

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research 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.

Questions

1. Can you provide information on women’s rights groups in Bangladesh, such as the issues, types of groups and organisations of these groups?

RESPONSE

1. Can you provide information on women’s rights groups in Bangladesh, such as the issues, types of groups and organisations of these groups?

Sources state that Bangladesh has a long tradition of women’s organisations. Contemporary Bangladesh is now home to what has been described as a “vibrant and strong” women’s rights movement. The organisations that comprise the women’s rights movement are varied. Women’s groups include the women’s wings of political parties as well as independent non-government organisations, professional bodies, student associations and trade unions. Sources report incidences in which women’s rights organisations and activists have been targeted by fundamental Islamist groups in Bangladesh (‘Bangladeshi women organise for their rights’ (undated), *The Independent -Bangladesh*, <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/may/12/12052006wo.htm> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 1).

Sources reveal that Bangladesh has had a long history of women’s rights organisations. These have traditionally been focussed on issues such welfare, education, skills, income generation and child care. The 1980’s however, saw a growth in women’s movements in both number and scope. New feminist organisations developed with new modes of organisational behaviour and new points of protests. These women’s rights organisations have developed specific programmes in order to end discriminatory practices against women such as violence against women, dowry, trafficking of women, unequal wages, work place exploitation, access to credit and unequal political and social rights. Sources state that these groups have led to a significant mobilisation in both urban and rural women. However according to Banglapedia the women’s rights movement “has been met with intermittent and slow responses from the male dominated political system”:

Mobilisation of women through women's organisations had largely begun during the Pakistan era through voluntary social services for the rehabilitation of the refugees flowing into the country following the partition of 1947. This organisation was the forerunner of the subsequent women's organisations like All Pakistan Women's Association, Federation of University Women and Karachi Business and Professional Women's Club. Subsequently, other professional women's organisations also came into being but almost all of these organisations' main thrust had been welfare oriented and creation of social awareness among women like women's education, development of skills and income generation and setting up of child and mothercare centres. The All Pakistan Women's Association, however, played a significant role in pushing for the Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 and was in favour of reservation of seats for women in the national and provincial assemblies. But since APWA (All Pakistan Woman Association) was aligned with the government of the day its activities failed to highlight women's demands for creating their greater participation in politics. Only organisation with specific women's rights was the United Front for Women's Rights but it too could not successfully create any platform for pushing women's agenda.

Following the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 the women's movement basically remained centred around welfare activities. It should, however, be mentioned that women had begun to take part in agitation politics as evidenced by their participation during the anti-Ayub movement of 1968-69 and formation of organisations like East Pakistan Mahila Sangram... They demanded election of sovereign parliament, direct election for the reserved seats for women, equal payment for the female workers (though the percentage of female workers were insignificant at the time), establishment of mother/child centres and shisu hospitals etc. But the growth of the nascent women's movement in Bangladesh was stunted due to steady deterioration of the democratic order of the country and the ideological inclination of the emergent women's organisations which were aligned with the then ruling party and sought to resolve women's issues within the gambit of socialist transformation of the society.

Women's participation in politics, however, remained peripheral despite state interventions to enhance their participation. But the impacts of worldwide consciousness among the women activities about the persistent inequality in gender relations created a new direction and impetus to women's movement the impact of which were felt in Bangladesh as well. In 1980s there emerged women's movement in Bangladesh, which many apprehended would be a replica of the West, but the movement soon was founded on indigenous feminist's issues, roots, new leadership, new organisations and new modes of organisational behaviour. As the decade of 1980s rolled on there also emerged a new breed of women's organisations and leadership in Bangladesh besides hundreds of existing ones delivering social services and skill training. The new brand has more specific programmes in order to end discriminatory practices against women. Issues like violence against women, rape, dowry and fatwa deaths, trafficking of women, unequal wages, exploitation of women in labour intensive industries like garment, apathy of the traditional trade unions towards women labours' needs, rights of access to credit and means of production like land, unequal political and social right became rallying points for the women's organisations. Both urban and rural women were mobilized significantly, on the issues of violence, rape, dowry and *fatwa* deaths, acid throwing and the like which indicate the powerlessness, subordination and vulnerability of women in the society.

