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Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing
Elections and Human Rights in Bangladesh
2200 Rayburn House Office Building

Written Statement of Dr. Richard L. Benkin
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The choice before us is simple: Do we continue our complicity in the destruction of Bangladesh's Hindus; or do we stand on the side of justice and take action? Do we continue clinging to a myth that pogroms against Bangladesh's Hindus are mere anomalies, or do we address the reality of endemic human rights violations there and uphold the principles on which both our own and Bangladesh's constitutions are based?

I have been fighting the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Bangladesh for well over a decade. I go there regularly (twice so far this year), to help victims, confront victimizers, and document government complicity. Most of this statement comes from my first-hand experience or my network of vetted informants on the ground.¹ In 1951, Hindus represented almost a third of East Pakistan's population. When East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971, they were less than one in five; thirty years later fewer than one in ten; and only one in 15 today. If anyone cannot see where this is headed, look at Pakistan where Hindus are down to one percent; or at Afghanistan or Kashmir, where once thriving Hindu communities are all but gone. The difference between those places and Bangladesh is that we have a chance to prevent the total destruction of the Hindu community there. There are more than 12 million souls in immediate danger, and we each have a moral imperative not to sit by idly.

Unfortunately, humanity's record in preventing mass persecution is shameful. Former President Bill Clinton has lamented the inaction that cost [300,000 Rwandan lives](#) during his watch. Despite decades of denials, it is now clear that the [western allies and others](#) had ample [evidence](#) of the Nazi holocaust and chose not to act. And even when we *seemed* to be paying attention, action, if any, was marginally effective at best. [Just ask](#) the Yazidis or the Darfuris and other ethnic minorities in the Sudans. So, do we wring our hands when it's too late; or do we save lives starting today?

Despite the millions of victims, this is "a quiet case of ethnic cleansing" (which is the title of my book on this subject). With no *gestapo* or *Janjaweed*, no concentration camps or killing centers; it flies under the international human rights radar.

¹ Also see Benkin, Richard L. 2012. *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing: the Murder of Bangladesh's Hindus* (New Delhi: Akshaya Prakashan).

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Bangladesh is a friendly nation that publicly condemns human rights atrocities and calls itself an ally. It calls itself secular, though it has an official state religion; and I know a lot of people in the government. They are decent people who, I believe, share the values of religious freedom and equality that their constitution proclaims as national values. Their good intentions, however, have not been able to stop the atrocities; atrocities that only worsen as radical Islamists grow stronger there by the day. As former [Congressman Bob Dold](#) told the House in 2011, “Since 1947, 49 million Hindus in Bangladesh have gone missing.” But what is that line (erroneously) attributed to Joseph Stalin? “One death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic.” So I will put it into a relatable context.

- In December 2012, government officials and others abducted 23-year old Eti Biswas from Bagerhat in Southwestern Bangladesh. Her family was told to abandon its small piece of land and leave Bangladesh, that Hindus were not wanted there. They refused, even after police and other officials “encouraged” them to do so. Eti Biswas’s violent abduction was the response. Her family pleaded with me to help recover their child. Earlier that same day—not more than 125 miles from where she was taken—Bangladeshi Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir angrily denied any Hindu persecution in his country or the right of an American to raise the issue; but said if I encountered any evidence, I should sent it to him and he would “take care of the matter personally.” I sent him extensive evidence on this abduction and asked for the help he promised. It never came, and Eti Biswas remains missing.
- That same year, human rights advocate Rabindra Ghosh and I trekked to a remote Hindu village in the far northern district of Dinajpur. No long before our arrival, a mob of over 100 Muslims attacked this village of 80 Hindu families after their imam claimed that Allah decreed that the land should be used for a mosque. The imam erroneously thought this is was fight between Hinduism and Islam. Yes, Muslims attacked the village, thought it was a Muslim religious duty, and were protected by a Muslim government with Islam as its official state religion. At the same time, the only thing standing between the village and another pogrom was four Muslim police, who told me that while the attackers threaten to “return and finish the job,” they would have to get through them first. They go there on their own time as frequently as they can because, they told me, “the government will do nothing.” And they were worried for the villagers.

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There are those who seem to have difficulty finding examples of government complicity in anti-Hindu persecution. For their benefit, here is what I experienced directly in just two days this March.

- I got a call to defend a very old and poor Hindu temple in Dhaka. It was facing escalating threats and attacks from Muslim mobs, and the police refused even to take their calls. My team and I intervened to hold off the attack, and then confronted the local police. They had no excuse for their inaction, tried to claim ignorance although I saw police in the temple area; and finally agreed to post armed security at the temple.
- That same evening, I was called to a Hindu home that had been looted and ransacked by a Muslim mob that day with special animus toward the family prayer room and its deities. The family, having escaped the violence, returned to see if they could salvage anything; but they couldn't. The police got wind that I was coming and posted guards. But the police head and others could *not* explain to me how this sizeable mob was able to ransack this home, located right in the capital, *for over four and a half hours in broad daylight* without any police intervention.
- The next day, Rabindra Ghosh and I went with another Hindu family whose land was seized violently two years prior with police taking no action against the usurpers or defending the rightful owners. After extensive talks and legal efforts, we got the Hindu owners their land.

I asked myself if any of that would have happened were I not there; and, sadly, history tells us it would not. In August, I gave United States (US) State Department evidence of 23 targeted, anti-Hindu attacks in Bangladesh during the first seven months of this year alone. All were validated by at least two independent witnesses, and all were allowed to proceed with impunity. Despite knowledge of specific criminals involved, Bangladeshi did not act. (The material submitted to State is attached to and is part of this statement.)

