

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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BANGLADESH: 2,500 booked for clashes over alleged blasphemy

BANGLADESH: 2,500 booked for clashes over 'blasphemy'

The violence was triggered by an alleged blasphemous post on Facebook insulting Prophet Muhammad

By Emran Hossain

UCA NEWS (05.06.2023) – Police in the Bangladeshi

capital Dhaka charged some 2,500, mostly unidentified people, on June 4 for street violence triggered by an alleged blasphemous post on Facebook.

Police also also charged a man named Mohammad Sohel under the country's stringent Digital Security Act, for a post on social media that allegedly defamed Prophet Muhammad.

Police said they rescued Sohel from a mob of Muslims lynching him in the violence-hit Kafrul area of the city and hospitalized him at the state-run Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sohel told journalists that he knew nothing about the post and claimed that his Facebook profile was hacked.

"Sohel has been accused in the case. There is evidence indicating his involvement in insulting the prophet," said Mohammad Abdul Baten, the officer in charge of Kafrul police station.

Baten said the case against more than 2,000 people included charges such as barring police from carrying out their duties, attacking police, and destroying public property.

At least 12 policemen were injured during a clash with local people, angered by the alleged social media post, said Baten.

The clash erupted after police rescued Sohel from the mob, who allegedly attacked him for making the post.

Baten did not clarify exactly what was written in the social media post.

In a third case, police named 28 people for attacking police. The identities of the men were not disclosed immediately.

Violence over alleged blasphemy involving Islam or its Prophet Muhammad occurs often in Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

The attacks often are politically motivated, observers and activists say, adding that the investigations are mostly manipulated by the police to get political opposition party leaders and activists in trouble.

On May 23, a cyber tribunal sentenced a Hindu man to 10 years in jail in Rangpur district, some 300 kilometers north of the capital, for insulting Islam through a social media post that triggered an attack by 20,000 Muslims on his village of Hindu minorities in 2017.

Reacting to the Hindu man's conviction, leaders of Muslim groups said that the attackers of the Hindu village were spared, just as in other similar cases.

In September 2022, another Hindu man was jailed for seven years for insulting the Prophet Mohammad on social media.

Earlier in 2012 and 2016 Muslim mobs torched houses, temples, monasteries, and shops of Hindus and Buddhists over social media posts that were considered blasphemous.

In May, the US International Religious Freedom Report said that religious minorities face harassment in Bangladesh because of sweeping provisions to prevent blasphemy under the Digital Security Act of 2018.

Photo: A group of Muslims protesting against the blasphemous Facebook post in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka in this 2019 image. (Photo; AFP)

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