacks on religious minority groups, including Christians, increased, and that these attacks were connected to a general perception of these religious minority groups as being supportive of the Awami League. A report published on the Global IDP Project website in 2005 provides the following summary of attacks on minorities following the 2001 election:

National elections on 1 October 2001 brought a massive victory to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which established a four-party coalition government including two Islamic parties. In the 300-seat Parliament, religious minorities hold seven seats: four for the Awami League and three for the BNP. Six non-Muslims hold deputy or state minister or equivalent positions in the government.

In the aftermath of the elections, Islamist extremists started a wave of discrimination and harassment of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist minorities who traditionally have been supporters of the defeated government party, the Awami League, and other opposition parties. Reported episodes included systematic attacks, rape, looting and burning of houses, dispossession of property and evictions. Hindu communities were particularly targeted. The Human Rights Congress for Bangladeshi Minorities estimated that during a three-month period, dozens of people were killed, more than 1,000 women from minority groups were raped and several thousand people lost their land (Guardian Unlimited, 21 July 2003). The Hindu dominated areas in the districts of Barisal, Bhola, Pirojpur, Satkhira, Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia, Jhenidah, Bagerhat, Feni, Tangail, Noakhali, Natore, Bogra, Sirajganj, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Brahmanbaria, Gazipur and Chittagong were the worst hit (‘Profile Of Internal Displacement: Bangladesh’ 2005, Global IDP Project website, 21 January [http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountriesb/Bangladesh/\\$File/Bangladesh%20-January%202005.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountriesb/Bangladesh/$File/Bangladesh%20-January%202005.pdf) – Accessed 25 January 2005 – Attachment 3).

The 2006 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom report on Bangladesh states that the attacks on minorities following the 2001 election were attributed by minority and human rights groups to “religious extremists or to partisans of the BNP and its Islamist allies”. The report also makes note of concerns that the voter role for the elections scheduled for early 2007 was being manipulated, with persons belonging to religious minorities being excluded:

Explicitly Islamic parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, helped the center-right Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) win the last national election in October 2001 and have allegedly used their positions in the current BNP-led government to favor Islamic organizations and to deny funding to or otherwise disadvantage groups viewed as opposing an Islamist political and social agenda. Although many of those who call for a more Islamist

Bangladesh have been engaged in peaceful political and social activities, others, drawing inspiration from extremist movements elsewhere in the Islamic world have adopted a jihadist ideology of violent struggle against perceived opponents of Islam.

The most serious episode of anti-minority violence followed the October 2001 elections. At that time, there were numerous reports of killings, sexual assaults, illegal land-seizures, arson, extortion, and intimidation of religious minority group members, particularly Hindus, perceived as favoring the BNP's main rival, the Awami League. Minority group representatives and human rights groups ascribed these attacks to religious extremists or to partisans of the BNP and its Islamist allies. The continued lack of accountability for the violence in 2001 raises serious concerns about an atmosphere of impunity for such crimes, as well as the possibility of a renewal of violence against Hindus and members of other religious minorities in the next general election, expected in early 2007. Some human rights activists and minority advocates also have voiced serious concerns that manipulation of the voting rolls to specifically exclude or burden persons with names associated with religious minority communities, coupled with active voter intimidation, may keep religious minorities from exercising their right to vote (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2006, *USCIRF Annual Report for 2006 – Bangladesh* <http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2006annualRpt.pdf#page=1> – Accessed 22 November 2006 – Attachment 4).

A chapter on the rights of religious minorities in the 2006 Ain O Salish Kendra report on human rights in Bangladesh provides more information on the reported exclusion of many voters belonging to religious and ethnic minority groups from the voter list drawn up during the term of the 2001-2006 BNP-led government for the (aborted) 2007 parliamentary election:

Although voting did not always take place according to religious blocs, there was some apprehension that the participation of Hindus and Christians would be reduced in the 2007 elections. According to the 2001 Population Census the proportion of the Hindu population had decreased to 9.2 per cent of the total from 10.50 per cent in 1991. The post election attacks in 2001, on many Hindu villages and some Christian homes by BNP-allied local gangs, on the assumption that they had voted for the AL, could scare them off from participating in future elections.

The voter list in 2006 reportedly had serious omissions of minority voters, both religious and ethnic minorities. The process of drawing up a fresh voter list for 2007 was already engulfed in controversy because of allegations of tampering and fictitious voter blocs. In addition, reporters uncovered evidence of vote registers which completely excluded many villages with sizable minority populations, especially in Chittagong. In some cases, enumerators claimed to be amending lists to delete names of those who had died recently or who had left the country, but in many cases it was alleged that the names of those who were still alive were also being deleted ('Rights of Religious Minorities' 2006, in *Human Rights in Bangladesh 2006*, eds H. Hossain & S. Hossain, Ain O Salish Kendra website http://www.askbd.org/web/?page_id=501 – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 5).

An article published by the *Hindustan Times* on 21 December 2004 refers to comments made at a meeting between Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina and members of the Bangladesh Christian Association. The article refers to statements by Hasina claiming that "Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led coalition was terrorising not only Christians, but Hindus as well, as she (Khaleda) saw them as a very active votebank of the Hasina's opposition Awami League (AL) Party". Of particular note are comments attributed to Bangladesh Christian Association vice-president Manju Samaddar, who is quoted as stating

that the Christian community has “always acted as a votebank of the Awami League in the past”, and that “[w]e can say with certainty that the Christians would work more actively in favour of the Awami League in future”:

Seeking to expose the Islamic fundamentalist leanings of Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, her arch rival and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed has charged her four-party coalition government with repressing religious minorities in the country.

Addressing members of the Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) here on Monday, Sheikh Hasina claimed that Khaleda Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led coalition was terrorising not only Christians, but Hindus as well, as she (Khaleda) saw them as a very active votebank of the Hasina’s opposition Awami League (AL) Party.

The BCA members were given this message ahead of Christmas when they called on Hasina, and they said they more than convinced that the AL had their community’s interest at heart[sic].

“We’ve always acted as a votebank of the Awami League in the past. We can say with certainty that the Christians would work more actively in favour of the Awami League in future,” said the association’s vice-president, Manju Samaddar, who led the delegation. Hasina also alleged that since its coming to power in 2001, the Khaleda Zia government had killed as many as 28,000 people in cooperation with the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

“Nobody was spared from the country-wide repression unleashed by the BNP after it had assumed office in 2001. Even the women of the Muslim communities were not spared,” she said. Hasina branded Jamaat-e-Islami [sic] as a fanatic outfit that was exploiting religion for political and personal gain (‘Bangla religious minorities not safe under Khaleda: Sheikh Hasina’ 2004, *Hindustan Times*, 21 December – Attachment 6).