In what kind of situation does justice depend on some guy from halfway around the world being present and the government not wanting to anger America that day? The victims were Hindu; the perpetrators Muslim. A nation with the noblest of constitutional sentiments about religious equality is empowering a religious majority to savage a religious minority. Whether that is intentional or not is immaterial to the victims. How large a percentage among the majority participate in this persecution likewise is - immaterial to the fact that persecution takes place with impunity.

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My concern was heightened as multiple police officials told me they were facing the same problems faced by their predecessors and that their successors will face because no government does anything that empowers them to change this terrible situation. And all of this makes the immediate threat facing over 12 million Bangladeshi Hindus serious.

During every major Bangladeshi election, [Hindus have been victims of targeted violence](#). If the perpetrators came solely from the ranks of radical Islamists, it would be a simple problem to cure. If the perpetrators were acting against the interests of parties in power, the latter would respond in force. If it was something that Bangladeshi leaders wanted to prevent, they would have taken action to prevent it. What actions have they taken to prevent Hindus from facing a similar fate this year, as national elections loom?

Although Bangladeshi officials have given me “assurances that everything will be done” to prevent the violence, Hindus there tell me they’ve heard that before, and they have not *seen* anything different this year. In March, I urged the Hindu community there to work with local police on self-defense, especially early warning of attacks. When I returned in September, I was told that the police rebuffed suggestions. There already has been serious anti-Hindu violence in Rangpur district. Muslim leaders there encouraged a crowd to avenge their faith, claiming that one of the Hindu villagers posted a statement on Facebook “insulting the prophet Mohammad.” The accusation turned out to be false. The alleged perpetrator had long ago left the village and, regardless, did not have the skills needed to leave the alleged post. That, however, is beside the point as there is no way to normalize such a violent and unrestrained reaction to the allegation. That reaction involved “tens of thousands” of attackers overrunning the village and committing multiple crimes, including beatings, arson, and looting. Some villagers have alleged sexual assault as well, but I have not been able to confirm that as of this writing. I can confirm criminals responsible for the attack have not been arrested, nor do members the Hindu community expect them to be. The Rangpur incident shows why Bangladesh’s Hindus live in fear and expect no justice from this or any other Bangladeshi government.

Some members of the current government have asked me to “give them time” and wait until after the elections to address the matter of anti-Hindu persecution; but whether or not I can wait means nothing. Bangladesh’s Hindus cannot. That this government—a group of decent people—understand this to be a political matter only underscores our moral obligation to act. For we know that when governments enable human rights violations, they cease to be “internal matters” and require action by others. So what must we do?

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The Bangladeshi government is correct in calling itself a friend, and we owe it to our friends to help them overcome their inability to stop these atrocities. While doing it, we help them stop the [growing power of radical Islamists in Bangladesh](#). More than the right thing to do, it also in the interest of both the United States and Bangladesh.

In 2016, Bangladeshi ambassador to the United States, Mohammad Ziauddin, admitted to former Congressman Dold and me that Hindus did face persecution in his country, then added that it was too poor to do anything about it. Dold's response: "We want to help you solve your problems. We can be most effective by focusing first on one specific thing: preventing further election time violence against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Our previous ineffectiveness with Bangladesh starts with our willingness to stop at hopeful words, like those "assurances" I was given. From my discussions with police on the ground, constitutional lawyers in Bangladesh, and others, it is clear that the Bangladeshi government has the resources to stop the election-time violence. I am not sure it has the will. Political considerations appear to trump moral ones.

The United States must make it explicit that it will hold the Bangladeshi government responsible for sectarian violence both before and after the election; that words are not enough. The United States will judge the Bangladeshis by actions and effect.

At the very least, we should tell the Bangladeshi government we expect several actions.

- Those responsible for the Rangpur pogrom and other attacks are arrested and prosecuted, and this would include organizers and inciters, not only participants.
- Police and other government officials that participate in cover ups or otherwise do not take action against perpetrators be sacked.
- And that it make clear to all that the government of Bangladesh will not allow these actions.

If the government claims that it does not have the resources to take these actions, the United States can help. It is key to a successful Bangladeshi economy that is inordinately dependent on garment exports; US citizens are its best customers. US importers/retailers will not want to be associated with a government that refuses to stop sectarian violence. There also is bi-partisan precedent for considering religious freedom and human rights in trade and other foreign policy: the International Religious Freedom Act (passed during the Clinton administration) and foreign policy actions of the Trump administration.

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Tariffs can be imposed on Bangladeshi imports and put in a fund to help Bangladesh enforce its own laws and constitutional principles. Aid can be withheld and earmarked for the same purpose to help save Bangladeshi lives.

- Bangladesh is also one of the largest contributors of United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping troops, funding largely by US taxpayers. Is our own government serving us well if it uses our money to enable persecution? Perhaps if Ambassador Ziauddin is right, we should revoke those peacekeeping positions so the personnel can be used to end sectarian violence at home.

It will have an impact. In 2007, I was in Bangladeshi during a military coup. After the coup, I spoke with some members of the military who told me that fear of losing those peacekeeping troops was the final motive for their action.

With the trade and peacekeeping items on the table, Bangladesh likely will take the action needed to stop the immediate violence against Hindus an unprecedented and courageous action by the current government there, and the people of the United States will have been partners in it. It will usher in a new era in US-Bangladesh relations and create new dynamics in regional cooperation in fighting radicals.

Not long ago, we had very public debate here about who we are as a nation and what that means. The Saudis had murdered a journalist at their Istanbul consulate, and Saudi officials were culpable. But Saudi Arabia is a very important ally, both financially and geo-politically. The question was: Do we take a stand against our friends' human rights violations, or do we look the other way *because* they are our friends? In the end, we *had* to stand for human rights, even if doing so would anger a friend. In the end, we decided that the United States of America could not *be* the United States of America if we looked the other way because it served our immediate interests.