Violence against women has, thus, become the most emotive issue around which women came together on non-partisan basis. However, neither large-scale policy initiatives from the government have come forth to alleviate the situation for the women nor the women's organisations have been able to organise large-scale help, support, and shelter and provide alternative ways of living for the victims. At present, various women's organisations are working for the strategies adopted at the Platform of Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995.

...There is no doubt that women's movement in Bangladesh has played a commendable role in creating awareness and political consciousness among the women population of the

country. Women's organisations have acted as forums for women's leadership training as well as channels to bring women's voices to proper perspectives and to the fore. Through seminars, workshops and writings they have highlighted the alarming lack of women's participation in shaping the public policy, which affect their everyday lives. But their consistent demand for power sharing and decision making process of the country has been met with intermittent and slow responses from the male dominated political system. There is not yet any Women's National Coalition, which can put women's issues on the national agenda ('Women'(undated), Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Banglapedia website, http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/ht/w_0067.htm – Accessed 14 May 2007 – Attachment 2).

Women's wings of political parties

According to the Sustainable Development Networking Programme every Bangladeshi political party has a women's wing:

Every political party has a women wing to encourage women to join politics either at national or local level. Women's participation in politics has no doubt increased tremendously. All NGOs, women's organizations and civil society organizations are very active in this regard ('Participation and representation of women in politics' (undated), Sustainable Development Networking Programme website, http://www.sdnpsd.org/sdi/international_days/women_day/2004/women_politics.htm – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 3).

Mahila Parishad is an established women's group linked to the Communist Party. Mahila Parishad claims to be the largest women's organisation in Bangladesh with a membership of around 130,000 individuals and a total of 52 branches in various parts of the country. As the country's largest women's organisation Mahila Parishad states that it:

has struggled to promote women's rights, gender equality and to protect women from violence in the public and private spheres. It has campaigned for a uniform family code for all communities in Bangladesh and for reservations to ensure women's political participation through direct elections to the national Parliament. (Ain Salish Kendra *et al*, 2004, *Shadow Report to the Fifth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh*, May, p.4, http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/pdf/bangladesh_sr.pdf – Accessed 17 May 2007 – Attachment 4).

However, Naila Kabeer in her 1991 report *The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh* states that politically affiliated women's groups face certain limitations. According to Kabeer the women's wings of the Awami League and BNP were limited to "putting pressure on the state to reform family and personal-status law". Kabeer also states that while left wing group Mahila Parishad has shown strength and provided a broader interpretation of women's rights it has also been undermined by party politics:

The women's wings of the two main parties – the BNP and the Awami League – are primarily active around welfare issues, but also support equal rights for women. In view, however, of their limited definition of women's roles, their demand generally translates into putting pressure on the state to reform family and personal-status law.

Women's rights are given a broader interpretation by the left-wing parties. The most active of these is Mahila Parishad which is linked to the Communist Party and has over 30,000 members. Mahila Parishad has been active on a wide range of issues: it has fought for the rights of women workers both in factories and in middle-class occupations like banking, kept up the pressure on the government to implement the 10 per cent quota for women in employment and (in contrast to the BNP and Awami League) opposed reserved parliamentary seats for women as an antidemocratic ploy to strengthen the party in power. More recently, it

spearheaded a campaign against dowry and against violence against women and opened up shelters for women who had been victims of violence. Some of the laws passed by the government on these issues were a consequence of Mahila Parishad's campaigns.

Despite its undeniable strengths, Mahila Parishad's institutional links with the Communist Party have prevented it from giving an independent significance to women's oppression. The struggle for women's rights tends to be subsumed within the 'wider' struggle for socialism and democracy; the politics of gender in personal relations and everyday life, and the ideological bases of women's subordination, receive scant attention from its members.

(Kabeer, N. 1991, 'The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh', *Feminist Review*, vol. 1, Spring, p.53 – Attachment 5).