An article published on the *Union of Catholic Asian News* website on 12 April 2006 refers to Advocate Promod Mankin as the “only Catholic parliamentarian” in Bangladesh, and as a member of the Awami League:

Advocate Promod Mankin, the only Catholic parliamentarian and a member of Awami League, the main opposition party, said in his rally speech: “Christians have only two significant religious festivals – Easter and Christmas. As a member of parliament, I urge the parliament to accede to this demand. I also submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia” (‘Christian Association Leads Rally Calling For Easter Public Holiday’ 2006, *Union of Catholic Asian News* website, 12 April <http://www.ucanews.com/2006/04/12/christian-association-leads-rally-calling-for-easter-public-holiday/> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – \\NTSSYD\REFER\Research\INTERNET\SOU-ASIA\bgd34387.we4.doc).

One instance was located of an explicit identification of members of the Christian community in Bangladesh as supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. A bulletin published on the website of the Sweden Bangladesh Democracy and Human Rights Watch provides a discussion of a violent incident in Bonpara, Rajshahi in April 2003, indicating that following a physical confrontation between Catholic priest Fr. Dino Jiacomelli and a local Muslim trader, Muslim residents attacked and injured numerous local Christians. The bulletin refers to the involvement of local Christian BNP supporters in the organisation of a community meeting to mediate between the Christian and Muslim communities following the incident:

The meeting on April 29 was organised by few Christian people (actively involved with BNP politics) in collaboration with the local BNP leaders. Most of the Christians were unhappy with the decision taken at the meeting but as the Christians were at the back, the whole parish people had to accept all the decisions. The decision to say sorry by the parish priest was very degrading and the decision for not punishing anyone for the incident, was also a matter of worry for the whole Christian community (Costa, Rosaline 2003, 'Christian Family at Boraigram under attack: Severely Wounded', Sweden Bangladesh Democracy and Human Rights Watch website, 3 May <http://hemvux.hule.harryda.se/eubanglaforum/sbdhrw/1.pdf> – Accessed 6 February 2009 – Attachment 8).

It may be worth noting a chapter on religious minorities in the 2006 Ain O Salish Kendra report on human rights in Bangladesh, which argues that the Awami League's "non-communal position may have been eroded" by recent political alliances negotiated with Islamist parties for electoral purposes:

The AL's non-communal position may have been eroded by some of its expedient electoral alliances. In late 2006, as part of the pre-election campaign, the AL began forming coalitions with smaller Islamist parties, and gave nominations to Islamists known for provocative anti-minority statements.

...In December 2006, it suddenly announced a pre-election Memorandum of Understanding with a small Islamist party Khelafat Majlish. The key points of the MoU included: i) No law to be enacted contradictory to Quranic values, Sunnah and Shariah, ii) qualifications issued by Kawmi madrassahs to be recognized for the purpose of recruitment to Government jobs, (iii) laws to be enacted (a) acknowledging the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the final and greatest prophet, (b) allowing certified Hakkani Alems to issue fatwas, and (c) making any criticism of the Prophet and the Caliphs a punishable offence.

This document was a repudiation of the AL's pronounced adherence to non-communalism. The MoU was reportedly kept secret prior to its announcement and only known to a select group of leaders such as the party President Sheikh Hasina, Secretary General Abdul Jalil, Sheikh Hasina's advisors and a few others. For most of the party's top leadership, the announcement came apparently out of the blue and highlighted at its most extreme, the lack of internal democracy in the party. Senior leaders, and some of the presumed 'next generation' leadership were caught completely off guard. Only a few months earlier a senior leader had reiterated AL's commitment to secularism in a globally televised BBC debate. There were strong reactions from grassroots AL workers as well as from within the Fourteen Party Alliance. Many prominent AL-aligned cultural workers, intellectuals and political activists publicly condemned the MoU.

In January 2007, Sheikh Hasina finally cancelled the MoU, but stopped short of acknowledging it as a mistake. She explained that the cancellation of the elections had made the MoU irrelevant. The larger issue it highlighted for many committed to human rights principles was that the rights of the minorities and citizens right to freedom of belief might become hostage to electoral strategies ('Rights of Religious Minorities' 2006, in *Human Rights in Bangladesh 2006*, eds H. Hossain & S. Hossain, Ain O Salish Kendra website http://www.askbd.org/web/?page_id=501 – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 5).

- 3. Are there any reports of a Catholic community in Lalpur (village) or Sonapur (local area) of Noakhali; in particular, their size and whether they are long-established?**
- 4. If so, is there any material to indicate their mistreatment or serious incidents?**

Limited information was located in publicly available sources on the Catholic community in Sonapur. No specific information was located in the sources consulted regarding Catholics or

Christians in Lalpur, Noakhali. Reports were located of two attacks on members of the Christian community in Sonapur, one in September 2000, and another in the late 1990's. No further reports were located of subsequent attacks on, or mistreatment of, members of the Catholic community in Sonapur. A review of source information is presented below under the following subheadings:

- [*Background on Catholic Community in Sonapur*](#)
- [*Situation of Catholic Community in Sonapur*](#)

Background on Catholic Community in Sonapur

An undated page on the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website provides limited information on Noakhali parish in Chittagong Diocese, identifying Our Lady of Lourdes, established in 1843 in Sonapur, as the parish church, and Father Gordon Dias as the parish priest. The same document indicates that the parish is home to 2409 Catholics ('Noakhali Parish' (undated), Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website http://cpcbsec.org/parishes_27_2_directory.tm – Accessed 5 February 2009 – Attachment 10).

Further information was located on the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website to indicate that the Catholic Church operates several religious, educational, and medical institutions in Sonapur:

- A page on the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website indicates that a congregation of the Holy Cross Sisters is stationed in Sonapur ('Holy Cross Sisters (CSC)(USA)' (undated), Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website http://cpcbsec.org/society_71_2_directory.tm – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 11).
- A page on the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website locates Brother Andre's High School, established in 1940, in Sonapur ('Diocese of Chittagong: High Schools' (undated), Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website http://www.cpcbsec.org/directory_2_high_s.tm – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 12).
- A page on the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website locates the Morium Dispensary, established in 1959, in Sonapur ('Diocese of Chittagong: Health Centre/Clinic' (undated), Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh website http://www.cpcbsec.org/directory_2_clinic.tm – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 13).