We face the same challenge today. Another friend has enabled massive human rights violations for decades. In *this* case, however, not merely one person has been victimized, but millions have; and millions *remain* at risk. Are their lives any less precious than that of the Saudi journalist? In contrast to last month's hue and cry over Mr. Khashoggi, stands our decades-long silence about these millions. Thus far, we *have* looked the other way. So, what are we going to do? Do we help our Bangladeshi friends do the right thing, or do we deny our basic American decency with a wink and a nod and be complicit in the destruction of Bangladesh's Hindus? Thank you.

**2018 Confirmed Human Rights Violations
By Bangladesh against Hindus**

Date	Location	Victim Name(s)	Age/Sex	Offense(s)	Offender(s)	Narrative: What Happened	Damage to Persons and Property	Witnesses (at least two sources)	Government Involvement, Inaction, specific reaction
1/2/2018	Village: Party Kuchilar Par, Demra Police station, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Kalachand Mondal, Prodip Mondal, Sajib Mondal, Shourav Mondal, Maloti Rani Mondal	Four males, one female	Land seizure, abuse of power, assault	Mohammad Ratan (Local Chairman of Demra Union), Mohammad Atique	In January 2018, the chairman of Demra Police station within Dhaka City forcibly entered the victims' property, threatened the victims with violence, and kicked them out of their own property. The victims approached police various occasions [RB: at least through April], but the police took no action; forcing them to take shelter at Nondipara within Khilgaon police station of Dhaka District. In the meantime, the land grabbers forged some (backdated) documents and took possession of the land. [RB: The manufacture and sale of fraudulent documents is widespread in Bangladesh, as I have seen for myself. Police, often knowing their origin, accept them as genuine to cover their lack of law enforcement.]	Land remains in possession of the land grabbers; Hindu victims have no recourse and are living an impoverished life away from their home.	BDMW; legal actions; admission by perpetrators, police, and others.	Police have given BDMW "assurances" that Hindu victims' rights will be protected, but have taken no action in that regard. [RB: This is extremely widespread in Bangladesh, and I have seen it directly on multiple occasions.]
1/5/2018	Khankhanabad Union Ward No.1 - Banskhal P.S., District- Chittagong, Bangladesh	Prodip Bala Jaladas, Roba Jaladas, Subrata Jaladas, Subash Jaladas, and 11 others	Multiple of both	Homes ransacked and looted; physical attacks	Md. Selim (35), Abdur Rahim (Rony) 19, Md. Romon (15), and 12 others	Perpetrators ransacked minority homes, mostly Hindu fishermen twice. Minority victims (including over eight woman and children) injured, valuables looted; most of the injured were admitted to local hospital at Banskhal.	Note hospitalization, looted valuables. Tremendous anxiety, insecurity among Hindu community.	BDMW; Daily Azadi of 1/7/18	Some arrests, most perpetrators never arrested; no punishment for "arrested." Attackers threatened BDMW rights investigators with impunity.
1/13/2018	Nagar Joar of Sonargaon Upazila of Narayangin District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Shri Liton Kumar Saha, Anita Rani Saha (70), Shova Rani Saha (50), Vhalobasa Saha (50), Titu Rani Saha (40)	Multiple genders/ages noted in parentheses	Land seizure; religious desecration	Abdul Wahab, Md. Jamal, Qamrul Islam, and Ayesha Begum	Muslim perpetrators with the help of local Union Parishad Chairman trespassed into the house of Shri Liton Kumar Saha, demolished the structures thereon, desecrated their personal puja house, damaged utensils and other valuables, looted movable properties (value 150,000 BDT), and forcibly occupied their house and lands without any lawful authority.	Land returned to owner, however, victims traumatized and minority community remains fearful of further land seizures, which continue; some rectified, most not. (See next incidents.)	BDMW; victim testimony	Male perpetrators arrested.
1/16/2018	Bashpur (Balapara), P.S. Madhukhali, District- Faridpur, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Sunil Biswas, Subal Biswas, Kamona Biswas, Momota Rani Biswas	Multiple of both, to age 72	Arson, murder of livestock	Md. Mostafa Munshi, Rahman Munshi, Rahim Munshi @ Alemmoni, Md. Enamul Munshi, Md. Bipul Sheikh	About 3am, perpetrators used petrol and other material to set fire to victims' animal sheds. One Shymol Debnath awoke and saw the named perpetrators fleeing from the spot. Shree Subal Biswas tried to extinguish fire but his hand was also injured and in the meantime they saw livestock burned to death.	Cost of murdered livestock per victims: Cow, calf, two goats (180,000 BDT); also destroyed farmer's output of onions.	BDMW; eyewitness	Two perfunctory arrests, released. No further action; no help for injured livestock or protection of victims. Purpose of action to intimidate Hindus to vacate lands. Details available.
1/19/2018	Chandra Khola, Borakhali, PS. Nobabgonj, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Lal Chand Bepari	Male/32	Murder	Hafiz Bhiya, Mofzel Bhiya, Md. Minar, Zahangir son of Jibon Bhiya, Ridhoy son of Sanowar Chowdhury, Sajib son of Kashem, Al-Amin son of Monir@Monu.	At about 6:30pm, the perpetrators forcibly entered the victim's home and attacked him with deadly weapons, including iron rods, chapati, ram dao, haturi, and lathis. They hacked him to death and dumped the corpse 50 yards from the home, near the family's arable lands, which the perpetrators wanted to seize as part of continuous land grabbing from Hindus that proceeds with relative impunity.	Young man murdered	BDMW; eyewitness (victim's mother); Daily Ittefaq (2/12/18).	Victim's mother filed a complaint, and police took her son's body for a post mortem; but never took action against the murderers. Rather, according to the victim's mother, some of the perpetrators pressured to drop the murder allegation. This has left her frightened, especially since her son's murderers (though known) are allowed to roam freely. Despite police comments they have taken no action against the murderers; which has strengthened the perception that crimes against Hindus can proceed with impunity. Community members are frightened.
