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Bangladesh - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 September 2014

Q18627 - Information on internal armed conflict

A report published by *BBC News* in March 2014 points out that:

> "Bangladesh spent 15 years under military rule and, although democracy was restored in 1990, the political scene remains volatile. Analysts say antagonism between the main parties - the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party - reflects personal animosity between leaders rather than substantial ideological differences. Political tensions have spilled over into violence; hundreds of people have been killed in recent years. Attacks have targeted opposition rallies and public gatherings. Senior opposition figures have also been targeted." (BBC News (17 March 2014) *Bangladesh profile*)

A report issued in April 2014 by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* notes that:

> "NGOs suggest over 500 people lost their lives in political violence in Bangladesh in 2013, with many more seriously injured. 215 were reportedly shot dead by law enforcers." (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (10 April 2014) *Human Rights and Democracy Report 2013 - Country case study: Bangladesh – political violence*)

In April 2014 *Human Rights Watch* states in a report that:

> "Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh in January 2014 were the most violent in the country's history. Months of political violence before and after the elections left hundreds dead and injured across the country." (Human Rights Watch (29 April 2014) *Democracy in the Crossfire, Opposition Violence and Government Abuses in the 2014 Pre- and Post- Election Period in Bangladesh*, p.1)

A report issued in September 2014 by *Amnesty International* states:

> "The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina continued in office after her party, the Awami League, was declared the winner in the 5 January 2014 elections. The elections were boycotted by the opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and its allies. The opposition protests against elections were frequently violent resulting in more than 100 people killed, most of whom died in violent clashes between the police and protestors, and some in clashes between rival political party supporters." (Amnesty International (2 September 2014) *Bangladesh: Stop enforced disappearances, torture and restrictions on freedom of expression*, p.1)

This document also points out that:

> "Amnesty International has reported on a catalogue of human rights violations in Bangladesh in recent years, which are ongoing and have not been addressed. These include enforced disappearances, torture, restricting the right to freedom of

> expression, extrajudicial executions, violence against minorities, violence against women, the situation of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the death penalty." (ibid, p.1)

A report issued in January 2014 by *Bertelsmann Stiftung* points out that:

> "Low-intensity conflict with radical leftist and Islamist militant groups has continued, although the incidence of open battle has subsided." (Bertelsmann Stiftung (1 January 2014) *Bangladesh Country Report*)

In May 2014 a publication released by *Jane's Intelligence Review* notes that:

> "Bangladesh faces growing security threats from a range of radical Islamist interests, including entrenched Deobandi militants, newly emergent jihadist groups, and even transnational operations such as Al-Qaeda." (Jane's Intelligence Review (1 May 2014) *Radical thinking - Transnational jihadists eye Bangladesh*)

The *Jamestown Foundation* in January 2014 notes:

> "Widespread violence, marked by protest rallies, hartals (general shutdowns), group clashes and bombings have led to massive confrontations between secular and Islamist forces in Bangladesh over the last year. Now, al-Qaeda leader Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri has issued a call for jihad in Bangladesh, the fourth largest Muslim nation in the world. The radical Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and activists of its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, have raised the standard of revolt by aligning themselves with the radical Hefajat-e-Islam (HeI) in violent opposition across the country against the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT - a domestic creation) verdicts in the trials of senior Jamaat leaders accused of war crimes during the 1971 liberation struggle." (Jamestown Foundation (23 January 2013) *Al-Qaeda Leader al-Zawahiri Urges Jihad Against the "Anti-Islamic" Government of Bangladesh*)

This report also states:

> "The direst implication of the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh is that it has reinvigorated dormant Islamist militant groups. Outlawed and decimated militant groups see opportunities to reorganize and consolidate in the current religiously-charged environment. The February 2013 standoff between secularists/atheists and pro-Islamist groups at Dhaka's Shahabag intersection sparked the emergence of banned clandestine militant groups that came forward in support of mainstream Islamist organizations like JeI and HeI. Proscribed militant groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, Harakatul-Jihad-i-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and the newly-formed Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) surfaced with a jihadist agenda. Existing militant groups like HuJi-B and JMB have tried to restructure themselves under the names Tanjim e-Tamiruddin and BEM…" (ibid)

A report published by *IRIN News* in March 2014 states:

> "Violence broke out after supporters of Bangladesh's largest Islamist political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, took to the streets in early March after Delawar Hossain Sayede, a top party leader, was sentenced to death for crimes against humanity during the country's liberation war with Pakistan in 1971. The unrest has killed at least 98 people, including civilians, according to civil society estimates. Analysts say it is among the worst violence since independence…" (IRIN News (27 March 2014) *Time to reconcile in Bangladesh?*)

A document released in May 2014 by the *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* notes that the:

> "The 1997 peace agreement between the government and the United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (PCJSS) has still not been fully implemented. The accord ended 24 years of conflict that broke out in 1973 in the south-eastern Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region after the government rejected demands for greater autonomy from non-Bengali indigenous people known collectively as Pahari or Jumma. The conflict forced Paharis to flee to the forests and to neighbouring India, while the government supported the settlement of Bengalis, Bangladesh's majority community, including on Pahari land, as a counterinsurgency measure. Some settlers were then also displaced as a result of the fighting. Tensions between Paharis and Bengalis have continued, with clashes displacing more people and preventing others from returning to their homes." (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (14 May 2014) *Global Overview 2014: people internally displaced by conflict and violence – Bangladesh*)

In July *Odhikar* published a report which includes noting:

> "According to information gathered by Odhikar, a reported total of 108 persons were extra judicially killed, between January and June 2014." (Odhikar (1 July 2014) *Human rights monitoring report: January – June 2014*, p.3)

In September 2014 a report issued by *Odhikar* states:

> "According to information gathered by Odhikar, in August 2014, six persons were killed and 497 were injured in political violence." (Odhikar (1 September 2014) *Human rights monitoring report: August 2014*)

In July 2014 *IRIN News* notes that:

> "The recent violent attack on Urdu-speaking Biharis in the Bangladeshi capital highlights this minority's ongoing protection needs: Community leaders allege political collusion in the attack. Clashes broke out on 14 June between Biharis and Bengalis, who make up the majority of Bangladesh's population, in Mirpur on the outskirts of Dhaka. Ten Biharis were killed and houses were torched; no arrests have been made to date." (IRIN News (21 July 2014) *Biharis in Bangladesh seek protection, justice*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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