A page on the Greater Noakhali website provides the following physical description of the Sonapur Catholic Mission, which it locates in a Noakhali town called Maijdi:

'Sonapur Catholic Mission', situated in the suburb of Noakhali district town Maijdi, is an attractive place. The metalled road with rows of bettel-nut trees on the two sides and the church housed in a big red-coloured tin-shed are really beautiful. There is a garden in front of the church and a big bell in one corner. The cemented passage used by those coming to the church for prayers is nicely decorated with wild grasses on the two sides. The quarters of the 'Father' and 'Sisters' are just by the side of the church. There are two medium size ponds on the two sides of the quarter with a soothing effect on the whole area ('Tourism' (undated),

Greater Noakhali website <http://greaternoakhali.net.bd/html/home.html> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 14).

It may be of interest to note an article published by the *New Nation* on 26 January 2008, which refers to a serious road accident involving a bus carrying a group of people from Sonapur Catholic Mission:

At least 40 people were injured when a bus skidded off Begumganj-Laxmipur road in Begumganj upazila Friday morning.

Local sources said the bus, carrying a picnic party from Sonapur Catholic Mission, turned turtle at Kalikapur at about 7:30am as the driver lost his control over steering.

On information, police rushed to the scene and rescued the injured.

They were admitted to different hospitals.

The condition of four injured passengers was stated to be critical, hospital sources said. ('40 injured in road accident' 2008, *The New Nation*, 26 January <http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2008/01/26/all0088.htm> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 15).

Situation of Catholic Community in Sonapur

Reports were located of two attacks on the Catholic community in Sonapur; one report refers an attack in September 2000, while another appears to refer to an attack in the late 1990s. No further reports of attacks against the Catholic community in Sonapur were located in the sources consulted.

A newsletter dated January 1999, located on the Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities website, features a reference to an attack on the Sonapur Church Convent in Noakhali by “miscreants”. The reference does not specify the date of the attack, but is located in a series of reports on religious minorities in Bangladesh in 1996, 1997, and 1998:

Noakhali: Some miscreants have attacked the Sonapur Church Convent of Noakhali district. Some persons were injured in this attack. But the administration has not yet taken proper steps against the miscreants (Chakraborty, Nasreen 1999, 'Dateline Bangladesh', Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities website, Issue 1, January <http://www.hrcbm.org/civil.html> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 16).

A page published on the Mayerdak website provides limited details regarding an attack on female members of the Christian community in Sonapur in September 2000:

IX. September 25, 2000. Sonapur area, Noakhali City (in southeastern Bangladesh bordering the Bay of Bengal). A ninety year old widow from the minority Christian community, Katherine Dias, was forced by local Islamic fundamentalists to vacate her home. Two daughters of Dias, who came from Canada to see their mother, were assaulted by Islamic reactionaries, who later tried to gang-rape them. The criminals also looted valuables in excess of 300,000 Taka (approximately US \$5,000) ('Incidents Against Minorities: September 2000' 2000, Mayerdak website, September http://www.mayerdak.com/incid_sep00.htm – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 17).

5. Please update on the treatment of BNP ‘field workers’ or supporters following the election of the AL Government. Any specific references to Dhaka or Noakhali would be useful.

Questions Two and Five of recent RRT *Research Response BGD34262* of 19 January 2009 refer to source information on the situation of BNP members and supporters in the wake of the Awami League victory at the 9th parliamentary elections held in Bangladesh on 29 December 2008 (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response BGD34262*, 19 January – Attachment 18). Further information was also located regarding on-going political violence in Bangladesh from mid-January 2009.

Reports were located of violence connected to the *upazila parishad* elections conducted across the country on 22 January 2009. A *New Age* article of 23 January 2009 refers to a statement by Bangladesh Election Commissioner Sakhawat Hussain that “he was informed the supporters of the ruling Awami League had been involved in violence and intimidation in different polling stations” on the day of the *upazila* polls. Media reports were also located of attacks on BNP supporters following the *upazila* election, including a fatal attack on “BNP activist Idris Molla” in Narail on 23 January, and subsequent fatal attacks on “BNP supporter” Rezaul in Daulatpur *upazila* and on “BNP activist Abdul Zabbar” of Kashipur village; all three deaths were attributed to Awami League activists (for background on the *upazila* elections see: Liton, Shakawat 2009, ‘Nation goes to polls of hopes today’, *The Daily Star*, 22 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72374> – Accessed 22 January 2009 – Attachment 19; and Liton, Shakawat & Islam, Shariful 2009, ‘Campaign stops, stage set for polls’, *The Daily Star*, 21 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72236> – Accessed 21 January 2009 – Attachment 20; for reports of violence on the day of the *upazila* polls see: ‘Violence, rigging mark *upazila* polls’ 2009, *New Age*, 23 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/23/front.html#1> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 22; for reports of violence against BNP supporters in the wake of the *upazila* polls see: ‘3 killed, 65 injured in poll violence’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 24 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72664> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 26; and ‘2 killed, 58 hurt in post-polls violence’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 25 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72828> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 27).

General commentary from various parties was located regarding ongoing political violence in Bangladesh. A *New Age* report of 27 January 2009 quotes local United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative Renata Lok Dessallien as stating that her organisation was “not happy with the violation of human rights in the post-election period”. A *Daily Star* report from 2 February refers to a statement by human rights NGO Odhikar that “[v]iolence after the December 29 national elections caused the death of 17 people and left 500 injured”, while an subsequent *Daily Star* article of 13 February 2009 reports claims by BNP Secretary General Khandker Delwar Hossain that “at least 31 leaders, workers and supporters of his party were killed by ruling party’s cadres after the elections” (for statements by UNDP representative Renata Lok Dessallien see: ‘UN expresses dismay over post-election violence’ 2009, *New Age*, 27 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/27/front.html> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 31; for reports on the number of casualties resulting from political violence in early 2009 see: ‘17 killed in post-polls violence’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 2 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74017> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 33; and Suman, Rakib Hasnet 2009, ‘BNP to hold convention on post-

poll violence’, *The Daily Star*, 13 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75683> – Accessed 13 February 2009 – Attachment 35).

Media reports were located of continuing attacks on BNP members in late January and in February 2009 which were attributed to Awami League supporters, including the fatal stabbing of BNP leader Khalilur Rahman in Jessore on 26 January, the killing of BNP ward vice-president Abu Daud Hassain Mollah of Baneswar on 30 January, and the beating death of BNP activist Iman Ali in Jessore on 9 February. Reports were also located of ongoing clashes between supporters of the BNP and Awami League in various locations across Bangladesh; these reports do not assign the role of aggressor or victim to either party (for reports of attacks on BNP members see: ‘BNP leader stabbed to death in Jessore’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 27 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73126> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 36; ‘Extortionists kill Rajshahi BNP leader’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 31 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73701> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 39; and ‘BNP activist killed by extortionists’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75229> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 42; for general reports of AL/BNP clashes see: ‘2 killed in AL-BNP gunfight’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 5 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74497> – Accessed 5 February 2009 – Attachment 44; and ‘50 houses ransacked, 15 injured’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 13 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75685> – Accessed 13 February 2009 – Attachment 46).