1/20/2018	West Deobogh (Bhuiyabag) within Fatullah Police station of Narayangonj District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Multiple members of Dey family	Multiple of both	Land seizure; religious desecration	Abdus Salam, President of Narayangonj District Journalist Union (NUJ), others; local authorities	Despite court order to return vested property of victims, perpetrator seized land, refused to vacate with help of local authorities. (Details available upon request.)	Victims' property remains in hands of perpetrator with local government backing.	BDMW; court orders	Government has supported the criminal; refused to enforce court order in favor of Hindu victims.
2/4/2018	Bahadurpur Topoban Ashram, Monirampur Upazila of Jessore District, Khulna Division, Bangladesh	Shri Goutam Kumar Das (principal of temple), Rajen Das, Sujit Singh, Nomita Rani Das, Chandi Charan Das	Three male; two female (ages 27-55)	Criminal trespass, religious desecration, assault, possibly murder	Mohammad Enamul Hossain, Idrish Ali, Shafiqullah, Alim Hossain, Md. Habibullah, Md. Mizanur Rahman, Md. Arif Hossain, Md. Abdul Kader, Md. Asmat Ali, Md. Naser Ali, Md. Siddique, Md. Shafiqul, Md. Billal, Md. Rahim, Samar Saker, and 30-40 unknown perpetrators	At about 8.45 p.m. a number of perpetrators armed with lathi, kirish, dao and country-made bamboo weapons attacked Hindu Shevasram (TOPOBAN ASHRAM). They unlawfully trespassed into the Topoban Ashram and asked the Principal Shri Goutam Kumar Das why they (Hindus) prevented water from irrigating fisheries within the locality. The conversation became heated with accusations by the perpetrators, who then began beating the Principal of the Ashram and others. The victims were sent to nearest Jessore General Hospital for treatment. Physicians said the Hindu principals' condition was critical.	BDMW was informed by the physician that the injury to the principal was fatal.	Multiple eyewitnesses; BDMW; documentation from MD and hospital	The fishery adjacent to the Ashram was the only income source for the temple, and Hindu community members believe that was the real reason for the attack, and that it was intended to impoverish the Ashram so it would abandon the land. Medical treatment was inadequate according to medical experts; and while police arrested eleven suspects, all were released after two days with no further action.
2/13/2018	Ward No. 9, Mohammadpur UNION of Senbagh Upazila of Noakhali District, Chittagong Division, Bangladesh	Sree Sree Rakka Kali Mandir; i.e., Hindu community	N/A	Religious desecration; arson	Unknown at the time of submission	Unknown perpetrators unlawfully entered Kali Temple at Mohammadpur Union on 13th of Feb at night (6-7pm), demolished five deities, desecrated the temple, set fires in it, and fled. In the morning Loni Bala Das discovered the desecration when she went to clean the Temple; a neighbor also testified to the desecration.	Temple desecrated; wooden deities destroyed; Hindu community unable to rebuild and fearful of further attacks. Cost not estimated.	BDMW; eyewitnesses; Bangla Tribune (2/15/18)	Police shown damage; said they would take action but have not done so. (Small community, easy to find perpetrators; not done by police.; hence, Hindu community remains fearful of more attacks due to impunity.)
2/17/2018	Moghadia (Hindu Para) Bhagaban Master Bari within Mirsarai Upazila of Chittagong Division, Bangladesh	Anupam Palit, Baby Rani Dey	Male (62); Female (50)	Arson	Unknown at the time of submission	Perpetrators set fire on the Hindu houses at Moghadia (Hindu Para) Bhagaban Master Bari within Mirsarai Upazila of Chittagong District on 17.02.2018 at about 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. Local Chairman of Union Parishad involved.	Two houses belonging to Hindus have been burnt to ashes on the same night. Despite efforts by local residents (no help from authorities), the fire could not be extinguished. The owners were in the city of Chittagong at the time, which is the only reason they were not harmed during the blaze. Contents of the house (sofa sets, wooden Almirah, wooden furniture, chair, tables, other important clothes and accessories) were gutted.	BDMW; multiple eyewitnesses (at least two dozen; names of most available)	Per human rights attorney and BDMW founder, Rabindra Ghosh: I have also discussed with the local Union Parishad Chairman Md Zahangir over his mobile (No.01829807721). He was annoyed with our intervention and rebuked me with ugly language and wanted us to leave the place. I have also reported his ugly behavior to the local administration but the local administration could do nothing. I have also talked with the local Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain of his constituency who assured me that he would visit the house of the victim; and gave him to understand that the local administration did not help us even the officer in charge of Mirsarai Police station did not entertain any first information report from the victim nor he himself lodged any case against perpetrators.

