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BANGLADESH: Hindus live in fear of attacks after three violent incidents

BANGLADESH: Hindus live in fear of attacks

Three incidents of violent attacks on members of the minority community last week left one dead and four injured

UCA News (12.06.2023) – Three incidents of attacks on members of Bangladesh's minority Hindu community last week have left one dead and four injured, just days after its leaders

gathered in the national capital Dhaka and expressed fears about a potential upsurge in violence against them ahead of national polls next January.

“We live in an area where the simplest of reasons could end lives. We are conscious of it every moment, trying to avoid picking up a fight with the majority Muslims,” said Prano Das, younger brother of the murdered fish farmer, Dulal Das, 50, from Rajganj in Naokhali district in southeastern Bangladesh.

Noakhali is a coastal district that has a history of Islamist fanaticism. The district witnessed deadly riots that saw Hindus attacked, massacred, raped and Hindu properties looted and set ablaze in 1946 when Bangladesh was part of British India.

Dulal’s body was found with its throat slit, while still seated in a green plastic chair under a tree keeping a night watch on his fish farm in the wee hours of June 9.

Local police arrested a suspect, Abul Hossain, within hours of the murder. He confessed to the crime after being spotted stealing fish from a neighboring pond by Dulal, police said.

The police are also searching for a drug addict who they identified as only Badsha, for assisting Hossain in committing the crime. He would frequent Dulal’s property to consume drugs there and often taunt the Hindu man and his family, police said.

“Try to imagine how it feels like living in a place where simple matters could mean death,” Prano said.

The Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council in a June 10 statement said such murders are hard to accept in a democratic country.

Monindra Kumar Nath, joint secretary of the Council, said: “Insecurity is a mild word to be used in this context and

cannot explain the whole situation. These attacks happen routinely and the perpetrators of such attacks are rarely brought to justice.”

On June 7, Apu Karmaker, the Hindu owner of a gold shop, was critically injured when stabbed during a robbery in a bustling market at Lakshmipur, located 137 kilometers southeast of Dhaka.

The injured man was shifted to a Dhaka hospital and underwent surgery while his brother, Tapan Karmaker, who accompanied him, kept worrying about the safety of the women in the family back home.

In an earlier incident, Suresh Majhi from Bhagyakul in Munshiganj district in central Bangladesh had to wait for three days to file a complaint with the police after his house was stormed, vandalized, and looted on June 5 by a Muslim mob.

Majhi and his wife were not home when the attack took place but his nephew, an employee and an Indian guest who were present were beaten up.

“There was no reason behind the attack,” Majhi said, naming eight of the attackers in his complaint.

Hindus account for 8 percent of Bangladesh’s more than 165 million people, according to the 2022 national census.

When the British partitioned India in 1947 along religious lines, West Bengal with a Hindu majority joined India and East Bengal (now Bangladesh) became part of Muslim-majority Pakistan. At that time, Hindus in Pakistan accounted for about 21 percent.

Activists say the attack on Hindus, often politically motivated, is a major factor behind the migration of Hindus to India and the decline of Bangladesh’s Hindu population.

Last month, the annual United States International Religious

Freedom report accused the Bangladesh government of failing to protect its minorities amidst atrocities that continued through 2022.

The report pointed out that the perpetrators of violence continued to enjoy impunity, saying that the government's nonchalance could at times be interpreted as favors to the perpetrators of minority attacks.

Photo: Leaders and members of minority groups march in capital Dhaka on Oct. 16, 2021, to demand justice for communal attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh. (Photo supplied)

[Further reading about FORB in Bangladesh on HRWF website](#)

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