Limited information was located regarding the situation of BNP supporters in Dhaka after the 29 December 2008 elections. An article published by *The Daily Star* on 31 December 2008 reports that “[a]t least 25 people were injured in separate post-election clashes between Awami League and BNP activists at different places in the capital yesterday”, while a subsequent *Daily Star* article of 1 January 2009 refers to an alleged attack on a BNP office in Dhaka by Awami League “activists”. A *Daily Star* article of 10 January 2009 reports an attack by “Awami League activists” on the home of BNP ward commissioner Golam Hossain in Dhaka. It may also be of interest to note reports of a recent increase in crime in Dhaka, including a *Daily Star* article of 5 February 2009, which refers to a statement made by State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj that “law and order is in crisis only in Dhaka city” (for information on post-election violence see: ‘3 killed in post-polls violence’ 2008, *The Daily Star*, 31 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69422> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 50; and Hasan, Rashidul 2009, ‘Send in rigging info’, *The Daily Star*, 1 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69512> – Accessed 8 January 2009 – Attachment 51; for information of the attack the home of Golam Hossain see: ‘Attack on BNP leader’s house in city’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70686> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41; for reports on general crime in Dhaka see: ‘Improve law and order’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 5 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74494> – Accessed 5 February 2009 – Attachment 52; and Manik, Julfikar Ali 2009, ‘Panic spreads as law enforcement slacks’, *The Daily Star*, 19 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=76531> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 53).

Local media reports were located regarding recent several incidents of politically-related violence involving members and/or supporters of the BNP in Noakhali. Most significantly, a *Daily Star* report of 26 January 2009 reports on the murder of a 16 year-old in Subanchar upazila, Noakhali, noting claims by the family of the deceased that he was killed by Awami

League activists because of his work in support of a BNP-affiliated candidate at recent *upazila* elections. An earlier *Daily Star* article of 30 December 2008 reports that one Mafizur Rahman was stabbed to death in Mamarkhal, Noakhali after casting his vote in the 29 December parliamentary election, but does not specify his political affiliation (for information on the murder in Subanchar see ‘Youth beaten to death in Noakhali’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 26 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72981> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 60; for further reports on recent violence in Noakhali see ‘One killed in polls violence’ 2008, *The Daily Star*, 30 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=69287> – Accessed 8 January 2009 – Attachment 54; ‘3 killed in post-polls violence’ 2008, *The Daily Star*, 31 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69422> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 55; ‘Attack on BNP leader’s house in city’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70686> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41; and ‘Ghosts of past return’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 23 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72525> – Accessed 23 January 2009 – Attachment 59).

A survey of source material on the treatment of BNP members, supporters, and ‘field workers’ from mid-January 2009 is presented below under the following subheadings:

- [*Violence connected to 22 January 2009 Upazila Election*](#)
- [*General Information on Political Violence and the Situation of BNP Supporters*](#)
- [*Information on situation of BNP supporters in Dhaka*](#)
- [*Information on situation of BNP supporters in Noakhali*](#)

Violence connected to 22 January 2009 Upazila Election

Reports were located of continuing violence in Bangladesh in connection with the *upazila parishad* elections held across the country on 22 January 2009. A *Daily Star* article provides background on the *upazila* polls, indicating that a total of 8,174 candidates were standing for a variety of posts in 480 upazilas (Liton, Shakawat 2009, ‘Nation goes to polls of hopes today’, *The Daily Star*, 22 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72374> – Accessed 22 January 2009 – Attachment 19).

With regard to the political affiliations of the candidates for the upazila polls, an article published by *The Daily Star* on 21 January 2009 states that “[t]hough non-partisan legally, the local government polls over three weeks after the national polls will see another contest between the political parties”, and that “[t]hose in contention are mostly grassroots level leaders of Awami League (AL), BNP, Jatiya Party and others” (Liton, Shakawat & Islam, Shariful 2009, ‘Campaign stops, stage set for polls’, *The Daily Star*, 21 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72236> – Accessed 21 January 2009 – Attachment 20).

An article published by *BBC News* on 23 January 2009 provides a brief summary of the results of the *upazila* polls, indicating that while “candidates stood as independents”, those affiliated with the Awami League had won 306 of 463 seats (‘Hasina wins Bangladesh local vote’ 2009, *BBC News*, 23 January http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7847732.stm – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 21).

Media reports were located indicating that the upazila polls were affected by a poor voter turnout, and by incidents of violence and electoral fraud. An article published by the *New Age*

on 23 January 2009 states that according to election officials, “[s]poradic incidents of violence, intimidation, capturing of polling centres, rigging, snatching of ballot boxes and papers allegedly by the ruling party supporters marked Thursday’s upazila elections, forcing the authorities to suspend elections to four upazila parishads and voting in many polling centres”. The article refers to comments by Bangladesh Election Commissioner Sakhawat Hussain, indicating that “he was informed the supporters of the ruling Awami League had been involved in violence and intimidation in different polling stations”. The article also provides details of incidents occurring at various location around Bangladesh on the day of the polls (‘Violence, rigging mark upazila polls’ 2009, *New Age*, 23 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/23/front.html#1> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 22).

A *Daily Star* article of 23 January 2009 refers to preliminary commentary on the conduct of the *upazila* elections by observer groups, including a report by the Election Working Group (EWG), which stated that “in some upazila campaigns rules were violated by candidates and their supporters and incidence of violence inside and outside of polling centers led them to close early”, and that “in most polling centres officials provided a high sense of security for voters and they were able to get to the polling centres peacefully and without intimidation” (‘Clashes spoil JS polls success’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 23 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72542> – Accessed 23 January 2009 – Attachment 23).

An article published by *BBC News* on 23 January 2009 reports of the 2009 *upazila* elections that “correspondents say that the level of violence was lower than in previous polls and reports of confrontations between rival sets of supporters were scattered” (Hasina wins Bangladesh local vote’ 2009, *BBC News*, 23 January http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7847732.stm – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 21).

Media reports were located regarding specific incidents of violence, including violence committed against BNP supporters or activists, occurring in connection with the 22 January 2009 *upazila* elections:

- A *Daily Star* article of 18 January 2009 reports allegations made by a BNP-backed candidate in Gabtali upazila that ‘the supporters of his contender attacked him, vandalised his cars used for canvassing and set fire to the residence of a BNP leader”, and that “Awami League workers and supporters had been attacking the BNP men at different unions of Gabtali upazila after the parliamentary elections” (‘BNP upazila chairman candidate alleges attack from rivals’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 18 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=71839v> – Accessed 28 January 2009 – Attachment 24).
- A *Daily Star* article of 22 January reports that “[o]ne person was killed and over a hundred people were injured yesterday as Awami League (AL) supporters clashed with police at Ukhia Upazila in Cox’s Bazar following a dispute over candidacy in upazila polls” (1 killed, 100 hurt in pre-polls violence’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 22 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72439> – Accessed 22 January 2009 – Attachment 25).