3/3/2018	Fatullah Police station, Narayangonj District, Dhaka, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Pagolnath Temple and devotees	Female, Male	Religious desecration	Local Islamists and residents; police	Temple had been harassed and threatened repeatedly, worshippers harassed; police refused to provide protection or even take calls from Temple leaders	Rabindra Ghosh stated and documented in writing to me: "The Officer in Charge of Fatullah Police station was Mohammad Kamal who first of all did not act in favour of Hindus of this Temple. After our arrival and face to face to the discussion, Mr. Kamal started to work in favour of this Temple. But the O.C. [Officer in Charge] has been transferred to another police station. Now there is no further interference from the police and political parties. This was a successful mission of your stay here in Bangladesh."	I personally saw this, and I can call on a number of eyewitnesses who were there at the time.	While the government did not carry out this action, it refused to take any action to protect the Mandir from ongoing threats and attacks--and even refused to take calls from the Temple. They acted only after pressure from Rabindra Ghosh and me, including my refusal to back down when the police denied culpability.
3/3/2018	Shere-E-Bangla Nagar Police station, Dhaka, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Family of Shudhangshu Chandra Biswas	Female, Male	Attack/looting	Local Islamists and residents; police	Family home was attacked, ransacked and looted for four hours in from about 11am until 3pm in the capital with no police intervention. Worship room ransacked and contents desecrated and destroyed.	Family still trying to put their lives together; fearful of further attacks, despite police telling us otherwise, due to the open way in which the attack was allowed to proceed.	I personally saw this, and I can call on a number of eyewitnesses who were there at the time.	Along with BDMW's Rabindra Ghosh, I went to the local police station and confronted the police--how could they not know about such a public crime carried out in broad daylight, allow it to happen, and not take action until they knew that we were arriving. The Officer in Charge said it was not an anti-Hindu action but a simple crime; yet, he could not answer when I asked him if intelligence agents visit every regular crime scene in his district, because I saw intelligence agents at this one because it was an anti-Hindu action; plus the deities and religious items were destroyed.
3/15/2018	Hathazari Road, Chittagong, Bangladesh	Shuva Kumar Nath, Srabonti Rani Nath	Male (15) and female children	Forced conversion	"Rajib Chandra Nath," "Sojib Chandra," Hindu pseudonyms provided in false conversion documents.	about 2 p.m. Shuva Kumar Nath left his house to bring food to his father's business and did not return. His sister, Srabonti Rani Nath, left home around 4 p.m. to go to private tutoring and did not return. The parents of the victims tried to find them but failed. Sawpan Kumar Nath (father) filed a case before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chittagong. BDMW president, Adv. Rabindra Ghosh along with 4 HR activists approached the Superintendent of Police, Chittagong for police to rescue the minor victims. Police informed BDMW that both the victims have been converted to Islam and presented a sworn affidavit (allegedly by these minors) renouncing Hinduism and accepting Islam. Enquiry officer, Mollah Mohammad Zahangir, said that both would be produced before the court at Chittagong. They were not. Police took no further action in this case.	Children remain held by others and alienated from their family and community.	Multiple eyewitnesses; private informant; Baloch Human Rights Organization; Human Rights Council of Balochistan, which went back and confirmed this with first hand sources.	This human rights atrocity was carried out by Pakistani forces or agents hired by the Pakistani government; and according to multiple human rights organizations, the government prevents journalists and human rights organizations from investigating these matters.
4/10/2018	Mirzapur (Baider Bar) P.S. Hathazari, Chittagong Division, Bangladesh	Shimul Baran Sen, Mukul Baran Sen	Male/56 and 51	Illegal land seizure; assault	Mohammad Jamal Uddin, U.P. Member of Ward No.7, Gumar Mordon Boizer Bari, Hathazari, Chittagong	Dr. Shakti Pada Sen was the owner of the lands pertaining R.S. Khatian No.1846 Dag No.9450/9621 of Mirzapur of Hathazari Police station at Chittagong. He died and his sons (Shimul Baran Sen and Mukul Baran Sen) inherited the properties. But Mohammad Jamal Uddin forcibly occupied some of land of the land and built on the land without any lawful authority. Shimul Baran and Mukul Baran approached legal authorities and the local administration several times to protect them and get back their property to no avail. The perpetrators also threatened the Hindu owners with impunity. One Zahangir Alam (Subinspector of Police, Hathazari P.S.) submitted a report in favor of the Hindu victims on August 16, 2010, also declaring Mohammad Zahangir Alam a trespasser. He never abided by it, and authorities did not enforce the order. A salish (Arbitration) by the local Union Parishad No.3 of Hathazari Upazila (March 13, 2010) also ruled in favor of Hindu owners. Mohammad Jamaluddin did not abide by it, and authorities did not enforce it.	Hindu property stolen; remains in the hands of the perpetrators with impunity. The perpetrators have threatened and assaulted the victims with impunity and lack of action by the police. [RB: I have seen this sort of thing first hand in Bangladesh. Rulings of law in favor of Hindus over Muslim land grabbers simply are not enforced by the authorities. I also have had police officials admit it to me in private conversations.]	Multiple eyewitnesses; private informant; Baloch Human Rights Organization; Human Rights Council of Balochistan, which went back and confirmed this with first hand sources.	This human rights atrocity was carried out by Pakistani forces or agents hired by the Pakistani government; and according to multiple human rights organizations, the government prevents journalists and human rights organizations from investigating these matters.
4/28/2018	P.O. and Village - Shib Nagar Daspara, P.S - Kaliogonj Police station, Jhenaidaha District, Khulna Division, Bangladesh	Mila Rani Das	Female/65	Murder	Unknown at the time of submission	Between 4:00 and 4:30pm, this elderly Hindu woman went to the Chitta River to bathe. Some time later, her corpse was discovered, throat slit. This occurred only eight kilometers from the police station.	Hindu victim murdered with impunity; further fear among the Hindu community due to lack of action by police.	Multiple eyewitnesses; private informant; Baloch Human Rights Organization; Human Rights Council of Balochistan, which went back and confirmed this with first hand sources.	This human rights atrocity was carried out by Pakistani forces or agents hired by the Pakistani government; and according to multiple human rights organizations, the government prevents journalists and human rights organizations from investigating these matters.
5/22/2018	Mashail village, Nali Union of Gheor Upazila of Manikgonj District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Monika Sarkar	Female/13	Gang rape	Mohammad Jony, Md. Rubel, Md. Shahidul Islam	At about 8.30 p.m. the victim (child) and her ailing father went to enjoy Puja celebration at her relative's house at Mashail village of Gheor Upazila of Manikgonj District. The named perpetrators (possibly along with others) kidnapped her from her relative's home, took her to a solitary location and raped her one after the other. The victim lost consciousness. Locals caught three of the perpetrators at the scene and took them to the Local U.P. Member Mujibar Rahman, who said he would settle the matter, and he tried to pay off the family not to press the case with the offer of a 100,000 BDT bribe (just under \$1200). Mujibar Rahman, however, allowed the perpetrators to leave without further action or prosecution.	The victim's mother lodged first information report (FIR) at Gheor police station two days later, naming the three perpetrators who had been seized. The case was filed under under section 9/3 of Women and Children Repression Act of 2003. That law, however, remains perfunctory and unenforced, despite the formal responses of the Bangladeshi government. Police did take the victim to local hospital for examination, confirming the assault, and she also appeared before the Manikgonj Chief Judicial Magistrate court, where she testified that those individuals gang-raped her.	BDMW; multiple eyewitnesses; Daily Somokal (5/23/18)	Police have taken no further action to apprehend the perpetrators, claiming they have fled. [RB: As an expert witness in asylum cases, I have testified to the inability in Bangladesh to abscond without detection.]

