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Hare Krishna (ISKCON) in Bangladesh: why violence continues

Attacks against temples and murders of devotees are not the products of local mobs only. Some political forces believe they can benefit from them.

By Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (30.03.2022) - <https://bit.ly/3LRPMwO> - [Bitter Winter has already denounced](#) the violence, which has included assaults on temples and murder, against the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement, in Bangladesh.

Unfortunately, the incidents continue. Police is currently investigating the March 17 assault of a mob of some 200 Islamic radicals against the Wari Radhakanta ISKCON temple located in Lalmohan Saha Street in Dhaka. They destroyed the southern wall of the temple, smashed statues, vandalized the premises, and looted money. A devotee was kidnapped and beaten, although he was later released. ISKCON claims that it called the police during the attack, but failed to obtain any support.

After the attack, the devotees submitted a detailed report to the police, identifying the mob leaders. The police promised to investigate, but whether effective action will be taken remains to be seen.

But why are the Hare Krishna devotees targeted in Bangladesh? After the [Bangladesh genocide](#) and India's help to establish Bangladesh as an independent state, the fact that Hindus had greatly suffered during the genocide was acknowledged. In 1972, independent Bangladesh vowed to build a state where the Muslim majority and the Hindu minority, then evaluated at around 13% of the population, would peacefully coexist. Despite decisions by courts of law the Hindus perceived as discriminatory, they trusted that the father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, called Mujib in the country, would keep the promises made to them.

However, Mujib was assassinated during a military coup in 1975. His successors as Presidents gradually moved from secularism to a system where Islam was recognized as the state religion. This system was opposed for obvious reasons by the Hindu minority, which was in turn targeted by the violence of Islamic extremists. The hotly contested 2001 elections brought to power a coalition that included Muslim fundamentalist parties. Hindus, who had overwhelmingly supported the coalition that lost the elections, were targeted by a campaign of violence. Hundreds of Hindu women were raped, shops owned by Hindus were looted, and dozens of Hindus were killed. Many escaped to India, reducing the Hindu population from 13% to 9%.

In 2009, Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Mujib, became Bangladesh's Prime Minister, a position she still holds today. She promised to act decisively against those who had murdered and raped Hindus. Some of them were arrested, convicted, and executed. The main Islamic fundamentalist party, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, was banned in 2013. Hasina cultivated a warm relation with India, and reopened the files of the crimes committed during the genocide, for which leaders of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami who had been collaborators of Pakistan in 1971 were executed in 2016.

During the COVID epidemic, however, Hasina also tried to improve the traditionally frosty relations with Pakistan, discussing with Pakistani authorities anti-COVID measures and other issues. Positions with Pakistan remain, however, distant on many issues.

ISKCON represents a brand of Hinduism whose devotees have reiterated, in face of violence and even murder, that they do not want to leave. They want to stay in Bangladesh and promote their message there. Without doubt, there are political forces that believe that fomenting sectarian hatred between Hindus and Muslims in Bangladesh would weaken the Hasina government, poison its relationship with India, and perhaps bring it closer to Pakistan or set in motion events that would lead to a different government. Attacks against ISKCON are not the product of local mobs only, and the inaction of the police shows there are forces in Bangladesh believing they can profit from them.

Photo: Protests in the U.S. after the Wari Radhakanta ISKCON temple attack. From Twitter.

New Christians face persecution from Muslim families

By [Kevin Zeller](#)



Bangladesh (MNN) — Christians make up just 0.3 percent of the population of Bangladesh. And it's difficult for that number to grow.

Persecution

Mission Network News (04.03.2022) - <https://bit.ly/3Cipv7r> - Peter Mazumder is the national director of **Asian Access** in Bangladesh. He says sharing the Gospel is constitutionally protected in Bangladesh, but it still often brings persecution, especially from Muslim groups.

"Over the last three years, 11,300 Christians have been displaced from their houses.

Fundamentalist groups will even burn the houses."

Police have watched many of these attacks but did nothing to stop them. "This is a common phenomenon," Mazumder says. "When people come to the Lord out of the Muslim majority background, they are not welcomed. And they are just kicked out from their families."

Asian Access also works among the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Over 1 million people live in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp. Mazumder says only 62 have been identified as Christians. "They like to worship in their camp, but it is really tough. Some people burned their camp houses."

Discipleship

After people begin following Jesus, the work is not finished. Asian Access works to provide nurturing and discipleship after the baptism.

Mazumder says, "We train new believers from Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds, including their children. We do Sunday School. We teach them from the Bible. They memorize the stories and perform dramas."

Pray many unreached people in Bangladesh would hear the good news of Jesus and His love for all people. Ask God to especially protect Christians who come out of Muslim families.