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 24 January 2009 reports that “at least three people were killed and sixty-five others injured in post upazila polls violence across the country yesterday”, and provides the details of violent incidents, including the killing of a BNP activist by “Awami League adherents” in Narail:

Our Faridpur correspondent reports: Awami League (AL) activist Akkas Matubbar, 50, of Patpasha village at Saltha upazila in Faridpur was beaten to death by rivals from within the party.

...Our Narail correspondent reports: BNP activist Idris Molla, 45, son of Nabi Mollah of Baka village in Lohagara upazila of the district was killed and fifteen others sustained injuries while AL adherents launched an attack on them yesterday.

...Our Sylhet correspondent reports: At least forty people were injured in post-poll violence yesterday in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts.

As a sequel to a row on the election day supporters of BNP’s Ponki Khan and AL candidate Muhibur Rahman locked in a clash with firearms yesterday afternoon leaving twenty five people injured.

...At least 15 people were injured at Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj district while activists of AL and BNP-backed candidates clashed over the unofficial declaration of the result (‘3 killed, 65 injured in poll violence’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 24 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72664> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 26).

- A *Daily Star* article of 25 January 2009 reports that “[t]wo people were killed and 58 others injured, including nine women, and five houses were ransacked in post-upazila poll violence in seven districts Friday night and yesterday”. The article provides details of incidents involving BNP and Awami League members or supporters, indicating that both of the deceased were BNP supporters killed in attacks allegedly conducted by Awami League supporters:

A BNP supporter was killed allegedly by Awami League (AL) activists in post-upazila election violence at Joardarpara village in Daulatpur upazila yesterday, reports UNB.

...Witnesses said some local AL activists attacked the house of Rezaul at 6:30 am as he had campaigned for Shaheed Sarker Mongol, BNP secretary general and chairman candidate in the upazila polls.

...Another UNB report says assailants killed a BNP activist Abdul Zabbar, 31, of Kashipur village, and injured four others in Jhikargachha upazila headquarters Friday night.

Local BNP leaders alleged that the assailants, led by UP member Polash, abducted Hafizur at night and police recovered his body from a mustered field yesterday morning.

The assailants also ransacked Zia Smriti Sangsad at night and injured four BNP activists, police said.

Staff Correspondent from Bogra reports: Nineteen people, including four women, were injured in post-upazila poll violence in Gabtali and Kahalu upazilas of the

district Friday night and yesterday.

Four women were injured when the supporters of upazila unit AL president Azam Khan who defeated in upazila (UZ) polls swooped on four houses of BNP supporters following an altercation over the UZ poll result at Hossainpur village in Gabtali upazila at about 10:45am yesterday ('2 killed, 58 hurt in post-polls violence' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 25 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72828> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 27).

- A *Daily Star* article of 27 January 2009 reports on the killing of an Awami League activist in a clash between Awami League and BNP supporters over the upazila polls in Netrokona ('AL activist killed in post-poll violence' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 27 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73164> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 28).
- A *Daily Star* article of 3 February 2009 reports that "[d]ozens of people including 15 women were injured as criminals vandalised 37 houses at Bamonile, Digerpara and Jitor villages in Jhenidah Sadar upazila on Sunday night as a sequel to tension over January 22 upazila election", and attributes the violence to two local factions of the Awami League ('Dozens hurt, 37 houses damaged in Jhenidah' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 3 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74128> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 29).

It may be of interest to note in this context an earlier article from the *Daily Star* which reports on a violent clash between two rival factions of the BNP in Noakhali in November 2008, stating that "[a]t least 24 people including the officer-in-charge (OC) of Chatkhil Police Station were injured in a clash between rivals of two groups of BNP at Kacharibazar on Sonaimuri-Chatkhil-Ramganj road here yesterday afternoon" ('24 injured as BNP rivals clash in Noakhali' 2008, *The Daily Star*, 20 November <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65575> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 30).

General Information on Political Violence and the Situation of BNP Supporters

General reports were also located regarding continuing politically-connected violence occurring in Bangladesh in January and February 2009. Commentary on recent political violence in Bangladesh was located from several sources, including human rights NGO Odhikar, senior BNP officials, and a local UNDP representative:

- According to a *New Age* report of 27 January 2009, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative Renata Lok Dessallien expressed concern over political violence in Bangladesh:

The United Nations on Monday expressed its dismay over the post-election human rights situation in the country, resulting from violence in the wake of the December 29 general elections which increased markedly after the upazila polls.

Reports from *New Age* correspondents said that some 20 people were killed and scores injured in election-related violence until January 16.

'We are not happy with the violation of human rights in the post-election period. Any violation of human rights is not a good sign. So we are concerned and hope that the situation will improve in the future,' Renata Lok Dessallien, the UNDP's resident

representative, told reporters after a meeting with Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at the latter's office.

...Dessalien further told reporters that her meeting with the foreign minister was a courtesy call that had touched upon issues like climate change and the upcoming meeting of the UN Human Rights Council, which Bangladesh is scheduled to attend at the hearing on the country's rights situation.

She said that though they were impressed with the December 29 elections, the aftermath was far from satisfactory ('UN expresses dismay over post-election violence' 2009, *New Age*, 27 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/27/front.html> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 31).

- Odhikar's *Human Rights Report 2008*, dated 15 January 2009, but posted on the organization's website in mid-February 2009, provides a summary of election-related violence between 9 December and 31 December 2008:

According to Odhikar's documentation, six persons were reported killed and 206 people were injured in post-election violence in different places across the country. Supporters of AL and its grand alliance, and the BNP led Four-Party alliances were found to be involved in such clashes. In many districts AL activists attacked the houses and shops of the Four-Party alliance supporters and vandalised their property. On the other hand it is also reported that BNP led Four-Party alliance attacked around 20 people as they did not vote for them. This section of the report reflects the incidents of post-election violence that took place between 9-31 December 2008 (Odhikar 2009, 'Human Rights Report 2008', Odhikar website, 15 January http://www.odhikar.org/report/pdf/hr_report_2008.pdf – Accessed 18 February 2009 - Attachment 32).

- An article published by the *Daily Star* on 2 February 2009 refers to commentary on political violence by NGO Odhikar as follows:

Violence after the December 29 national elections caused the death of 17 people and left 500 injured, human rights organisation Odhikar said yesterday.