Non Government Organisations

"Bangladesh has a huge number of registered NGOs (nearly 23 000) some of which are the largest and best known in the world, and are currently being replicated in other countries." (Haque, M.S. 2002, 'The Changing Balance of Power Between the Government and NGOs in Bangladesh' *International Political Science Review*, 2002, vol.23, p.412 – Attachment 6). According to Khushi Kabir, chairperson of the Association of Development agencies in Bangladesh, women have largely been organised under Non Government Organisations ('Bangladeshi women organise for their rights' (undated), *The Independent – Bangladesh*, <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/may/12/12052006wo.htm> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 1).

These Non Government Organisations (NGOs) vary in both size and scope. Some women's rights organisations are involved in political activism such as lobbying and advocacy campaigns. Some NGOs have focussed instead on economic development through micro-credit programmes. Many other non-government organisations have adopted a grass roots approach and have established developmental programs on a village level in order to assist with women's immediate needs as well as long term empowerment.

Naripokkho, Steps Towards Development and the Grameen Bank are 3 examples of major non governmental organisations currently operating in Bangladesh. These organisations and examples of other smaller groups have been profiled below.

Naripokkho

Naripokkho is a well-known women's rights group which describes itself as 'one of the most vocal women's groups in the country.' ('Naripokkho' (undated) The Human Rights Databank website, <http://www.hri.ca/organizations/vieworg.asp?id=7596> – Accessed 17 May 2007 – Attachment 7). Naripokkho is involved in research, lobbying and advocacy campaigns regarding gender justice and equal rights:

Organisational profile and mission

Naripokkho is a membership-based women's activist organization founded in 1983, working for the advancement of women's rights and entitlements and building resistance against violence, discrimination and injustice. Naripokkho's activities include advocacy campaigns, research, discussions, cultural events, and lobbying on issues of gender justice. Naripokkho's work can be clustered under the following four themes:

- Violence against women and human rights
- Reproductive rights and women's health
- Gender issues in environment and development

- Representation of women in media and cultural politics.

Background of the issue

Naripokkho's principal focus has been the assertion of women's citizenship and their claim to equal rights and equal treatment. In its various campaigns, Naripokkho has kept the agenda of equal rights of women as citizens in the forefront... ('Claiming Citizenship' (undated), Royal Tropical Institute website,

http://kindermuseum.nl/gcg/html/claiming_citizenship_projects.asp – Accessed 17 May 2007 – Attachment 8).

Steps Towards Development

Steps towards development is another large non government organisation which focuses on advocacy of women's rights and the lobbying of national and local policy makers.

STEPS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT, non-government organization established in 1993, has in the last 10 years created a large network of 121 organisations that campaign and advocate for policy interventions to establish gender equality and mainstreaming women into development. The network is committed to democracy, equality, good governance, justice and respect for human rights. It has engaged in consultations with grass roots groups in 145 different areas in Bangladesh to promote its vision and strategies. This has strengthened its advocacy with local level and national policy makers.

(Ain Salish Kendra *et al*, 2004, *Shadow Report to the Fifth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh*, May, p. 4 <http://www.iwraw->

<http://www.iwraw->
[ap.org/resources/pdf/bangladesh_SR.pdf](http://www.iwraw-) – Accessed 1 August 2006 – Attachment 4).

The Grameen Bank

The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is a high profile NGO that provides credit to the very poor villagers. The Grameen Bank state that:

As of March, 2007, it has 7.06 million borrowers, 97 percent of whom are women. With 2399 branches, GB provides services in 76,848 villages, covering more than 91 percent of the total villages in Bangladesh.

Grameen Bank's positive impact on its poor and formerly poor borrowers has been documented in many independent studies carried out by external agencies including the World Bank, the International Food Research Policy Institute (IFPRI) and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). ('Grameen Bank' (undated) Grameen website, <http://www.grameen-info.org/bank/index.html> – Accessed 17 May 2007 – Attachment 9).

Grassroots developmental organisations

Grassroots development organisations are a major part of the women's rights movement in Bangladesh. According to Khushi Kabir, chairperson of the Association of Development agencies in Bangladesh "There are many progressive NGOs doing consciousness-raising work among poorer women and village women." ('Bangladeshi women organise for their rights' (undated), *The Independent- Bangladesh*, <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/may/12/12052006wo.htm> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 1).