5/23/2018	Kalunagar Kamrangirchar Police Station, Dhaka, Bangladesh	Rabindra Ghosh	Male	Massive attack; intimidation for human rights work	Over 300 attackers; several government officials	<p>The repeated attack on Human Rights Defender - Adv. Rabindra Ghosh and his house around 8.30 p.m. is part of ongoing attempts by members of the government and radicals to stop humanitarian activities for the minorities of Bangladesh. Previously the houses of Adv. Ghosh was also demolished/looted on April 24, 2018 at about 1.30 a.m. Further as part of this effort, the local Councillor, Hajee Md. Nure Alam of Dhaka City Corporation instituted a false criminal case against Advocate Ghosh for alleged extortion of money (50,000 BDT) from him. There is no evidence of this, but the police accepted the case and rendered Ghosh in a great distress.</p> <p>Mr. Ghosh that same night met with Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Minister for Home Affairs at his official residence in Dhaka. His response in front of others was "Why you are constructing a house within a river or Khal? Why did you not meet with Food Minister Adv. Kamrul Islam for an amicable solution? He also continued to say "Why you are damaging the integrity of the country? Why are you putting the country in a peril?" He added, "Why you keep a relationship with (American human rights activist) Dr. Richard Benkin?". According to Ghosh, the Minister then added, "If you prove the lands you purchased is personal property rather than Government property, no person in your area at Kamrangirchar will harm you any more." Ghosh added that the Minister's threatening words, made him feel unsafe for rest of my life and security." Neither did the Minister or any other official take action against known perpetrators responsible for the home demolition and looting of valuables.</p>	Mr. Ghosh's property remains destroyed, and he has no access to it. No action has been taken by authorities to determine the cause or arrest the perpetrators who committed the crimes against Mr. Ghosh. This is one of many attacks on the human rights advocate, which led the International Commission of Jurists to declare that there was no effective rule of law in Bangladesh.	Multiple eyewitnesses; testimony by the victim, numerous articles, including some in Dhaka's most widely read and respected dailies, The Daily Star and New Age. Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission.	See previous remarks.
6/10/2018	Near Government Mohila College Gate -Chasara, P.S., Narayangonj Sadar, Narayangonj District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Thithi Rani Halder	Female/16	Abduction; forced conversion	Abul Kalam Azad (police official who took the bribe/ransom), Md. Mehidi Hasan Bulbul, Bazlu Mridha, and two-three unknown accomplices	At about 2 p.m., Thiti Fani Halder, a minor Hindu girl, appeared for her Higher Secondary School Certificate examination from Narayangonj Mohilla College. When she arrived at the Mohilla College gate, the perpetrators intercepted her, forced her into a micro-bus, and decamped. Some locals tried to save her, but in vain. The perpetrators, after kidnapping the girl sent messages to her mother via mobile phone (6/12/18 at about 7.17 pm) demanding ransom, saying "If you would like to get your daughter back then you will have to pay us."	The young girl has not been seen since, has been forcibly converted to Islam.	Multiple eyewitnesses; BDMW; The Daily Juger Chinta (7/4/18)	The victim's father went to police station with all relevant information, but the Subinspector of Police, Abul Kalam Azad, delayed the investigation and did not register the case until 6/23/18, at which point it was too late to recover the victim. Police then showed forged and pre-dated documents alleging conversion to Islam and a marriage; also changing the victim's name to a Muslim name, Fathema Tuz Zohara. That document, which also alleges the change of religion, was dated 9/14/17, clearly a forgery. Moreover, child marriage is not allowed under Bangladesh law (and minor victim is protected under that law). During the BDMW investigation, the police in charge (Abul Kalam Azad) blamed the father for the victim not being recovered, which is contrary to the facts above. Additionally, per the victim's father, he paid a 50,000 BDT ransom to Abul Kalam Azad, supposedly to get his daughter back; but, the father said, the police did not do anything after that (and it is presumed that Abul Kalam Azad kept the money). Rather, he later said, "Your daughter has been converted to Islam and she will not return to your family." Even so, police demands for money to recover the victim to her continue. Rabindra Ghosh (BDMW attorney) spoke with the Additional Superintendent of Police about this. According to Mr. Ghosh, he became angry and started verbally abused him. He also told him once the (forced) conversion was noted per sworn affidavit (even if the latter is challenged as falsified), there is no recourse. The child will never be allowed to renounce the Islamic faith. Per Ghosh, he spoke with Md. Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Home Minister of Bangladesh, about the kidnapping and forced conversion, and about the police's abusive behavior toward him and other human rights investigators. The Home Minister also said he will look into the matter and has not gotten back to Mr. Ghosh since.
6/11/2018	Char Biswanath, Serajdikhan Police Station, Munshigonj District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Dharma Dev & Radha Mandir	Mandir	Religious desecration; extortion	Unknown at the time of submission	At about 2-5 a.m., while the Pujaries were sleeping outside the Temple, perpetrators burst in and destroyed Hindu deities, cut off the head of Dharma Dev, broke some glasses and caused multiple damage, then fled.	Deities, property destroyed. Hindu community fearful and intimidated; and they see that they have no recourse to the rule of law or action by the authorities.	Multiple eyewitnesses; BDMW; multiple newspapers including the Bangla Tribune	Shri Dilip Mondal Babu (Secretary of the Temple) tried to file a complaint before Akhtaruzzaman, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Serajdikhan Circle. The latter refused to allow that any crime had been committed. He said that the police would take no action that that local Hindus would have to find any perpetrators. Bangladeshi law calls for protection of religious minorities, but this case again demonstrates the gap between the written law and the rule of law as practiced by authorities in Bangladesh. Police expressed displeasure with the fact that the incident had appeared in the media and, according to locals, then tried to suppress further coverage or revelation of the material facts in the case. On July 27, 2018, at about 5pm, Rabindra Ghosh and Dilip Kumar Ray of BDMW visited the scene of the religious desecration and took video interviews of eyewitnesses to the crime. Most said that they could not identify the perpetrators of the attack because it was night. It is not unlikely, however, that the locals were motivated by intimidation and fear of retaliation. This is widespread among Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh who have been victimized by retaliating criminals, and who have no recourse with police and other authorities. The local Police Superintendent claimed that the Hindus did not lodge and FIR/complaint. Those locals, however, showed BDMW copies of the complaints they lodged with the police. The police took no action. Another police official said with no identification of the perpetrators by the victims, they could do nothing. Of course, identifying criminals is the responsibility of the police, who refused to carry out (even in the attempt) those responsibilities for the Hindu community members. As noted by BDMW, this is why "the result of cases will be zero."