Odhikar in its report on post-poll violence suggests that the police should be more active in countering incidents of post-parliament election.

The report observed that though the security forces were not acting as agents fostering election-related violence, they might not be playing an effective role in countering the incidents [researcher's emphasis].

The Odhikar report recommended that a parliamentary committee be formed to take into account the activities of various intelligence agencies during the caretaker government's rule and monitor the activities on a regular basis ('17 killed in post-polls violence' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 2 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74017> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 33).

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 2 February reports claims by BNP Secretary General Khandker Delwar Hossain that "since the December 29 elections, Awami League cadres have been attacking BNP men and looted their valuables across

the country”, and that “around 20 leaders and workers of BNP have been killed by the AL cadres since the elections” (‘20 BNP men killed since Dec 29 polls’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 2 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74037> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 34).

- A subsequent article published by *The Daily Star* on 13 February 2009 reports that the “opposition BNP has taken an initiative to organise a national convention on post-election violence in a bid to create public opinion against ‘torture and repression on their supporters’ across the country after the December 29 elections”. The article notes that “BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain has recently claimed at least 31 leaders, workers and supporters of his party were killed by ruling party’s cadres after the elections” (Suman, Rakib Hasnet 2009, ‘BNP to hold convention on post-poll violence’, *The Daily Star*, 13 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75683> – Accessed 13 February 2009 – Attachment 35).

Further reports were located on specific incidents of violence involving members of the Awami League and BNP in January and February 2009. Reports were located which described alleged attacks on persons affiliated with the BNP which were attributed to Awami League members by family members of the deceased, or by local “sources” or “witnesses”:

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 10 January 2009 reports that on 9 January “[a] local BNP leader was stabbed allegedly by Awami League activists” in Arinagar village in Kendua, Netrokona. The article identifies the victim as “Md Afzal Hossain, vice-president of Sandikon union BNP” (‘Attack on BNP leader’s house in city’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70686> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41).
- A *Daily Star* article of 27 January 2009 reports that “[a] BNP leader was stabbed to death in broad daylight allegedly by Awami League activists at Rajapur village in Jessore yesterday”. The article notes that “[a]ccording to sources, Khalilur had a long-standing feud with some local AL activists over establishment of supremacy in the area”, and that “[i]n the wake of the December 29 parliamentary election, some AL activists threatened Khalilur with dire consequences and asked him to leave the area, his family members said” (‘BNP leader stabbed to death in Jessore’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 27 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73126> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 36).
- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 28 January 2009 reports allegations that in the wake of the murder of BNP leader Khalilur Rahman in Jessore, police had dictated the names of the accused in the First Incident Report lodged by the victim’s son. The report indicates that the names of four accused were recorded in the FIR, while the victim’s son named twelve assailants and claimed that “the members of the killing squad are the supporters of local Awami League” (‘FIR dictated by police lodged’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 28 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73304> – Accessed 28 January 2009 – Attachment 38).
- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 27 January 2009 reports that “Awami League cadres allegedly kidnapped a BNP man at Naldanga of Natore yesterday and

demanded ransom for his release”, but also notes reports that the abduction was connected to an unpaid debt, indicating that local police had “refused to record any case” (‘BNP supporter “abducted” by AL men in Natore’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 27 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73119> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 37).

- The same *Daily Star* article also reports a separate incident in which “at least ten people were injured as AL men attacked the house of Natore sadar BNP’s acting general secretary Akhtaruzzaman Hares at Laxmipur Kholabaria village” (‘BNP supporter “abducted” by AL men in Natore’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 27 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73119> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 37).
- A *Daily Star* article of 31 January 2009 reports that BNP ward vice-president “was murdered reportedly for not paying toll to extortionists at Biraldaha village in Puthia upazila early yesterday”. The article refers to claims by family members of the deceased that “local Awami League (AL) cadres” were responsible for the killing, but also notes the possibility that the murder was connected to a rivalry over “business shares”, as well as claims by the son of the deceased that “AL men tortured BNP activists and leaders in the area after BNP candidate won in the upazila election” (‘Extortionists kill Rajshahi BNP leader’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 31 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73701> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 39).
- An article published by the *Daily Star* on 4 February 2009 reports that the “[t]endons of legs of a BNP activist were cut allegedly by Awami League (AL) activists in Protyasha residential area here yesterday” (‘Tendons of BNP activist severed’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 4 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74267> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 40).
- An article published on 10 February 2009 by *The Daily Star* reports that “[a] BNP activist was beaten to death by extortionists at Jhinaikundu village in Chowgachha upazila in the district yesterday”, and notes reports that “[f]amily members and local BNP leaders however alleged that the Awami League (AL) cadres beat him to death in broad daylight for a failing to pay Tk 50,000 as toll” (‘BNP activist killed by extortionists’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75229> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 42).
- A *Daily Star* article of 18 February 2009 reports that “[a] group of Awami League (AL) cadres attacked and injured a Kendua upazila BNP leader immediately after their release on bail yesterday”, noting statements by a local police officer indicating that “the three attackers are activists of Kendua upazila AL and they attacked Hasem as a sequel to previous enmity”(‘AL men beat up Kendua BNP leader’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 18 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=76322> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 43).

Media reports were also located of continuing “clashes” between BNP and Awami League supporters in February 2009, in which neither side was specifically assigned the role of

aggressor or victim. In some cases, reports indicated that the violence may have been connected to local economic or social disputes:

- A *Daily Star* article of 5 February reports that “[t]wo people were killed and 15 others injured, five of them with bullet, in a fierce clash between Awami League (AL) and BNP supporters at Jajira in Sadar upazila yesterday”, referring to “local sources” which indicated that the two groups “had a long-standing dispute over establishing supremacy in the area” (‘2 killed in AL-BNP gunfight’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 5 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74497> – Accessed 5 February 2009 – Attachment 44).
- A *Daily Star* article of 10 February reports that “[a]t least 28 people were injured, four of them critically, in a clash between the supporters of Awami League and BNP at Baoitara Bazar in Sirajganj Sadar upazila yesterday morning over construction of a road” (‘28 injured as AL, BNP men clash in Sirajganj’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75164> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 45).
- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 13 February 2009 reports that “[a]t least 15 people, including a woman, were injured and 50 houses were ransacked in a fierce clash between two groups of people at Najarpur village in Sadar upazila yesterday”. The article indicates that the two groups were affiliated to local Awami League and BNP supporters, but that the clash was instigated by a dispute over a “carom” game (‘50 houses ransacked, 15 injured’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 13 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75685> – Accessed 13 February 2009 – Attachment 46).
- Another *Daily Star* report of 13 February reports that “[a]t least 20 people including three women were injured and eight houses looted in a clash between the supporters of Awami League (AL) and BNP” in Narail, attributing the clash to “previous enmity between the supporters of AL activist Matiar and BNP leader Nayeb Ali”. It is worth noting that the article indicates that eight houses belonging to supporters of BNP leader Nayeb Ali “were looted and damaged by their opponents” (‘AL-BNP clash in Narail’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 13 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=75696> – Accessed 13 February 2009 – Attachment 47).