Naila Kabeer describes these groups as the "main location of struggles for women's rights". According to Kabeer these organisations work with collectives and assist with class based issues such as wages as well as feminist issues such as consciousness raising and violence against women. This is seen as adopting a long term approach to female empowerment as opposed to a short term welfare solution.

The other main location of struggles for women's rights is in grassroots development organizations which flourish outside the confines of official efforts. A significant number of these nongovernmental organizations place women's oppression centrally in their programmes for change. Rather than reproduce the welfarism that characterizes most development initiatives, NGOs such as Proshika, Nijera Kori and Saptagram have shifted their primary objectives from meeting the immediate needs of poor and landless women and men to that of their longer-term empowerment.

These NGOs work with a collective rather than individual concept of empowerment. Landless women and men are organized into groups, often on the basis of welfare or economic activities: health delivery, credit, cultivation of collectively leased land and so on. Through a process of 'conscientization', they are encouraged to analyse the roots of their oppression and to break the 'culture of silence' which is part of the condition of poverty (Freire, 1972). The training sessions include analysis of feminist issues – such as male violence, dowry, polygamy, verbal repudiation – as well as the more usual class-based ones of wages, land rights, corruption and clientelism.

These strategies represent an important break with past efforts to change women's lives. They are directed primarily at rural women who generally fall outside the orbit of conventional political organizations. They also give greater primacy to the power of ideology in maintaining gender subordination. By acknowledging that the struggle against oppression also requires the transformation of individual consciousness, the progressive NGOs have extended the arena of the women's movement beyond the parameters of conventional left politics. (Kabeer, N. 1991, 'The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh', *Feminist Review*, vol. 37, Spring, p.54 – Attachment 5).

More detailed information on these major grassroots organisations can be found on their websites:

Proshika – <http://www.proshika.org/>
Nijera Kori – <http://www.nijerakori.org/>

Saptagram has released a booklet outlining its origins as a grassroots organization and its development into a movement to empower deprived, landless women (Guttman, C. 1994, *In Our Own Hands: The Story of Saptagram, a Women's Self-Reliance and Education Movement in Bangladesh. Education for All: Making It Work. Innovations Series 2*, UNESCO, Paris, Attachment 10).

Other grassroots development organisations include:

- **Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)** has development activities for rural women. 66, Mahakali Commercial Area, Dhaka-12.
- **Gonoshasthaya Kendra** has development activities for rural women. P.O. Nayarhat, Savar Distt., Dhaka.
- **Nari Shonghoti** works with rural women. Center for Social Studies, Room 1107, Ark Building, Dhaka University, Dhaka ('South Asian Women's Organisations' (undated), The South Asian Women's Network, <http://www.sawnet.org/orgns/#bangladesh> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 11).

Banchte Shekha is a small but growing grassroots development program run by village women for village women. Banchte Shekha is Bangla for "learning to live". The organisation addresses the immediate needs for women living in villages as well as providing important education on empowerment and income-generating skills, legal literacy, health issues, and

family planning (Banchte Shekha: Women helping Women in Bangladesh (undated), Jim Mullins website, <http://www.jim-mullins.com/bangladesh.html> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 12).

Professional women's organisations

Sources indicate the existence of independent professional women's organisations in Bangladesh. These professional women's groups include research groups, legal organisations, technology groups and university based women's groups:

Aside from political and development organizations, there are also a large number of independent women's organizations such as professional organizations (e.g., the Federation of University Women, the Federation of Business and Professional Women), the Bangladesh Women's Rights Movement (mainly working around legal discrimination), Naripokkho (an autonomous feminist group) and various women's research groups such as Women for Women and Nari Shongoti. It is unlikely that women could have been active in such numbers and on such a range of issues if the state had been a more monolithic presence and displayed a firmer commitment to its Islamic programme. (Kabeer, N. 1991, 'The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh', *Feminist Review*, vol. 37, Spring, p.54 – Attachment 5).