7/1/2018	Arazi Harkoli, (Jharpara) P.S. Kotwali, Rangpur District, Rangpur Division, Bangladesh	Chandana Rani Roy	Female/16	Kidnapping; Forced Conversion	Milon Meah, Lebu Meah, Anwar Meah, Babul Meah, Mohammad Robiul Islam, Monzurul Islam, and two to three others	At about 10 a.m. while the victim was on her way from home to school (Pagla Peer School and College), she was intercepted by multiple male adults near the Horkoli Petrol pump and forced onto a micro-bus, which then sped away. Several eyewitnesses testified that the victim cried out loudly but that nobody came to her aid. They were all intimidated by the victims: including their influence and previous lack of police action against them or in favor of Hindu victims. Her father and mother tried to rescue her through negotiation but the perpetrators refused.	Victim remains missing, and her parents have been told that they will not see her again. Victim's parents have been made to know that their daughter has been married and converted to Islam. She never has shown any sign of wanting to leave her faith or convert to Islam; nor has there been any mention of a "love affair" with a Muslim.	BDMW; multiple eyewitnesses	On July 7, the victim's father of victim lodged First Information Report before Rangpur Sadar Police station on 3rd of July under the Women and Children Repression Act, naming the perpetrators identified by multiple eyewitnesses. Officer in charge of Rangpur Sadar P.S. told Rabindra Ghosh that they are taking "necessary steps," but there is no evidence of police action. Mr. Ghosh spoke with other police officials, up to the Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur District, all of whom gave vague assurances with no action. The Officer-in-charge of Rangpur Sadar admitted that "those criminals are absconding"; that is, has escaped justice and that nothing will be done to recover the victim or punish the criminals.
7/4/2018	Noyakandi, Sadarpur Police station, Faridpur District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Tonnima Rani Das	Female/16	Abduction; forced conversion	Mohammad Rabi Sheikh, Ainal Sheikh, Zulhaz Sheikh, Joyal Sheikh, Rab Sheikh, two-three more unidentified perpetrators.	At about 7.30 a.m. while the victim was going to Begum Faizunnesa Govt. Girls High School from her home, the perpetrators intercepted her and forcibly took her away towards Faridpur town by Mahendra vehicle. Local witnesses (named on this report) testify to seeing the attack and trying to save her; but in vain. Her legal guardian tried to find out where she was taken but failed. He and others were told that the minor girl was also forcefully converted to Islam.	Victim remains missing and unavailable to family and community; perpetrators remain free; forcible conversion of Hindus and others to Islam remains common and never sanctioned.	Multiple eyewitnesses, including Mongal Das, Jalaluddin, and Akkas Matubar; BDMW. (It is rather rare for eyewitnesses to allow their names to be made public in these matters. There is a great deal of fear and intimidation. The power of the party in power runs rather unchecked [Richard Benkin: <i>something I confirmed again personally while in Bangladesh in 2018</i>]; and its youth league is a well-documented "enforcer." Local eyewitnesses, including Rabin Chandra, Sunon Chandra, and Biswanath Roy who categorically state that the accused kidnapped the child for forcible conversion to Islam. BDMW, including the following human rights investigators: Advocate Rabindra Ghosh, Rabindra Nath Baral Rabin, Shymol Banerjee, Dhiman Bhattacharjee, Ratna Ghosh, and	Parimal Das @ Kala, the victim's father, lodged a first information report at Sadarpur police station on July 4, 2018 under the Women and Children Repression Act, 2003 (Amended), naming the perpetrators; police, however, neither made any arrests nor rescued the victim. Harun ar-Rashid, Officer in Charge (O.C.) of Sadarpur Police station, said "I will surely rescue the girl," but the victim's father told BDMW that the police and the O.C. has taken no steps to recover his daughter. The Faridpur police superintendent also told BDMW (Rabindra Ghosh) that efforts are being made to rescue the girl; however, there is no evidence of any action, and th O.C. is now refusing to communicate with the victim's father or BDMW. The local perpetrators are well known to father and mother of a victim and had tried to force them into agreeing to their daughter's marriage to one of them, and to her conversion to Islam. The victim did not wish it, and neither did her parents; so they refused. <i>There is no sanction against forcible conversion to Islam, which is perpetrated disproportionately against young Hindu females.</i>