An article published by *The Daily Star* on 1 February 2009 reports on an attack conducted by BNP members in Satkhira, stating that “[a]t least 14 people were injured as BNP supporters attacked the house of an Awami League activist at village Sreeula in Assassuni upazila yesterday” (‘AL man’s house attacked: 14 hurt’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 1 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73822> – Accessed 4 February 2009 – Attachment 48).

Information on situation of BNP supporters in Dhaka

Question Four of recent RRT *Research Response BGD34262* of 19 January 2009 refers to source information on the situation of BNP members and supporters in Dhaka in the wake of the Awami League victory at the 29 December 2008 Bangladesh parliamentary elections (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response BGD34262*, 19 January – Attachment 18). A brief survey of relevant reports follows below:

- A page located on the Bangladesh Government web portal identifies twenty Dhaka electorates, and indicates that candidates from the Bangladesh Awami League were successful in eighteen seats in the 29 December 2008 parliamentary election; Awami League electoral allies the Bangladesh Workers Party and the Jatiya party each won one of the remaining two seats ('Seatwise Candidates Elected' (Undated), Bangladesh Government web portal <http://123.49.39.5/result/report7.php?lang=en> – Accessed 14 January 2009 – Attachment 49).
- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 31 December 2008 reports that “[a]t least 25 people were injured in separate post-election clashes between Awami League and BNP activists at different places in the capital yesterday” ('3 killed in post-polls violence' 2008, *The Daily Star*, 31 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69422> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 50).
- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 1 January 2009 refers to an alleged attack on a BNP office in Dhaka by Awami League “activists”, stating that “BNP candidate for Dhaka-16 barrister Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury Mia alleged that AL activists captured the ward-92 BNP office” (Hasan, Rashidul 2009, 'Send in rigging info', *The Daily Star*, 1 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69512> – Accessed 8 January 2009 – Attachment 51).

Subsequent reports were located of limited further incidents in Dhaka in January and February 2009:

- A *Daily Star* article of 10 January 2009 reports on attacks by “Awami League activists” on the home of BNP ward commissioner Golam Hossain in Dhaka:

Talking to *The Daily Star*, Ward Commissioner Golam Hossain, a former vice-president of Ward 27 BNP, alleged that local AL cadres ransacked his houses at about 5:30pm and again at 8:30pm.

“Over 30 cadres damaged doors, windows and furniture of my two houses,” he said, adding that the cadres also threatened to kill him.

The police, however, said some unruly youths made the attacks as they were driven away after they gathered in front of the house ('Attack on BNP leader's house in city' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70686> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41).
- An article published by the *New Age* on 23 January 2009 on violence connected with the upazila elections held on 22 January reports that Awami League activists had been arrested in Keraniganj in Dhaka “for their alleged involvement in troublemaking” ('Violence, rigging mark upazila polls' 2009, *New Age*, 23 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/23/front.html#1> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 22).

It may also be of interest to note local media reports of law and order problems in Dhaka in early 2009:

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 5 February 2009 reports that “[t]he home ministry yesterday asked the officers-in-charge (OCs) of the city’s police stations to make an all-out effort to improve the law and order situation in the capital by making the ongoing special anti-crime drive a success”, and refers to a statement made by State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj that “law and order is in crisis only in Dhaka city and he would give highest priority to curb crimes in the capital” (‘Improve law and order’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 5 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=74494> – Accessed 5 February 2009 – Attachment 52).
- A *Daily Star* article of 19 February 2009 which reports that “[l]aw and order is witnessing a slide with an increase in criminal activities in the city and elsewhere in the country, although law-enforcement agencies and the government claim to have the situation under control” (Manik, Julfikar Ali 2009, ‘Panic spreads as law enforcement slacks’, *The Daily Star*, 19 February <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=76531> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 53).

Information on situation of BNP supporters in Noakhali

A page located on the Bangladesh Government web portal identifies six Noakhali electorates, and indicates that at the 29 December 2008 parliamentary elections, candidates from the BNP were successful in three seats, while Awami League candidates won two, with the sixth seat going to an independent candidate (‘Seatwise Candidates Elected’ (Undated), Bangladesh Government web portal <http://123.49.39.5/result/report7.php?lang=en> – Accessed 14 January 2009 – Attachment 49).

Media reports were located of violence occurring in Noakhali in connection with the 29 December 2008 parliamentary election. A *Daily Star* report of 30 December 2008 provides general information on election violence in Noakhali, indicating that one person was killed and 15 others injured:

Our Noakhali correspondent reports: One person was killed and 15 others, including a woman and a policeman, were injured during several clashes between grand alliance and four-party alliance supporters in five constituencies of the district.

Witnesses said criminals stabbed Mafizur Rahman, 48, to death at Mamarkhal as he was returning home around 2:30pm after tendering vote at Janata Bazar polling centre of Nalwisher in Noakhali-6 constituency.

Voting was suspended at Mati Mia High School polling centre in Noakhali-3 constituency around noon following clashes between supporters of BNP candidate Barkat Ullah Bulu and independent candidate Minhaz Ahmed Javed.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Begumganj Manzurul Momin said the supporters of the candidates accused each other of influencing voters.

Constable Billal was injured while trying to stop clashes between Awami League and BNP in Noakhali-4 constituency (‘One killed in polls violence’ 2008, *The Daily Star*, 30 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=69287> – Accessed 8 January 2009 – Attachment 54).

A *Daily Star* article of 31 December 2008 reports that 30 people were injured in election related violence in Noakhali on the previous day, including 20 people hurt in a clash between BNP and Awami League supporters over election results:

In Noakhali, at least 30 people were injured in two separate incidents of violence at Noakhali Sadar and Sonaimuri upazilas yesterday.

Of them, 20 people were injured when followers of local BNP leader Enam Mollah and AL leader Hafiz of Vatirtek Char Shulukia village of Noakhali Sadar upazila clashed over election results. Of them, 16 were admitted to Noakhali General Hospital ('3 killed in post-polls violence' 2008, *The Daily Star*, 31 December <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=69422> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 55).

