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BGD101504.E 27 July 2006

Bangladesh: The Jatiya Party; its factions and subgroups, including its youth wing; leadership; activities; and treatment of members of the party (2004-2006)

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Background


Jatiya Party Factions


Although the Jatiya Party (Ershad) had allied itself with the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) in 1998 when both parties were in the opposition, this alliance was broken shortly before the 2001 elections (Political Parties of the World Jan. 2005, 50). During these elections, the Jatiya Party (Ershad) ran as part of the Islami Jatio Oikya Front [or "Islamic National Unity Front" (Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006 Dec. 2005, 93)] (ibid.; Bangladesh Election Committee n.d.a). Bangladesh's next elections are expected to take place in January 2007 (Reuters 8 June 2006; BBC 20 June 2006).

The Manju faction of the Jatiya Party was formed in 1999 by party dissidents led


Front Organizations


Leadership

The Ershad faction of the Jatiya Party is led by Hossain Mohammad Ershad (Reuters 8 June 2006; Europa World Year Book 2005 2005, 718; Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006 Dec. 2005, 92). The party's senior vice chairperson is Begum Raushan Ershad (ibid., 93), the president's wife (ibid. 92), while the party's secretary general is Ruhul Amin Howlader (ibid.,93; Europa World Year Book 2005 2005, 718; UNB 5 Nov. 2004).

The Jatiya Party (Ershad) has a presidium with over 40 members (UNB 11 Feb. 2006; Jatiya Party n.d.a), including Ershad (ibid.); in addition, the party has an advisory board made up of 16 advisors (Jatiya Party n.d.b). A list of names of Jatiya Party (Ershad) advisors and presidium members can be found on the party's official Website at <http://www.jatiyaparty.org>.


For a complete list of names of Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Party (Manju), and Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) Members of Parliament (MPs) and their districts, please consult the Bangladesh Election Committee Website at <http://www.bd-ec.org/stat/Parliament%20Election%202001%20Results%20and%20Statistics/MP%20at%20a%20glance.pdf> or the LCG Bangladesh Website at <http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/parliament/allmps.php>.

Membership

Information on the membership of the Jatiya Party and its factions could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Activities

Information on the activities of the Jatiya Party was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to the Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006, in 2004, Ershad attempted to reunite the Jatiya factions; however, the Jatiya Party (Manju), among others, was unwilling to take part in the reunification (Dec. 2005, 93).

In 2006, both the ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and the main opposition party Awami League (AL) are reportedly seeking to form an alliance with the Jatiya Party (Ershad) before the 2007 elections (Reuters 8 June 2006). Information on whether the Jatiya Party (Ershad) has actually formed an alliance with one of the two parties could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However Ershad has been a critic of both parties, stating that they have "failed miserably to govern the country in the last 15 years" (UNB 19 June 2006). Ershad has also criticized the government's record in fighting terrorism (UNB 5 Nov. 2004; see also UNB 20 Nov. 2005a).

In sources from 2004 to 2006, there were reports of the Jatiya Party (Ershad), including its student front (UNB 27 Mar. 2004) and youth front (UNB 20 Nov. 2005a) participating in political rallies (ibid.; PTI 1 Jan. 2006; UNB 5 Nov. 2004; ibid. 27 Mar. 2004). According to a 1 January 2006 news article by The Press Trust of India, a major non-profit news agency in India (PTI n.d.), a Jatiya Party (Ershad) rally in downtown Dhaka ended in a clash between Jatiya Party (Ershad) activists and Communist Party of Bangladesh supporters (PTI 1 Jan. 2006). The violence caused damage to shops and vehicles, and led to the death of one person and the injury of approximately eighty others (ibid.). Information on the exact cause of the conflict was not provided in the article.

Treatment of Members

From 2004 to 2006, there were reports of Jatiya Party leaders and supporters being killed (AFP 9 Mar. 2006; PTI 9 Mar. 2006; ibid. 27 Oct. 2005; UNB 2 Jan. 2005; ibid. 1 June 2004). In June 2004, the president of the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) youth
front was killed in a gun attack in Dhaka (ibid.). No information on the perpetrators of the attack could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In October 2005, two Jatiya Party (Ershad) supporters were killed in a bomb attack carried out by unidentified men in the Narail district (PTI 27 Oct. 2005). In March 2006, the illegal Maoist group Janajuddha (AFP 9 Mar. 2006) killed a local leader of the Jatiya Party (Naziur-Firoz) in a bomb attack in Khulna (ibid.; PTI 9 Mar. 2006).

According to Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004, Zia International airport officials prevented Jatiya Party (Ershad) leader Ershad from taking a trip abroad in February 2004 (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.d). Ershad was later allowed to travel following talks between Jatiya Party (Ershad) leaders and government officials (ibid.).

In November 2005, the Jatiya Party (Ershad) student front was "chased out of" the campus at Dhaka University by supporters of the political party JSD [Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Australia July 2006)] student front and other "left-leaning" organizations (UNB 21 Nov. 2005; ibid. 20 Nov. 2005b). According to the JSD student league leader, cited in a 20 November 2005 UNB article, the activities of the Jatiya (Ershad) student front are banned on the Dhaka University campus (20 Nov. 2005b).

No further information on the treatment of Jatiya Party members could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France-Presse (AFP). 9 March 2006. "Bomb Kills an Opposition Leader in Bangladesh." (Factiva)


The Press Trust of India (PTI) [New Delhi]. 9 March 2006. "Ruling Party Leader Killed in Blast in Bangladesh." (Factiva)

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Reuters. 8 June 2006. Anis Ahmed. "Feature - Old Foes Gird for Fresh Polls In Restive Bangladesh." (Factiva)


_____. 27 February 2006. "Ershad Master of Scandal: Bidisha." (Factiva)


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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Bangladesh Virtual Library, European Country of Origin Information Network (Ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group (ICG), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Official Website of the Jatiya Party, United Kingdom Home Office, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

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