7/12/2018	Khatkatia (Bala Kumar), Kotwali Police Station, Rangpur Division, Bangladesh	Radha Rani Roy	Female/15	Abduction; forced conversion	Md. Sagar Meah, Md. Momin Meah, Mst. Sathi Begum, plus 2-3 unknown perpetrators	At about 9 am, as the victim was walking to school from home, the named perpetrators intercepted and kidnapped her, speeding away to an unknown destination for forcible conversion to Islam. The victim girl was the student of Amashu Progoti High School, Rangpur District. According to the victim's mother, these perpetrators had been trying to "convince" this destitute woman to consent to her child's alienation and forcible conversion to Islam.	Victim remains missing in the hands of those who kidnapped her and possibly has been subjected to forced conversion to Islam already.	Kobita Rani Roy (victim's mother) filed a lodged First Information Report at the Rangpur Kotwali police station under section 7/30 of Women and Children Repression Act, 2003. Police, however, have taken no action to rescue the victim and return her to her family or to arrest and punish the perpetrators. In Bangladesh, officials do not stop forced conversion to Islam, often providing some false justification. Whether out of fear or bigotry, they do not interfere once this has occurred. Forcible conversion to Islam is not criminalized, while retaliation (even murder) for voluntary conversion from Islam is allowed to continue with impunity.	
7/14/2018	Madhabdi Police Station, Norsingdi District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	Sreemoti Puza Rani Ghosh	Female/16	Abduction; forced conversion	Mohammad Faruk, Mohammad Harun, Mohammad Alamgir, Mohammad Arif, Md. Sabuj and 2-3 more unidentified perpetrators.	At about 5:30 p.m., minor victim went to "Ratha Jatra" with her relations to enjoy puja and other functions. Several perpetrators from the local Muslim community seized the victim. She cried out, but the perpetrators hurriedly took her away and decamped towards an unknown destination. The nearest relatives of the victim tried to find their young female relative, but were not successful and cried out loudly for the victim's rescue. Victim is a student of Nazrul Islam Babu College 1st year at Arai Hazar P.S. Narayanganj District of Bangladesh. BDMW and the family also have been told that the victim has converted to Islam and cannot be removed from her current location.	Multiple eyewitnesses; BDMW, including the following human rights investigators: Rabindra Ghosh, Rabindra Nath Baral Rabin, Goutam Roy, Dilip Kumar Ray, all of whom visited the site and spoke with eyewitnesses and police.	Prodip Ghosh, victim's maternal uncle, lodged First Information Report (FIR) at Madhabdi police station with the help of Bangladesh Minority Watch (BDMW) on July 17, 2018, against the perpetrators named in Column H, Line 244 of this document. Police refused to record the matter or take any action until BDMW prevailed on intervention by the District's Superintendent of Police. Nevertheless, police have not recovered the minor victim or taken action to apprehend the criminals named by eyewitnesses. BDMW investigators also spoke with Mizanur Rahman, Superintendent of Police, who has responsibility for investigating the matter in accordance with the Women and Children Act and all other pertinent laws and regulation. Mizanur Rahman did not carry out those duties and tried to suborn perjury by asking the complainant to say that there was only one perpetrator. He was not sanctioned for any of this willful negligence.	
7/23/2018	Nalitabari Upazila, Sherpur District, Mymensingh Division, Bangladesh	Mohasawshan Kali Mandir & Khalbhanga Sarbojonin Kali Mandir	Mandir	Religious desecration	Unknown at the time of submission	At about 2 pm, unidentified perpetrators trespassed into the Mohasawshan Kali Mandir and Khalbhanga Sarbojonin Kali Mandir, and destroyed the Hindu deities therein.	Deities, property destroyed.	Multiple eyewitnesses; BDMW.	Local people eyewitnesses informed the Shri Arun Sarkar, President of Puja Uzzapon Parishad, who informed the police. They arrived at the scene but have not identified the perpetrators as yet. Local people informed the matter to Shri Arun Sarkar- President of Puja Uzzapon Parishad and the president appraised police for necessary action. Police appeared at the spot and witnessed the incident. Police could not identify the perpetrators as yet. A.K.M. Fasiur Rahman, Officer in Charge of Nalitabari police station told Rabindra Ghosh that no case has yet been filed. US Human Rights activist Dr. Richard Benkin and BDMW President Rabindra Ghosh recently stopped a 2018 attack on another Hindu temple after Dhaka police refused to take any action. This case is being reported so soon after the attack to make sure police are enjoined to intervene per their duty.