Women for Women is an example of a professional women's organisation. Women for Women is an organisation comprised of academics who provide research, information, dissemination, advocacy awareness and motivational programs on gender issues:

One of the most important women's groups in Bangladesh is Women for Women: A Research and Study Group, located in Dhaka. It is a pioneer non-government, non-profit, voluntary women's organization, engaged in research and public education programs on gender issues with a view to enhancing the status of women. It was established in 1973 by a group of committed woman professionals, representing a variety of academic disciplines. The Group strongly felt the need for developing a sound information base for identifying the issues relating to the disadvantaged status of women in Bangladesh and for creating public awareness with a view to ameliorating the existing situation. Since then, Women For Women has been engaged in research, information, dissemination, advocacy awareness and motivational programs.

The activities of Women for Women include seminars, workshops, conferences, national conventions, library development, and publications.

(Islam, M (1998) 'Feminism in Bangladesh', Centre for Digital Discourse and Culture, Virginia Tech website, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/ban.html> – Accessed 17 May 2007 – Attachment 13)

Additional professional women's organisations include:

- **Adhunika** is dedicated to the promotion of technology usage for women in Bangladesh (<http://www.adhunika.org/bd/Index.html>).
- **Ain o Salish Kendro (ASK)**. A human rights and legal resource centre. ASK provides free legal aid, mediation and counselling services, monitors, documents and campaigns on human rights and women's rights issues, and undertakes public interest litigation. It has litigated a number of cases on women's human rights, including challenges to the practice of "safe custody". It also publishes an annual report on human rights in Bangladesh. Address: 26/3 Purana Paltan Line, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh, tel: 8802 831 5851 ('South Asian Women's Organisations' (undated) The South Asian Women's Network, <http://www.sawnet.org/orgns/#bangladesh> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 10).

Student associations

Khushi Kabir, chairperson of the Association of Development agencies in Bangladesh states that:

There are also many women students' associations in the schools and universities. (Bangladeshi women organise for their rights' (undated), *The Independent*, <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/may/12/12052006wo.htm> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 1).

Trade Unions

Sources state that while women have been traditionally unrepresented by trade unions in Bangladesh an increasing number of women trade union activists are emerging and women within the garment industry are co-ordinating protest activity:

Trade unions have only recently started organising women. Previously women have worked mainly in the unorganised sectors, but more and more women trade union activists have been working with these women.

Women in the garment industry, where there are no trade unions, have recently been organising strikes and demonstrations (Bangladeshi women organise for their rights' (undated), *The Independent -Bangladesh*, <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/may/12/12052006wo.htm> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 1).

Nari Uddog Kendra, while not a trade union, is listed as an organisation assisting female garment workers with accommodation issues:

Nari Uddog Kendra, 22/18, Khilzi Road, Block –B, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh, Phone: 9115996, Fax- 880-2-813095; Contact Person – Masuda Khanam Shafali. NUK is active for Female garment workers accommodation problem. They also active for women's shelter in urban area ('South Asian Women's Organisations' (undated) The South Asian Women's Network, <http://www.sawnet.org/orgns/#bangladesh> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 10).

Others

An annotated list women's organisations appears in a United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) report on women in local government. The list provides information on their respective aims and activities and a snapshot of the overall diversity of the women's rights movement in the country. (Annotated List of Organisations and Individuals' 2000, in *State of Women in Urban Local Government Bangladesh*, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific website, 11 February <http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/bangladesh.pdf> – Accessed 27 July 2006 – Attachment 14)

The South Asian Women's Organisation also have a list available on their website which provides details for some organisations in Bangladesh along with brief descriptions on their objectives and services. ('South Asian Women's Organisations' (undated) The South Asian Women's Network, <http://www.sawnet.org/orgns/#bangladesh> – Accessed 15 May 2007 – Attachment 10)

Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics similarly has produced a list of women's organisations in Bangladesh (Women's Organisations (2005) Centre for Asia-Pacific Women

in Politics, 9 May, http://www.capwip.org/resources/ba_brorg.htm#bangladesh – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 15).

Harassment and attacks by fundamentalist groups

It has been reported in a 2001 paper titled *Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh* that the religious right in Bangladesh argue that “female emancipation is not part of God’s plan”. According to this article the religious right have conducted a “many speared campaign” which has included “attacks on development organisations which empowered women through offering loans, skills training and employment opportunities.” An example of such an attack includes the burning of schools run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee in protest against female education (Mahnaz Murshid, T. (2001), *Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh, Subordination and Resistance*, Swadhinta Trust website, <http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/misc/womenbdeshtazeen.pdf> - Accessed 21 May 2007 - Attachment 16).