An article published by *The New Age* on 4 January refers to claims by BNP office secretary Ruhul Kabir Rezvi that BNP supporters had been subject to attacks by Awami League supporters in various locations, including Noakhali, in the wake of the parliamentary polls:

Rezvi alleged that BNP leaders and workers, including their family members, especially women, were still being harassed across the country. "The Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina had claimed that they do not believe in the politics of vengeance and destruction but in practice what we see are really horrifying," he added.

He said that BNP has urged the local administrations to take action against the perpetrators, but their appeal went in vain.

"Local administrations have been showing their partisan manner that is never acceptable," he added.

He claimed that dozens of party leaders and activists have been tortured in Feni, Jhenaidah, Laxmipur, Gazipur, Tangail, Noakhali, Manikganj, Narayangani and Bhola in fresh attacks over the last 24 hours ('UZ poll campaign in offing: BNP complains of attack on its partymen' 2009, *The New Nation*, 4 January <http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2009/01/04/news0888.htm> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 56).

A *Daily Star* article of 12 January 2009 reports that the "mysterious death" on 4 December 2008 of the Awami League-alliance candidate in the Noakhali-1 electorate caused the election to be delayed until 12 January 2009 in this constituency. The article refers to claims made in the lead-up to the poll by BNP candidate Mahbubuddin Khokan that "supporters of Awami League were threatening his activists and would-be agents in 27 polling centres" (Hasan, Rashidul 2009, 'Tight Race at BNP stronghold', *The Daily Star*, 12 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70953> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 57).

A *Daily Star* article of 10 January 2009 reports that "[a]t least 10 activists of BNP-led four-party coalition were injured" after an attack in Chatkil, Noakhali which witnesses attributed to Awami League supporters. The article indicates that the BNP supporters were attacked after attending a rally addressed by BNP leader Khaleda Zia for the delayed poll:

UNB adds: At least 10 activists of BNP-led four-party coalition were injured in an attack allegedly by grand alliance supporters at Nayanpur in Chatkhil, Noakhali last night.

Witnesses said the Awami League-led grand alliance supporters stopped a bus carrying the four-party activists rerunning from an election rally addressed by BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia at Chatkhil upazila headquarters at about 7:00pm.

They then beat up the BNP activists, leaving the 10 people injured.

Three of the injured – Jubo Dal leader Kamal Uddin, 35, and activists Ershad, 30, and Nazim, 32 – were admitted to a private clinic.

The election rally was arranged in support of BNP candidate Barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokon ('Attack on BNP leader's house in city' 2009, *The Daily Star*, 10 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=70686> – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41).

A *Daily Star* article published on 13 January 2009 reports that BNP candidate Mahbubuddin Khokon won the delayed parliamentary poll held in Noakhali-1 electorate on 12 January. The article also indicates that polling had been conducted peacefully in the electorate, but refers to reports of attacks on BNP supporters by Awami League supporters following the BNP victory:

Reports of attacks on BNP men after the possible AL defeat came from Shompara Bazar, Yasin Hajir Bazar, Noakhola and some other areas. No details were available immediately (Hasan, Rashidul 2009, 'BNP triumphs in Noakhali polls', *The Daily Star*, 13 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=71083> – Accessed 13 January 2009 – Attachment 58).

As noted above, a *Daily Star* article of 20 November 2008 reports on a violent clash between two rival factions of the BNP in Noakhali in November 2008 in connection with party nominations for the parliamentary election:

At least 24 people including the officer-in-charge (OC) of Chatkhil Police Station were injured in a clash between rivals of two groups of BNP at Kacharibazar on Sonaimuri-Chatkhil-Ramganj road here yesterday afternoon.

The clash occurred as local BNP men obstructed party nominee Barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokon while he was on the way to Chatkhil Upazila town from Sonaimuri on board a microbus. He got nomination to contest from Noakhali-1 (Chatkhil-Sonaimuri) constituency in the upcoming Jatiya Sangsad (JS) elections.

However, supporters of both the groups chased and counter chased each other and locked in a bloody clash injuring 24 people. The injured included Chatkhil Police Station OC Ashraf Alam. Five vehicles including four minibuses and a truck were also set on fire by mob. Barrister Mahbub's microbus was also burnt ('24 injured as BNP rivals clash in Noakhali' 2008, *The Daily Star*, 20 November <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65575> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – Attachment 30).

Reports were also located of violence occurring in Noakhali in connection with the *upazila* elections held on 22 January 2009:

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 23 January 2009 reports that candidates affiliated with the BNP ("four-party") had withdrawn from contention, "alleging beating up of their polling agents". Without specifying party affiliations, the article

also indicates that 50 people were injured in election-related clashes in Noakhali on 22 January:

A chairman and three vice-chairmen candidates in Noakhali said they have “withdrawn” from the race alleging beating up of their polling agents. They are four-party-backed Companiganj chairman candidate Fakhru Islam, vice-chairman candidate Jahir Uddin and female vice-chairman candidate Taslima Toha Lipi.

Voting was suspended in two polling centres following snatching of ballot papers in Noakhali. At least 50 people were injured in clashes between the supporters of rival candidates in different polling centres there.

Police arrested eight people in connection with intimidating voters and other criminal activities around polling centres in the district (‘Ghosts of past return’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 23 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72525> – Accessed 23 January 2009 – Attachment 59).

- An article published by the *New Age* on 23 January 2009 reports that supporters of a BNP affiliated candidate in Noakhali had attacked an *upazila* official, and vandalised the vehicle of an Awami League candidate:

The activists of a candidate, backed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, at Subarna Char in Noakhali attacked the officer of the *upazila* nirbahi officer during vote count. They also vandalised the vehicle of the *upazila* nirbahi officer and Khairul Anam Chowdhury, a candidate backed by the Awami League (‘Violence, rigging mark *upazila* polls’ 2009, *New Age*, 23 January <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/jan/23/front.html#1> – Accessed 27 January 2009 – Attachment 22).

- An article published by *The Daily Star* on 26 January 2009 reports on the killing of a youth in Subanchar *upazila* in Noakhali on 25 January, noting that the father of the deceased alleged that he was killed by Awami League activists because “he worked for the BNP candidates in the *upazila* election”:

A youth was beaten to death at Char Alauddin in Subarnachar *upazila* yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Didar Alam, 16, son of Abdul Malek.

Malek alleged that Awami League (AL) activists killed Didar as he worked for the BNP candidates in the *upazila* election.

Malek also said that two AL activists – Siraj and Nooruddin called Didar out of his house, took him to a nearby shop of one Farid Saudagar at about 10 am and started beating him indiscriminately with sticks, leaving him seriously injured.

He was rushed to Noakhali General Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Sudharam Thana police recovered the body and sent it to morgue for autopsy (‘Youth beaten to death in Noakhali’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 26 January <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72981> – Accessed 19 February 2009 – [Attachment 60](#)).

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