Sources also state that women and developmental non governmental organisations in Bangladesh have been subject to fatwas by fundamentalist leaders. (Riaz, A. 2005, ‘Traditional institutions as tools of political Islam in Bangladesh’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Volume 40, Issue 3, 1 June – Attachment 17)

Attacks against feminist activists by Islamic fundamentalist have also been reported. Taslima Nasrin, a prominent journalist was subject to threats from Islamic groups due to her criticism of fundamentalism and advocacy of women’s rights:

Islamic fundamentalists launched a campaign against her in 1990, staging street demonstrations and processions. They broke into newspaper offices that she used to regularly write from, sued her editors and publishers, and put her life in danger, a danger that only increased over time. She was publicly assaulted several times by fundamentalist mobs. No longer was she welcomed to any public places, not even to book fairs that she loved to visit. In 1993, a fundamentalist organization called Soldiers of Islam issued a fatwa against her, a price was set on her head because of her criticism of Islam, and she was confined to her house.

According to Taslima, the religious scriptures are out of time, out of place. Instead of religious laws, she maintains, what is needed is a uniform civil code that accords women equality and justice. Her views caused fourteen different political and non-political religious organizations to unite for the first time, starting violent demonstrations, calling general strikes, blocking government offices, and demanding her immediate execution by hanging.

The government, instead of taking action against the fundamentalists, turned against her. A case was filed charging that she hurt people's religious feelings, and a non-bail-able arrest warrant was issued. Deeming prison to be an extremely unsafe place, Taslima went into hiding.

In the meantime two more fatwas were issued by Islamic extremists, two more prices were set on her head, and hundreds of thousands of fundamentalists took to the streets, demanding her death.

But the international organization of writers, and many humanist organizations beyond the borders of Bangladesh, came to Taslima's support. News of her plight became known throughout the world. Some western democratic governments that endorse human rights and freedom of expression tried saving her life. After long miserable days in hiding, she was

finally granted bail but was also forced to leave her country ('A brief biography' (undated), official homepage of Taslima Nasreen, <http://taslimanasrin.com/index2.html> - Accessed 21 May 2007 - Attachment 18).

A conservative group of Muslims clerics was also reported to have accused a leading women's rights advocate and BNP parliamentarian, Farida Rahman, of apostasy and demanded that she be put to death. Rahman had earlier criticised the Islamic inheritance code ('Chronology of Events: January 1994 – December 1995' 1995, (undated) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.htm?tbl=RSDCOI&page=research&id=3ae6a81b0> – Accessed 3 August 2006 – Attachment 19).

Sultana Kamal, a women's right activist also claims to have been terrorised by Islamic militants. Sultana Kamal was accused by village religious leaders of 'misbehaviour' due to her challenging of the use of fatwa's against women. Kamal states that her home was fire bombed by fundamentalist Sahaba Soldiers ('Muslim Women challenging Islamic Fundamentalism', 2001, the-south-asian.com website, <http://www.the-south-asian.com/nov2001/muslim%20women%20challenging%20islamic%20fundamentalism4.htm> – Accessed 21 May 2007 - Attachment 20).

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Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International News & Politics

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Government Information & Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

Search Engines

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Bangladesh Women's Organisations

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Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, <http://www.capwip.org/>

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Royal Tropical Institute - <http://kindermuseum.nl/>

South Asian women's organisations – <http://www.sawnet.org/orgns/>

We can end all violence against women website – <http://www.wecanendvaw.org/>
Women Living Under Muslim Laws – <http://www.wluml.org/english/index.shtml>

Bangladesh News & Politics

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The Bangladesh Observer – <http://www.bangladeshobserveronline.com/index.html>

The Daily Star – <http://www.thedailystar.net/index.php>

The Independent –Bangladesh - <http://independent-bangladesh.com/>

General

Sustainable Development Networking Programme website - <http://www.sdnpsd.org/>–

The Human Rights Internet - <http://www.hri.ca/>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, <http://www.unhcr.org/>

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ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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21. Attachment deleted.

22. Attachment deleted.

23. Attachment deleted.